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Contenido

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Editorial

Edgar Lucero[1]

HOW journal continues sharing national and worldwide outcomes of educational and research experiences intended to add understanding to English language teaching practices. In this 2022-1 issue, the journal presents seven research reports, two articles of reflection and revision of themes, and one of a theoretical review.

The first research report by Carmelina Encarnación Mosquera introduces a study that analyzes the learning needs of a group of 108 students majoring in modern languages at Universidad del Cauca, Popayán, Colombia. The study reveals that the students' needs are mainly related to developing autonomy and a sense of ownership of learning, identifying, and using learning strategies. In the second research report, Jhooni Quintero-González and Amparo Clavijo-Olarte present an exploratory qualitative study which shares an innovative experience with 23 EFL undergraduate students in the Business Administration program at a private university in Bogotá, Colombia. The study reveals how these students explore cultural practices for shopping, economy, and pet-related issues in order to propose social entrepreneurship projects as social solutions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The third research report describes a study in a rural public school in Colombia. Claudia Camila Coronado-Rodríguez, Luisa Fernanda Aguilar-Peña, and María Fernanda Jaime-Osorio, from Universidad Surcolombiana in Neiva, Colombia, seek to identify the impact of a task-based teacher-development program on the teaching practices of three primary teachers of the school. By identifying the teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and realities in their teaching practices, and how these influence their performance inside and outside the classroom, the three authors show how awareness of these aspects fosters improvements in the teachers' practices of lesson planning and materials design as well as in their English language pronunciation and vocabulary use.

The following two research reports present action research studies on oral communication in English. In the fourth research report, John Steven Gómez-Giraldo, from Universidad de

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Antioquia, Medellin, Colombia, presents an action-research fostering dialogic achievements of English language learners' communicative repertoires at a public school in a Colombian town. By considering the restricted concept of communication of the grammar-based syllabus and the competitive and violent interactions between the learners, the author, who is also the researcher, designed an action plan to expand the learners' communicative repertoires and promote reflections on violence and conflict resolution. The study shows how embracing the learners' communicative practices creates spaces for reflection on complex social and moral topics in the classroom. The fifth research report, presented by teachers Fabio Adrián Torres-Rodríguez and Liliana Martínez-Granada, each from a different school in Ibagué, Colombia, explores a proposal to motivate students' L2 oral communication through the practice of narrative games as task-based activities. The action-research process of the study aims at reflecting on the participants' lack of oral communication in English. The findings demonstrate that the students feel more motivated to use English when opportunities for social interaction, collaborative work, and scaffolding are offered.

The last two research reports come from Iran. Hossein Hashemnezhad, from Islamic Azad University in Tehran, presents a qualitative content analysis study exploring factors affecting EFL learning in that country. Based on data from face-to-face non-structured interviews with EFL teachers and university students, the author highlights factors associated with language planning and policy, teacher and student characteristics, and environmental/social elements. These factors entail implications for language planners, policymakers, and teachers. The second research report from Iran is presented by Samaneh Bahrami, from Islamic Azad University, in Tonekabon. This study implements the backward summary technique to enhance reading comprehension with 120 students of non-English undergraduate programs at the university. The results indicate that the experimental groups improve reading comprehension, retention, and organization of concepts of the assigned texts.

The two articles of reflection and revision of themes in this current issue of HOW talk about social networks to support English language learning and core elements guiding ELT education in the last years respectively. Perla Villegas-Torres, from Universidad de Guanajuato, Mexico, presents an analysis on the implementation of social networks to support the learning of English in the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). By contrasting several research studies, the author initially discusses the strengths of implementing social networks in L2 instruction; then, the issues of teachers' CALL training for the implementation of social networks in the L2 instruction. She invites language teachers to include this resource in their L2 classes. The second article of reflection, by Angela Castro-Garces, from Universidad del Cauca, Popayán, Colombia, generates a reflective overview of English language teachers' knowledge-base, identity construction, and decision-making. This reflection uncovers teacher educators' gains and challenges in the field of ELT education.

The last article in this 2022-1 issue is a theoretical review. In it, Diego Fernando Macías, from Universidad Surcolombiana, in Neiva, Colombia, and Wilson Hernández-Varona, from Concordia University, in Montreal, Canada, offer an analysis of the prevailing literature on teacher learning in language teaching. The authors focus on three dominant and overlapping approaches, identified through the literature, to understand teacher learning from a language teaching perspective. These approaches are content knowledge and teaching skills for effective teaching, the teachers' hidden pedagogy and prior experiences, and the social context in learning to teach. The authors offer several implications for teacher educators such as acknowledging future teachers' prior cognitions and learning experiences, highlighting the benefits of collaborative work and communities of practice, and adapting and innovating within the social constraints of their teaching context.

We, of the Editorial Committee of HOW journal, hope that these ten articles keep communication going among English language teachers both in Colombia and abroad. In this way, the journal maintains its objective of offering opportunities for the dissemination of knowledge resulting from educational and research practices that concern English language teaching and learning around the world.

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Learning Needs of English and French Students from a Modern Languages Program at a Colombian University

Necesidades de Aprendizaje de Inglés y Francés de Estudiantes en el Programa de Lenguas Modernas en una Universidad Colombiana

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Abstract

This research study aims to analyze the learning needs of modern languages students at Universidad del Cauca and their implications on the bachelor's program. These needs were analyzed by exploring students' learning strategies and expectations, standards of competences, and other factors that might be affecting the learning of English and French. Data were gathered through questionnaires and a documentary review, framed by a mixed approach. The population was composed of 108 students, enrolled at the time the research started, who volunteered to take part in the study. The results show that students' needs are mainly related to developing autonomy and a sense of ownership as to learning, identifying, and using learning strategies, being trained in learning strategies use, being exposed to innovative methodologies, and being exposed to more language practice. Consequently, the modern languages program is expected to take important actions to meet students' needs in which all parties involved are committed. Finally, since needs analysis is meant to be the starting point in all teaching and learning processes, the methodology developed in this research could be useful for further studies on the same topic.

Keywords: competences, English learning, French learning, learning needs, standards, strategies

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Resumen

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar las necesidades de aprendizaje de los estudiantes de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad del Cauca y sus implicaciones en el programa de licenciatura. Estas necesidades se analizaron explorando las estrategias de aprendizaje de los estudiantes, las expectativas, los estándares de competencias y otros factores que podrían estar afectando el aprendizaje del inglés y el francés. Los datos se recopilaron por medio de cuestionarios y una revisión documental, enmarcados por un enfoque mixto. La población participante fue de 108 estudiantes matriculados en el momento en que comenzó la investigación, quienes se ofrecieron como voluntarios para participar en el estudio. Los resultados muestran que las necesidades de los estudiantes se relacionan principalmente con el desarrollo de la autonomía y el sentido de propiedad del aprendizaje, la identificación y el uso de estrategias de aprendizaje, la formación en el uso de estrategias de aprendizaje, la exposición a metodologías innovadoras y una mayor práctica del idioma. En consecuencia, se espera que el programa de Lenguas Modernas tome acciones importantes para satisfacer las necesidades de los estudiantes en las que todas las partes involucradas se comprometan. Finalmente, dado que el análisis de necesidades debe ser el punto de partida en todos los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje, la metodología desarrollada en esta investigación podría ser útil para futuros estudios sobre el mismo tema.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje del francés, aprendizaje del inglés, competencias, estándares, estrategias, necesidades de aprendizaje

Introduction

The University of Cauca is a public higher education institution located in the southwest of Colombia. It accommodates around 12,500 students yearly in different programs aimed to contribute to the social and cultural development of the region. One of the programs offered is the bachelor's program in modern languages with emphases on English and French, which has gone through two high quality accreditation processes, evidencing the accomplishment of the mission to promote students' professional, social, and human development.

Once the last self-evaluation process had been carried out for high-quality accreditation purposes and given the institution's being aware of the importance of inquiring about students' learning needs in English and French to implement action plans inside the modern languages program and thus, respond to English and French learning in the region, a proposal to diagnose those needs and analyze their implications in the training process emerged as one of the actions contemplated in the improvement plan of the program. For this, students' learning needs were identified by analyzing factors that have influenced the process, by identifying their learning strategies and expectations, and by analyzing their language competences based on the guidelines of the Common European Framework of References for Languages.

The research methodology of the current study was grounded on a qualitative and a quantitative approach. Three questionnaires and a documentary analysis were used to collect

data from students. Also, documentary records derived from evaluation processes carried out inside the program were revised.

The theories that were reviewed for a better understanding and to support the study were related to foreign language learning, foreign language teaching in Colombia, learning needs, learning strategies, and standards of competences.

According to the research, the most common learning needs that emerged from the findings were developing autonomy, a sense of ownership of learning, instruction in the use of learning strategies, methodologies that allow meaningful learning, and real language practice atmospheres. Taking into account these identified learning needs, some strategies are proposed for the program, which could help improve students' learning.

Literature Review

Foreign Language Learning (L2)

According to Dornyei (2001), learning a foreign language involves the learning target, the learner, and the learning environment, which may contain different factors such as the learner's motivation, language level, the target culture, and target community, among other aspects. As for Lightbown and Spada (1999), factors affecting learning are all related to personality among which are intelligence, aptitude, personality, attitude, preferences, beliefs, and age, apart from motivation. However, when measured, intelligence addresses various tasks, and for languages, IQ tests regularly stress listening, writing, and reading skills rather than students' performance in classroom interaction activities and oral communication.

As for Brown (2007), language learning comprises factors that somehow influence learners' sociocultural and educational background, life experiences and their effects on learning, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, and their personality. In a country like Colombia, although English and French are learned as foreign languages, intercultural differences and similarities between the mother tongue and the target language also influence learning.

Foreign Language Teaching in Colombia

The General Education Law of 1994 in articles 21, 22, 23, and 31 establishes as an objective the learning of a foreign language that allows learners, from primary school onward, to develop skills to speak, read, understand, and express themselves, as foreign languages are mandatory areas of the curriculum. In accordance with this law, the Colombian Ministry of National Education creates a series of conditions that promote foreign language learning with the support of international entities and national educational institutions through projects such as COFE (Colombian Framework for English, 1995), and the National

Bilingualism Program (PNB) 2004-2019. From 2004 to 2010, standards for the development of competences in foreign languages were adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference (2001).

From 2010 to 2014, through the "*Programa de Fortalecimiento para el Desarrollo de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras*" (PFDCLE) [Program for Strengthening the Development of Foreign Language Competences], the Ministry of Education sought to diagnose the language level and drew up training programs to strengthen English skills of both teachers and students in different regions of Colombia and, in turn, supported programs to improve teaching methodologies. Currently, the National Bilingual Program (2018-2022) seeks to strengthen pedagogical practices, promote innovating learning environments, implement learning and teaching syllabi and tools, and promote bilingual contexts.

With respect to French, Arismendi and Colorado (2015) point out that French as a foreign language in Colombia has been maintained mainly at the university level by training teachers and a diverse public interested in tourism and employment through agreements with francophone and academic companies. Regarding undergraduate programs specifically, they point out that French is taught in undergraduate languages programs in 15 universities in Colombia, complying with the levels stipulated by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, requiring a B2 level by 2015. According to De Mejía (2006, as cited in Arismendi & Colorado, 2015), the integration of foreign languages in the school curriculum has been a tradition in Colombia; however, in recent decades, more emphasis has been placed on English.

According to Pérez (2018), Colombian's French learning needs are not only related to tourism but also to academic, professional, labor, and business fields, as well as to responding to the challenges of globalization and learning sociolinguistic competences. Although more emphasis has been placed on English learning in educational institutions, there is an interest in doing masters' studies in a French-speaking country, so this need is mainly met in language centers, alliances, and undergraduate training programs. Since French had occupied no place in the curricula of the Colombian educational system since the 1980s, the French Embassy in Colombia and the Ministry of National Education signed a cooperation agreement to promote French teaching in public schools in 2009.

Although the concept of foreign language and that of a second language differ from each other, the expectations that the Ministry of National Education has through the National Bilingual Program focus on the development of communicative competences, seen from a panorama suited to a second language learning context rather than to a foreign language learning context, because of the implications it entails such as the need to communicate, the learning conditions, and the input hours, among other aspects, in order to reach the expected standards. According to Sanchez and Obando (2008), the national Bilingual Program in

Colombia was based on standards from a European context whose characteristics are not like the Colombian contexts, and whose Framework pursues different purposes. Regarding a second language, Oxford (2003) argues that it is one studied in a context in which that language is used to communicate; therefore, whoever learns it is exposed to a lot of input in that language. By contrast, a foreign language is one that is learned in a context where the target language is not primarily used to communicate, and the input is restricted. Bilingual programs implemented in other countries are successful because these are developed with contents appropriately selected, a wide range of authentic materials, and exposure to the language necessary for the achievement of the expected goals. Besides, learners' motivation towards the target language and how they can get ahead personally and professionally if they are proficient are worth mentioning (Sanchez & Obando, 2008).

Usma (2009) states that the policies on bilingualism in Colombia have been the result of political, economic, and cultural processes associated with what is known as "globalization". However, when these policies are introduced into the school system, they reflect a disconnection from the educational realities of the country, for they are aligned with "international economic and political agendas" (De Mejía, 2004, as cited in Usma, 2009). Likewise, Gómez (2017) highlights that regarding the National Bilingual Program, there is a mismatch between Colombian realities and the actions taken and its real purpose of attending to the "workforce rather than to the need to foster social development" (p. 149).

Regarding the English levels achieved in Colombia and the statistics of the population that learns it, the British Council (2015) found that 4.1% of the population speaks English having learned it both in formal public and private education at all school levels, and through private courses and self-taught learning. This study also reveals that only 7% of Colombian students who graduated from eleventh grade reach an English level of at least A1 (beginner); students with the highest proficiency level graduate from schools in high-income areas.

According to these statistics, the achievements are not encouraging since they hardly show levels to meet expectations, because there are factors to consider so that English teaching can be effective such as the lack of qualified teachers, resources, and funding, as well as the number of students per class and the non-application of standards, especially with most of the population in public education.

As for the expectations of French learners, Torres-Martínez (2009) sustains that many Colombians are attracted to emigrate to countries like Canada and France; therefore, the implementation of the DELF and DALF[2] tests or completing French courses to obtain a language level certification have been in greater demand. In the case of France, it is a

[2] DELF-*Diplôme d'études en langue française* and DALF- Diplôme approfondi de langue française are the official certifications issued by the French Ministry of National Education, according to the 6 levels of the Common European Framework

country that attracts a lot of attention for being a center for studies in administration and international business, as well as a training center, making it a priority destination. Regarding French teaching, a shortcoming in teacher training has been diagnosed, especially in teachers' proficiency level and qualification. The author argues that as for native French teachers, they are mostly professionals in areas other than language teaching; thus, Colombian teachers of French have little chance of updating their teaching methodologies. In his study, Torres-Martínez (2009) maintains that there is "a marked conceptual and pedagogical rigidity, as well as difficulties in assuming French as a language for life (and not only for reading), grounded on real sociocultural interaction through communication strategies" (p. 20).

According to Groux et al. (2003), foreign language learning bridges the gaps between human and social interests and purposes thanks to the linguistic capital made up of foreign language skills that take on significance through social exchange.

Foreign Language Learning Needs and Standards

Ravitch (1995, as cited in Cárdenas, Chávez, & Hernández, 2015) defines standard "as a goal and the measure of progress towards that goal" (p. 69). For the Colombian context, the Ministry of National Education has adopted standards based on those of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), in which opportunities for interaction in the target language according to real needs is not the case. The need to communicate in English or French in Colombia is subject to the conditions in which students live, where the absence of resources for input in the L2 is common, and socio-economic and conflict situations are difficult (Guerrero, 2008, as cited in Cárdenas, Chávez, & Hernández, 2015). The Ministry of National Education also promotes French learning so that citizens can insert the country in communication processes, global economy, and cultural exchange. According to the French Embassy in Colombia, French is a "language that offers cultural, professional, and business opportunities for development"[3] (El Tiempo, March 25, 2017).

The Ministry of National Education, through *Resolución 18583-2017* as one of the main axes that guarantees accreditation for universities, establishes that students from language programs must be certified at C1 level by the end of their undergraduate studies. That certification can be issued either by the Saber Pro Test[4] results or any other standardized test listed in the Resolución 12730 de 2017.

Munby (1978, as cited in Moreno 2004) points out the importance of analyzing needs and their relationship with curricular content, learning strategies, and teaching methods.

[3] In Spanish "[…] francés como un idioma que ofrece oportunidades de desarrollo cultural, profesional y empresarial".

[4] The aim of the Saber Pro test is to evaluate and report on the level of skill development and general knowledge of students from university undergraduate programs.

Besides, Hutchinson and Waters (1987, as cited in Moreno 2004) state that linguistic needs of the target situation are based on three types of needs that they call demands, wants, and deficiencies.

According to Harmer (2007), the reasons for learning a language are diverse and influence the needs to learn it; namely, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and General English. Bringing the author's approach to the context of language teaching and learning in the Modern Languages Program of the University of Cauca, the institution designed the curriculum in such a way that students learn specifically for academic and general purposes as they learn to write or speak the language to communicate effectively anywhere, anytime. In this process, no matter what the learning purpose is, learner needs emerge as they are challenged by contents and methodologies which in many cases do not meet the learners' learning styles or their expectations. Hence, autonomy plays an important role since it implies the learner's sense of responsibility, which can be strengthened by using different learning strategies to deal with those challenges.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, as cited in Mohammed & Mohammed, 2018) differentiate between two types of needs. They call the first, "target needs," which have to do with what students are required to do in a specific situation and include "needs", "lacks", and "wants". Target needs refer to what students must experience in order to perform in the specific situation, the gaps between what they know and should know in that situation and what they feel they need. The second type corresponds to "learning needs", which have to do with how students learn, the reasons why they learn, the course content, and location. Learning needs would be related to the learning process itself, in which students are expected to demonstrate their gradual progress.

Berwick (1989, as cited in Mohammed & Mohammed, 2018), sustains that learning needs refer to "the accessible difference between the present situation and a future desired one" (p. 53). Therefore, they are the gap between what the learner knows and should know when performing in the target language. The social context shapes learners' social and cognitive behavior and the actions they decide to take or not to take cannot be fully understood if the context is not considered (Vygotsky, 1978; Bourdieu, 1991; Wells, 2008, as cited in Bailey, 2017). Also, in a country like Colombia, the social system influences how learners accept or choose their foreign language learning experience (Wells, 2008, as cited in Bailey, 2017). Considering these insights, L2 learning should not be separated from the sociocultural perceptions of those who learn it, since their ways of thinking and acting in society play an important role.

According to Bandura (1997, as cited in Bailey, 2017), language learning is externally controlled in Colombia. Hence, decisions about what, how, how much, where, and why the foreign language is learned do not necessarily come from learners but from established

policies that also determine learner's needs. This argument is based on the definition of standards for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education by the Ministry of National Education. Ayala and Alvarez (2005) point out the importance of taking into account the needs that learners have to achieve their goals and of understanding their context for defining appropriate methodologies. They sustain that "attention has been given to foreign models" (p. 12), because of the lack of a proposal with guidelines pertinent to the characteristics of the Colombian institutions and learners. Ramos-Holguin (2021) states that pedagogical agendas must be negotiated so that a "permanent dialogue" can be promoted in the learning process. She also highlights how relevant it is to develop a pedagogy that has been negotiated with learners and teachers, and that is pertinent to that particular context.

Although focusing on L2 learning from a sociocultural perspective could respond to learner needs, from a constructivist perspective, few educational institutions in Colombia have the resources to enable this type of learning (Bailey, 2017). As a result, analyzing learning needs is an important starting point in curriculum development since these define the organization of content, goals, purposes, and objectives.

As for teaching and its implications on learning, Robert, Rosen, and Reinhardt (2011) sustain that knowing who the leaner is becomes relevant when dealing with individual characteristics, such as identity, personality, interests, and motivation to learn. Also, they highlight the implications of the learner's prior knowledge of the target language and culture and communication needs. However, language teaching tends to privilege general characteristics rather than particular ones.

Learning Strategies

The lack of effective learning strategies is one of the biggest obstacles in L2 learning (Bedoya et al., 2015). According to Scarcella and Oxford (1992, p. 63, as cited in Oxford, 2001), learning strategies are defined as "specifications, behaviors, steps or techniques", or ways of "encouraging oneself to tackle a difficult linguistic task, used by students to improve their own learning" (p. 2). Learning strategies are very useful when managing learning if they are chosen according to the type of task or learning style. Oxford (2001) points out six types of learning strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, related to memory, compensatory, affective, and social. All of them are useful in making learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, effective, self-directed, and transferable to new situations when they are related to the task, fit with learning styles, and when the learner relates them to other strategies. Additionally, when learning strategies are used, learning is permanent because they promote learner autonomy (Allwright, 1990 and Little, 1991, as cited in Oxford, 2001).

Jiménez (2018) states that autonomy "[…] implies taking control of learning or self-directing the process and wanting to do it" (p. 72). In that process, making decisions about

learning ways that are effective is necessary in order to take a participative stance on the learner's part. So, autonomy can also be understood as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning. This practice involves self-determination and decision-making on different aspects of learning, such as determining objectives, monitoring the process, and evaluating performance" as well as a "capacity for objectivity, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action" (Holec, 1981, and Little, 1991, as cited in Jimenez, 2018, p. 72).

Among the most used instruments for assessing learner learning strategies is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning-SILL (Oxford et al., 1990). Through this survey, learners are exposed to different statements that help them realize whether or not they are using different learning strategies and which ones in oral or written activities to improve their learning. Several implications that learning styles have in L2 teaching relate to analyzing both learning styles and strategies in the classroom, adapting instruction on the L2 and strategies, and resorting to varied methodologies (Oxford, 2001).

Resnick (1988, as cited in Duquette, 2002) states that learners who have no prior knowledge of how to solve learning problems must learn to use the strategies as opposed to those who already have previous knowledge, who must merely activate them for they are useful in any situation. Regarding strategy instruction, Weinstein (1994, as cited in Cartier, 2000) points out that, first, students who are successful in their learning are those who use effective strategies in the activities proposed for them; second, to strengthen autonomy in the process, knowing and using learning strategies to develop different skills are important; and third, the strategies that students acquire will be useful for life, such as problem-solving strategies.

Competence

According to the Ministry of National Education competences relate to knowledge, skills, and individual characteristics by means of which people carry out actions in a given context. As for communicative competence, it involves linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competence. The first competence refers to knowing formal aspects of the language and the ability to use them meaningfully. The second relates to the discursive and functional competence of the language. The third, sociolinguistic competence, refers to the knowledge of the social and cultural conditions of the target language (Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés, 2006). According to Hymes (1972, as cited in Brown, 2007), communicative competence has to do with the competence that makes the individual capable of giving and interpreting messages and negotiating meanings with other people in specific contexts.

Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983, as cited in Brown, 2007) define communicative competence from components of the linguistic system and functional aspects

of communication. Communicative competence includes grammatical and sociolinguistic competence (Brown 2007). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) points out that proficient users can understand a wide range of texts, recognize implicit meaning, express themselves fluently and spontaneously, use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes, as well as produce clear, well-structured, detailed texts on complex subjects at the C1 level. At the C2 level, proficient users can understand easily what they hear or read, summarize information from different spoken and written sources, and express themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely. Considering that language graduates will be required to certify either C1 or C2 levels, it is pertinent to analyze the students' learning needs in order to help them achieve those competences.

Methodology

The mission of the Modern Languages program of the University of Cauca is to contribute to "the development of integral professionals, capable of performing in the field of foreign languages, based on their understanding of pedagogy, linguistics, socio-humanistics, and research" (Proyecto Educativo del Programa, 2017, p. 4). It has been offered for 50 years preparing around 260 students who come from different municipalities of the southwest of Colombia in all, each academic period. The student population in the program is characterized by different aspects. For instance, the students belong to mestizo, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities, which makes the program participants multicultural and implies different perceptions, interests, and needs of the students regarding English and French learning.

As the main objective of this research is to analyze modern languages students' learning needs and their implications in the program, the research question was stated as follows: What are the learning needs of the Modern Languages program students (Cohorts 2015-2 to 2019-2) of Universidad del Cauca? In view of this, a mixed-type approach was used entailing characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Wallace (1998), the qualitative approach is used to describe data that cannot be counted or measured objectively whereas the quantitative approach is mainly used to describe what can be counted or measured objectively.

The data collection process was carried out by reviewing documents of the Program and through questionnaires that included both closed and open questions to corroborate the findings emerging from the research.

As for the documentary review, the Educational Project of the Program (PEP, 2017) was consulted to find out aspects related to students' professional and work profiles, learning

objectives, methodology, evaluation processes, language courses, and their correspondence with students' learning needs. Additionally, 13 teachers' course reports[5] were revised using mind-maps and summarizing charts to provide a view of the most relevant aspects related to students' learning problems. The data gathered were categorized and grouped according to commonalities, which led to getting general categories that facilitated the analysis. Another document derived from self-reflection and self-evaluation processes led by the Committee of Professional Practice inside the languages program was revised and analyzed. The main aspects analyzed were the factors that might hinder students' learning. The data were grouped and categorized according to their commonalities.

In addition, three questionnaires were designed and shared online with the students[6], which included both open and closed questions. The first questionnaire contained six sections that inquired about the students' characterization, the learning process, learning expectations (Moreno, 2004), learning needs, and factors that have helped or hindered students' English and French learning. The data from the closed questions were analyzed taking into consideration the highest percentages obtained and making a contrast with the lowest ones. The data from open questions were categorized according to the common aspects found in the data.

The second questionnaire was based particularly on the Language Strategy Inventory format. It comprised two parts: The first part aimed to know about the use of general learning strategies for listening, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing, and translation through multiple selection options, and open-ended questions about other strategies that the students were using. The second part was an open-ended question in which the students were asked to make suggestions for the program to help them develop their learning strategies.

The third questionnaire inquired about language standards developed by the students and thus, identify their learning needs. The first part was about the students' competences in oral and written comprehension and expression. The format was adapted from the Swiss version of the European Language Portfolio Self-Assessment Checklists (Little, D., & Perclová, R., 2001), which contains standards divided into speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Two options were included to refer to what the students can or cannot do. A different questionnaire was used in each of the semesters, based on the skills students should demonstrate at a certain level (Semesters I and II an A2 level; semesters III and IV,

[5] Teachers' course reports are a self-evaluation instrument inside the Modern Languages Program and are submitted at the end of each semester.

[6] The questionnaires were administered to 108 students in total. Eight students in first semester, 19 in second semester, 23 in third semester, one in fourth semester, 15 in fifth semester, 24 in seventh semester, 11 in ninth semester, and seven in tenth semester.

B1; semesters V and VII, B2; semesters IX and X, C1). The second part included two open questions on the perceptions of learning competences and the needs for developing them.

Table 1. General Structure of the Research

Questions	Objectives	Participants	Instruments
Correspondence between the curriculum and the students' learning needs	To find out about students' professional profile, program learning objectives, methodology, evaluation processes, and course contents.		Documentary analysis of the educational project of the Modern Languages Program (PEP)
Factors influencing students' learning	To identify the factors that might hinder students' learning		Documentary analysis of teachers' reports. Survey carried out by the professional practice committee
– Characterization of the population – Studies completed – Reasons for studying modern languages – Participation in exchange programs – Certifications – Language exposure – Learning needs (specific/general) – Learning expectations – Factors helping/ hindering learning	– To characterize the population – To describe students' learning needs, expectations, and the factors hindering students' learning	Students from all semesters	First Questionnaire
– Use of learning strategies – Interest in using learning strategies. – Disinterest in using learning strategies	To inquire about students' general learning strategies	Students from all semesters	Second Questionnaire

Questions	Objectives	Participants	Instruments
Standards of competences	To analyze students' standards of competences according to the CEFRL	Students from all semesters	Third Questionnaire

Table 1 shows in detail the purpose of the study and the action plan taken to answer all the leading questions and aspects to focus on, the objectives, the participants in each stage of the process, and the instruments used to collect the data.

Data Analysis and Results

The research question inquired about students' English and French learning needs and was approached from their learning strategies, expectations, communicative competences, and other factors influencing learning.

As for the curriculum (Educational Project of the Program), it was found that students' exposure to English and French lessons was high regarding the weekly hours (8 to 10); also, the program methodology is reflective, and self-evaluation processes are permanent. Foreign language instruction is articulated to pedagogy, socio-humanistic, linguistic, and research areas to promote students' integral development as future educators. Interaction in L2 in various fields of knowledge is promoted. Communication skills are developed according to standards set by national policies. The methodology promotes constant practice. Assessment procedures are used to diagnose student performance and to follow-up learning.

In relation to the teachers' reports, the main problems encountered regarding learning, lie in the fact that students are aware of their lack of autonomy and commitment to do independent tasks; these are factors that according to Jiménez (2018) learners are required to have control over, take charge of, and gain a sense of ownership of learning. In addition, it was found that students have difficulty with grammar, reading, and writing techniques, oral comprehension in French, and pronunciation in both languages. Heterogeneity in the English proficiency levels is also seen as a difficulty. It is worth mentioning that there is little information about students' learning strategies and if teachers provide instruction regarding them.

Other aspects mentioned in the reports are related to the Educational Project of the Program (PEP). For instance, critical thinking is promoted through the analysis of interesting topics. Reflection on learning and social problems is encouraged. Teaching methodologies are varied, students are exposed to different types of input material, individual tutorials

are provided to address learning needs, evaluation is participatory and applied to follow-up students' performance in all language skills according to the course methodology, and students' work goes hand in hand with the objectives of the program.

Besides teachers' reports, in 2017 the Professional Practice Committee surveyed students from all semesters to find out about factors affecting their learning. The final document was revised by focusing on the aspects that might hinder the process and by taking into account teachers' and students' weaknesses and suggestions made to improve learning. Results show that students require comprehensible input, especially in first semesters in which L1 is occasionally used. According to Harmer (2007), one of the teacher's roles is that of being an input provider so that the language can be comprehensible to learners. In advanced semesters, the students would like to be more exposed to the foreign language in interaction activities that enhance real communication. When the Ministry of National Education defines foreign language (Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés[7], 2006), it refers to the exposure to the target language as a process that occurs in controlled periods; however, the expected results of the NBP suggest a permanent use of the foreign language to communicate, like in those contexts where the use of the language is not restricted; that is, where it is used as a second language (Oxford, 2003).

In all the semesters, the students suggest that classroom materials should include those related to communication and information technologies. They also mention the importance of carrying out immersion sessions with native speakers to develop oral skills, to be exposed to standardized tests, and get some instruction on learning strategies to promote autonomy and independence (Allwright, 1990, and Little, 1991, as cited in Oxford, 2001). Regarding immersion sessions, students made comments, as the following, in the survey carried out by the Professional Practice Committee:

- S1: "[…] more spaces for interaction […] should be provided, and even if the hours per week for English and French classes are reduced." [sic]
- S2: "[…] that the students be exposed to the foreign language much longer than they are and that the teachers use the L2 more so that we can interact more with them." [sic]
- S3: "More immersion activities and […] more class hours with native teachers, since in some semesters we don't even have a couple of hours with a native teacher, this for both languages, since there has always been more inclination for English." [sic]
- S4: "Have more [learning] spaces where I can express myself, that teachers demand much more the language use both inside and outside the class and that within classes more activities focused on this ability be carried out." [sic]

7 Basic standards on foreign language competences: English.

As for the first questionnaire, 108 students participated; although not all of them answered the 63 questions contained in it. Results show that the most common reasons for studying modern languages are interest in the foreign languages, traveling, being a teacher, being an interpreter, and working overseas. Only 27 out of 108 students are interested in being teachers, despite studying for a bachelor's degree, as shown in Figure 1 below.

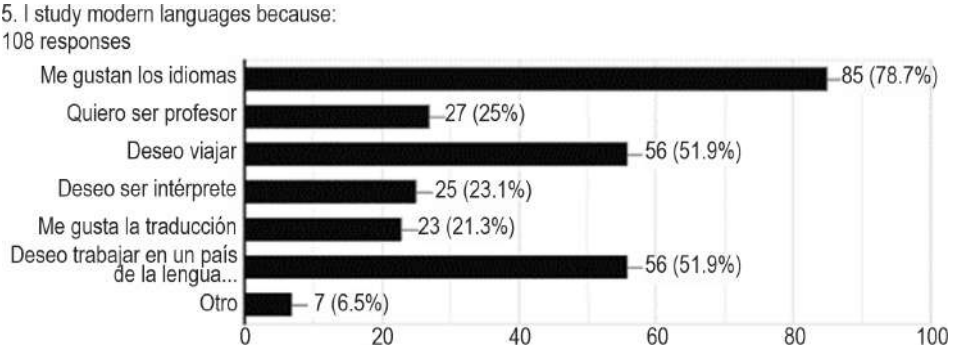

Figure 1. *Students' Reasons to Study Modern Languages*

Results also show that students' expectations concerning language instruction would suggest work more focused on content rather than linguistic aspects. Between 50% and 60% of the students expect to be able to understand content, courses, talks, dialogues, songs, radio programs, to do and understand presentations, ask, and answer questions, do assignments, write dictations, read literary works, and write summaries. Only 33.3% of 107 students answered that they would like to learn languages to teach, whereas 35.5% expect to use it to interact in the target culture, and 25.2% as professional support. Students' expectations are related to being able to use L2 in context, having the ability to use L2 to interact, certify language level and develop argumentative competence.

In the first questionnaire, students were given a list of expectations about their performance in both oral and written competences, with two options that would show students' level of expectation in those competences, which were quite well (from 50% to 80% of achievement) and very well (more than 80% of achievement) (see Annex 1). The percentages obtained in each option were added and divided into the number of expectations to estimate the mean for each option. Results showed that 58.84% of the students would like to perform quite well and 41.16% very well in the competences given in the list. The highest percentages range from 63% to 76% of students who would like to perform quite well when they respond to an interview, correct English written by others, read research articles, write

critical comments, defend, or dispute opinions, and participate in debates and seminars. The following Figures 2 to 7 display this information.

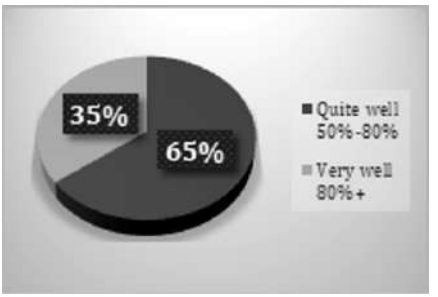

Figure 2. Respond to an Interview

Figure 3. Correct English

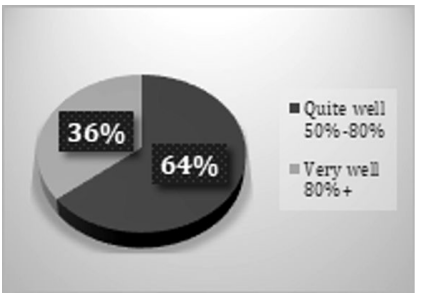

Figure 4. Read Research Articles

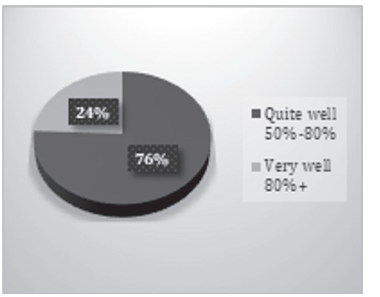

Figure 5. Write Critical Comments

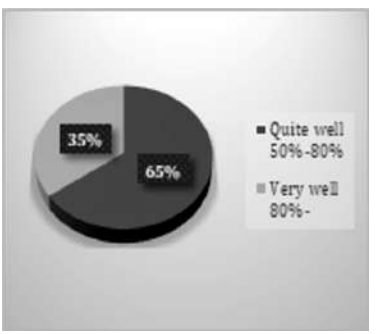

Figure 6. Defend/Dispute Opinions

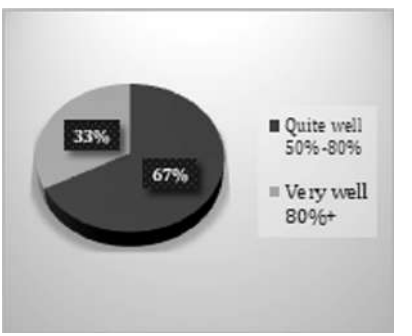

Figure 7. Participate in Debates and Seminars

As for students' general learning expectations, the first question was about the use they expect to give to the target language by the end of the major. Figure 8 shows that the highest percentage corresponds to interacting in the target culture, followed by teaching, and supporting a profession other than teaching. Figure 9 shows the results obtained for the language level that students expect to achieve by the end of the degree, and Figure 10 shows that most of the students expect to certify their level of proficiency through a standardized test.

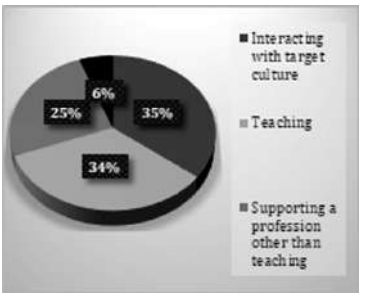

Figure 8. Use of Target Language

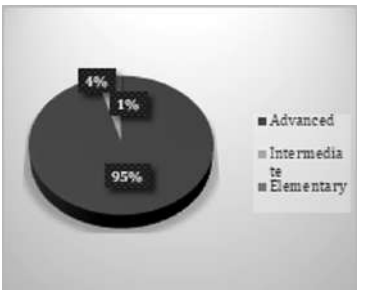

Figure 9. Language Level Achievement

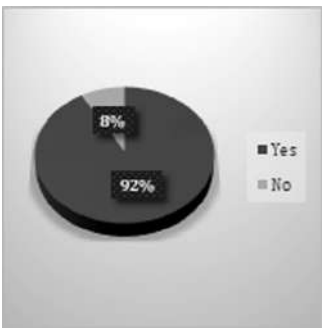

Figure 10. Certify Proficiency Level

In addition, students referred to their learning needs to develop language skills. For instance, to develop oral expression, they need to overcome the fear of making mistakes and have greater exposure to L2 with greater accompaniment of native teachers. To develop oral comprehension, they need to be more disciplined and committed, do peer work, and use listening strategies. To develop reading comprehension, they require instruction in

strategies and be exposed to different types of texts. Finally, writing can be developed by using strategies.

Table 2 below shows each of the options about the use of the learning strategies. Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 below show the results of the survey devoted to general learning strategies used for listening, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, and some suggestions for the program.

Table 2. *First Questionnaire. Rubric for the Use of Learning Strategies*

Use of strategies	Options
I have used this strategy and I like it	Option 1
I have tried to use this strategy and I use it again	Option 2
I have never used this strategy, but I am interested in it	Option 3
This strategy does not catch my attention	Option 4

Table 3. Strategies Used to Learn Vocabulary

Vocabulary	O1 %	O2 %	O3 %	O4 %
Strategies to learn new words	54.4	36.9	5.8	2.9
Strategies to review vocabulary	33	46.6	16.5	3.9
Strategies to remember vocabulary	37.9	44.7	16.5	1
Strategies to use new vocabulary	47.6	35	17.5	

Table 4. trategies Used for Speaking

Speaking	O1 %	O2 %	O3 %	O4 %
Strategies to practice speaking	51.5	36.9	11.7	
Strategies to get involved in a conversation	35.9	43.7	19.4	1
Strategies for when I cannot think of a word or expression	40.8	44.7	12.6	1.9

Table 5. Strategies Used for Reading

Reading	O1 %	O2 %	O3 %	O4 %
Strategies to improve reading skills	47.6	37.9	14.6	15
Strategies for when words and grammar structures cannot be understood	40.8	41.7	17.5	18

Table 6. Strategies Used for Writing

Writing	O1 %	O2 %	O3 %	O4 %
Strategies for basic writing	52.4	35	9.7	2.9
Strategies to write an essay or an academic report	30.4	42.2	22.5	4.9
Strategies to use after writing a draft of an essay or report	31.1	41.7	25.2	1.9

Table 7. Strategies Used for Translation

Translation	O1 %	O2 %	O3 %	O4 %
Strategies for translation	52.4	35	9.7	2.9
Strategies to work directly in the target language	30.4	42.2	22.5	4.9

The following are sample comments on students' learning strategies:

- S5: "The implementation of conversation clubs in the program is an idea that cannot be discarded, it is an opportunity for students to put into practice what they have seen in class, learning and teaching cannot be limited to the classroom or virtual resources […]" [sic]
- S6: "Because the reading of texts is progressing little by little and also in the level of difficulty of these with specific topics, for me it would be ideal to review types of expressions and specific vocabulary related to the topic of the text to be read to contextualize the students." [sic]

– S7: "[…] not only accept academic writings as grades or assignments, there are many types of writings that have more influence or interest for students." [sic]

Findings emerging from this section of the survey show that students need instruction in the use of learning strategies in all the language skills. Regarding listening, they need guidelines to carry out listening exercises and strategies to prepare to listen to and to analyze oral discourse. As for vocabulary, they need strategies to learn lexicon, memorize it and use it in context. Regarding speaking, they need to develop communication strategies. To develop reading and writing, they need to have command of complex grammar to understand and produce academic texts and strategies for editing texts. Translation is not emphasized in the program; however, students would mainly resort to Spanish to carry out reading and writing comprehension exercises.

The second questionnaire focused on the students' standards of competences. The data from the closed questions were analyzed according to the mean derived from the percentages obtained in each skill. This questionnaire aimed to explore both strengths and weaknesses with respect to the students' communicative competences in comparison to the standards defined for each semester and then to identify students' learning needs in all the language skills. In addition, students' comments on their learning process, resulting from the open-ended questions, were categorized into groups according to common aspects which led to drawing conclusions as to how they see the development of their competences and the greater needs they are facing to achieve it. Table 8 below shows in percentages, the standards of competences achieved by the students in all of the semesters, both in English and French.

Table 8. Second Questionnaire. Standards of Competences

N° of students per Semester	Listening		Reading		Conversation		Speaking		Writing	
	Op. 1	Op. 2	Op 1	Op. 2	Op. 1	Op. 2	Op.1	Op. 2	Op. 1	Op.2
I (8)- II (19)-	93.65	6.35	74.73	25.27	75.45	24.55	88.78	11.22	80.95	19.05
III (23) IV (1)	83.31	16.69	81.25	18.75	69.04	30.95	66.66	33.33	60.95	39.05
V (15) VII (24)	66.23	33.76	61.50	38.49	75.3	24.3	65.03	34.96	68.52	31.47
IX (11) X (7)	46.43	53.56	68.35	31.64	55.35	44.65	61.02	38.97	66.32	33.67

The highest percentages are in option 1, which refers to what the students can do, and the lowest ones, to what they cannot do, but they find necessary in all language skills.

Going deeper into specific competences of the students in first and second semesters, it was found that strategies to get the main idea of an audio recording are needed, as well as strategies to understand a story plot, identify the most important episodes, and get the main idea of reading texts. Also, a number of students cannot write informal messages between friends, use situational language for shopping, exchange money, ask for directions, describe past events, and start a conversation. In written skills, several students cannot narrate an event with simple phrases, fill out a form with personal information, write about everyday life, or write an informal letter.

According to the findings, the students from second semester need to address topics or to be exposed to material that allows them to rehearse everyday life situations. This would promote meaningful learning and would allow them to develop communicative competences according to the standards defined for elementary level.

As for the open-ended questions, answers focused on linguistic knowledge and the target culture, fear of public speaking, French pronunciation, exposure to L2, listening skill material, and face-to-face classes.

Regarding students in third and fourth semesters, there is a need to be exposed to authentic material and literary texts to reinforce strategies to express opinions on a given topic, to create spaces for interaction, to describe feelings, argue, follow directions, explain a topic, and receive feedback on their performance. Furthermore, various students cannot write a press release or a short article for a school magazine, nor can they write the summary of a curriculum vitae or describe it in a personal letter, or of a plot from a movie or book.

For the development of competences, the students find it necessary to reinforce writing and grammar in French, to be more exposed to input in English and French that helps them develop oral fluency, and to sustain a conversation. There is also a necessity to have more class hours of English and French, especially in the new curriculum, be exposed to different forms of learning, reinforce phonetics and vocabulary, engage in interaction spaces, develop more autonomous work, and provide more interest in listening skills.

With respect to fifth and sixth semesters, it was found that students do not have much difficulty understanding standard language in both listening and reading. However, when it comes to getting the main idea of a complex discourse related even to familiar topics, most students express lack of strategies to do so. In the data that emerged from the documentary analysis and the survey, students expressed the need to be exposed to L2 in activities that generate interaction in all subjects. This could help them become familiar with technical language and be able to participate in extensive conversations and discussions on topics of general interest.

The balance leans more towards what students can do regarding writing ability, except for two specific competences: writing essays and highlighting decisive points and support.

Regarding the open question, students identified as their greatest needs 1) to learn vocabulary and develop fluency in oral expression, 2) work on learning strategies in both languages, 3) reinforce L2 use, 4) feel comfortable with themselves and their process, 5) be involved in immersion activities, 6) have a language laboratory, and 7) increase motivation towards learning. Based on these findings, students' language competences seem to be related to evaluation processes which might not be aligned with the standards required at that level. Therefore, the undergraduate program needs to revise the criteria to promote students. For instance, two students commented:

- S8: "" […] More demand is lacking, […] a balance between demanding […] but with a good motivation of the students." [sic]
- S9: "I feel necessary to be at a higher level of immersion in English." [sic]

Finally, as for students in ninth and tenth semesters, the results show that the greatest needs for developing competences lie in putting ideas in writing, the lack of external motivation, autonomy, more support from teachers, interaction spaces, and reflective language practice. The following are two students' comments with respect to this:

- S10: "I consider that my greatest need is to have more spaces where I can practice all the skills […] and in the city, French is not very common for people to speak this language [French]." [sic]
- S11: "My greatest need would be to have more spaces not only autonomous but also in support with the teachers of the program to read in the other language and to interact in real more than created situations." [sic]

Conclusions

After analyzing the data and taking into account the findings emerging from the research that aimed to analyze the learning needs of Modern Languages students at the University of Cauca, I feel the following conclusions can be stated:

Autonomy plays an important role in language learning as it implies being exposed to the target language as much as possible. Nevertheless, it was found in the documentary analysis and other data collection instruments that students are aware of their lack of autonomy, commitment, responsibility, and motivation towards learning; this awareness becomes one of the main hindrances in their learning and language performance.

Instruction in learning strategies is meant to promote learner autonomy and to develop meaningful learning; thus, when this kind of instruction is not a fundamental aspect in

curriculum design, students do not make the most of learning and their progress can take longer than expected.

Most students participating in the study do not aim to be teachers but to work in other fields in which the foreign language can be used to communicate and interact in different contexts. Anyway, since it is known that there is a high demand of language teachers in the region, mainly English, students might consider working as teachers as a secondary choice just in case they do not find other job opportunities.

The curriculum of the program proposes the development of communication skills being encouraged according to the standards established by the Ministry of National Education for the bachelor's degree programs in Colombia; however, it was found that students require more exigence from the program in the development of communicative competences to achieve the required standards.

In a context like Colombia, foreign language learning is meant to be intervened by teachers who are called upon to be input providers as one of their most important roles.

Even though diagnostic tests are implemented in the language program to identify students' level and plan regarding the teaching actions, according to the research findings, students from elementary levels expressed the need of being provided with more comprehensible input that allows them to develop language skills progressively and effectively.

The need of immersion spaces in the target languages is the most mentioned by students. The reasons they express are that these activities promote interaction in an anxiety-free environment, language can be used freely in real life situations, fluency takes on more importance than accuracy, and interaction is promoted.

Teaching and learning imply a permanent interaction among the parties involved, that is, teachers and students. Therefore, establishing a good rapport contributes significantly to this process, since in most cases students feel afraid of speaking or asking questions of the teachers or other classmates because they do not want to be on the spot or judged if they make mistakes.

As part of teaching methodologies, grading materials facilitate learning. Students from different semesters agree on the fact that most of these are not innovative, which in many cases turn classroom activities monotonous, thus affecting their motivation and interest. The lack of resources aligned with communication and information technologies in the program has become a hindrance in addressing students' learning styles.

Exposure to the target language in subjects other than English and French allows students not only to become familiar with technical language, but also to improve their

motivation towards learning as they deal with content related to different knowledge areas of the curriculum.

Considering that being a teacher is not an expectation of most of the population, I would say that this aspect is a determining factor in the level of interest and commitment to learning if languages are taught only to pursue teaching, overlooking the target culture. One of the students' learning needs is to be exposed to materials and participate in activities and programs whereupon they can learn about French and English cultures.

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Annex.
Students' learning expectations regarding their performance in both oral and written competences.

DCCO: Desempeño en las competencias comunicativas orales DCCE: Desempeño en las competencias comunicativas escritas EGA: Expectativas generales de aprendizaje	Opción 1 Bastante 50%-80%	Opción 2 Mucho + del 80%
22. (DCCO) Entender el contenido de cursos, clases, charlas o conferencias.	50.9	49.1%
23. (DCCO) Mantener conversaciones formales e informales	62	38%
24. (DCCO) Responder adecuadamente una entrevista	63	37%
25. (DCCO) Entender diálogos de películas, letras de canciones y programas de radio y televisión	57.4	42.6%
26. (DCCO) Hacer y entender presentaciones orales	57.4	42.6%
27. (DCCO) Atender a un visitante o ser atendido	59.8	40.2%
28. (DCCO) Hacer y responder preguntas en clase	56.1	43.9%
29. (DCCO) Participar en debates y seminarios	75.7	24.3%
30.(DCCO) Defender o rebatir opiniones	67.3	32.7%
31. (DCCO) Hablar sobre las causas y consecuencias de determinados hechos	64.3	35.8%
32. (DCCE) Hacer traducciones	56.7	43.3%
33. (DCCE) Redactar trabajos para entregar a los profesores.	55.1	44.9%
34. (DCCE) Leer artículos de investigación	64.8	35.2%
35. (DCCE) Corregir el inglés escrito por otros	64.2	35.8%
36. (DCCE) Escribir comentarios críticos	65.1	34.9%
37. (DCCE) Escribir dictados	53.3	46.7%
38. (DCCE) Leer libros de texto	44.9	55.1%
39. (DCCE) Escribir cartas de solicitud de empleo y curriculum vitae	60.2	39.8%
40. (DCCE) Leer obras literarias	56.6	43.4%

DCCO: Desempeño en las competencias comunicativas orales DCCE: Desempeño en las competencias comunicativas escritas EGA: Expectativas generales de aprendizaje	Opción 1 Bastante 50%-80%	Opción 2 Mucho + del 80%
41. (DCCE) Leer y escribir correspondencia (correo ordinario, fax y correo electrónico	54.7%	45.3%
42. (DCCE) Leer la prensa	62.7%	37.3%
43. (DCCE) Escribir resúmenes	52.8%	47.2%
44. (DCCE) Tomar apuntes	48.6%	51.4%
45. (EGA) Cuál es el uso que espera darle a la L2 objeto de aprendizaje al terminar la carrera?	Docencia	33.6%
	Interacción cultura objeto	35.5%
	Apoyo profesional	25.2%
	Otro	5.6%
46. (EGA) Cuál es el nivel de lengua que espera alcanzar al terminar la carrera?	Elemental	0.9%
	Intermedio	3.7%
	Avanzado	95.3%
47. (EGA) Espera certificar su nivel de lengua mediante una prueba estandarizada al terminar la carrera?	Sí	91.6%
	No	8.4%
49. (EGA) Desea aplicar a una beca al terminar la carrera?	Sí	51.9%
	No	7.4%
	Tal vez	40.7%

Note: Adapted from Moreno, A. (2004). Análisis de necesidades para el aula de lengua inglesa en filología inglesa: Un estudio de caso. Dpto. de Filología Moderna. Universidad de Barcelona. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/39074397.pdf

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Social Entrepreneurship Projects in the English Class: A Pandemic Multimodal Experience

Proyectos de Emprendimiento Social en la Clase de Inglés: Una Experiencia Multimodal en Pandemia

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Abstract

This exploratory qualitative study shares an innovative experience with twenty-three EFL undergraduate students in the Business Administration Program at a private university in Colombia. It aimed at positioning them as problem solvers and connecting their background as sources for EFL learning. We explored how business administration students problematized their communities to propose social solutions during the pandemic. Data were collected from students' reflective journals, students' artifacts, and a survey. In groups, the students explored cultural practices for shopping, economy, and pet-related issues to propose a social entrepreneurship project. Eleven business projects emerged as a result of students' socially-oriented concerns, critical skills, and multimodal experiences.

Keywords: communities, foreign language, multimodality, social entrepreneurship

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Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo exploratorio comparte una experiencia innovadora con veintitrés estudiantes del programa de Administración de Empresas de una universidad privada en Colombia. Su objetivo es posicionarlos como productores de proyectos y conectar sus conocimientos previos como fuentes de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera. Exploramos cómo los estudiantes de administración de empresas problematizaron sus comunidades para proponer soluciones sociales durante la pandemia. Los datos se recogieron de diarios reflexivos y productos creados por los estudiantes, y una encuesta. En grupos, los estudiantes exploraron las prácticas culturales utilizadas para adquirir productos; prácticas problemáticas relacionadas con la economía y las mascotas para proponer un proyecto de emprendimiento social. Once proyectos empresariales surgieron como resultado de las preocupaciones de carácter social de los estudiantes, sus habilidades críticas y sus experiencias multimodales.

Palabras clave: empresariado social, comunidades, idioma extranjero, multimodalidad

Introduction

In the current Colombian EFL teaching and learning context, novel emancipatory and critical pedagogies are emerging. Consequently, it has been, and will be paramount for EFL teachers to orchestrate social action and critical reading of the world through critical literacy. Discourses are transmitted through language, and it structures the perception of individuals' milieu. Then, this awareness could lead to debunking the status quo (Janks, Dixon, Ferreira, Granville & Newfield, 2014). Thus, we as teachers and teacher educators have the responsibility to walk students through endless possibilities for them to make sense of reality and enact changes within it. This article shares an exploratory research experience and a pedagogical project implemented with students in the business school at a private university in Bogota, Colombia, under the following lenses: critical literacies (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lewison, Flint, & Slyus, 2002; Luke, 2012; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019), multimodality (Kress, 2003; Jewitt, 2008, Walsh, 2010), and community-based pedagogy (CBP) (Sharkey, Clavijo & Ramírez 2016, Moll, 1994; Demarest, 2015).

For the purpose of describing this research experience, this paper is written and assembled in four main segments. Firstly, in the *needs analysis* segment, we discuss the origin, guiding question, and rationale of the project. Secondly, the theoretical underpinnings supporting the framework for the pedagogical innovation will be discussed. Thirdly, we present the data collection instruments, the participants' profile, ethical considerations, and the main didactic choices made throughout the project in the *methodology* section. Then, we analyze and discuss the findings and learning outcomes derived from the pedagogical project aimed at a fruitful reflection. Lastly, we provide final remarks on the experience and personal reflection.

Needs Analysis

In this section, we describe the setting and initial considerations for the pedagogical project. The implementation took place in a virtual class with twenty-three undergraduate EFL students of a private university located in the north of Bogota, Colombia. The students involved were in the program of business administration. They enrolled in the course *English Level 4*. English is a compulsory subject in all the degree programs offered at this university, and there are a total of seven levels (it varies depending on the program). Considering the institutional policies for EFL teaching that require teachers to follow an imported textbook (i.e., adopted foreign coursebooks) and students to obtain a good score on an international exam (Menken, 2006; Usma, 2009), we reflected upon the need to move away from a teaching paradigm focused on only results and proficiency (Ball, 2003) and start problematizing the approach to EFL teaching being used. We believe that language is not the end but the medium through which students access understanding of social concerns (Fairclough, 2001).

An academic dialogue initiated in February 2020, which continued throughout the academic year, nurtured our reflection between teacher practitioners and teacher educators. During the spring semester of 2020, when Jhooni enrolled in the critical literacy seminar offered by Amparo, she invited in-service teachers to get rid of deficit pedagogies that position students as passive learners and instead view them as active participants and co-constructors of their learning experiences valuing what Moll (1994) refers to, as *funds of knowledge*.

Thus, as university teacher educators and a teacher researcher, we decided to collaborate in the design and implementation of a more meaningful and context-responsive curriculum, considering students' needs, interests, and backgrounds through pedagogies of reconnection (Comber & Kamler, 2004). We started conceiving ways to identify students' needs and interests by having students present their hopes, dreams, and ambitions as future businesses. Initially, the topic suggested was *entrepreneurship*. This subject matter bloomed out of a great number of the students claiming that they desired to set up their own business for economic independence as illustrated in the following excerpt: **"***I'm looking forward starting my own business*" (Excerpt 1, Student A, April 4, 2020). Some of them were motivated by their family to help them economically (See Appendix A):

> "*I'd like to create a company with my father.*" (Excerpt 2, Student B, April 4, 2020)
>
> **"***I would like to get to have my company where I can employ my family...***"** (Excerpt 3, Student C, April 4, 2020)

This initial exploration with Jhooni´s students helped us think of an approach to social entrepreneurship, in which the students could explore the marketing strategies to identify needs in order to start a business with the purpose of empowering them as critical subjects

in relation to their careers. Thus, we posed the following research question: *How do business administration students problematize their communities to propose social solutions during the pandemic*? As a result of this decision, the topic of *social entrepreneurship* was proposed as a curricular project for all students in the program. This concept has multiple definitions, since it comprises a lot of characteristics. Thus, the definition that we adopted views *social entrepreneurs* as agents of social change through the establishment of an enterprise that is the result of innovation. Furthermore, we consider that social improvement is predominant over profit maximization (Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2012). This concept, as opposed to mere *entrepreneurship*, paves the road to collective social enhancement (Chell, 2007).

Consequently, the business administration students were invited to explore the culture of *social entrepreneurship* to be able to come up with a business idea based on their interests and the market analysis within the COVID-19 emergency. The students expressed their interest in participating in the project. The process of problematizing and rethinking one's own teaching in the critical literacy seminar guided by Amparo was informed by professional readings proposed by and in interactions with her along with critical reflections on the topics proposed by the students for their social entrepreneurship project. Selecting theoretical sources as foundations that support this exploratory study was also a collaborative project for us. Our common interest in social entrepreneurship to impact communities, critical literacy, and local knowledge was a meeting point for the discussion. Hence, an academic discussion about the theoretical underpinnings follows.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Community-Based Pedagogy for EFL Learning

One principal cornerstone conceived in this exploratory research experience is community-based pedagogy (CBP henceforth). CBP has been utilized in an array of studies and has been theorized by a good number of authors internationally and locally (for instance, Moll, 1994; Azano, 2011; Demarest, 2015; Medina et al., 2015; Sharkey et al., 2016). In this section, we discuss selected authors and pedagogical experiences concerning this framework, which helped reach a purposeful definition that guided the project with the students. Firstly, one insightful contribution to this field is the concept of *funds of knowledge* by Moll (1994). The author claimed that this term within a sociocultural perspective is linked to the premise that a student is deeply connected to social aspects and practices that embody intellectual resources for learning. Hence, those funds can be successfully used for classroom instruction. Having mentioned this, we kept in mind the students' previous and sociocultural experiences to be able to exploit their potential in the learning process.

Another pivotal perspective in CBP is the link between pedagogy and place. As suggested by Demarest (2015), one's identity is related to the place one belongs to, thus, it entails an understanding of life. This notion comprises a wide range of views to consider when creating curriculum, hence, the concept of local knowledge becomes central as "it's a term that helps us understand the diverse experiences of students and the particular aspects of their lives" (Demarest, 2015. p. 9). This reasoning behind local knowledge has been a paradigm for many researchers. For instance, Azano (2011) investigated how a teacher made use of places to teach eighth graders in a rural school in the U.S. The researcher found that place-based pedagogy could be a significant entry point for teachers to better activate prior knowledge and make more meaningful connections to curriculum.

In the Colombian context, there have been profound contributions to CBP, with a broader scope. This is the case reported by Medina et al. (2015). The researchers carried out an investigation in an online-based EFL course in a public university with undergraduate students from different programs. Medina et al. (2015) analyzed how students read the community critically in an EFL online course. The findings demonstrated that the students recognized the community assets and used them as resources. Also, the participants read the community critically from a problem-solving perspective in order to find solutions that responded to the troublesome issues of the context. One conclusion stated was the necessity for teachers to break the dichotomy between school and community. This is grounded evidence of the idea that local knowledge within a CBP approach can widen the scope and contribute to valuing what the community has to offer and take it as a resource for the EFL learning and teaching.

In another study, Sharkey et al. (2016) looked into the work and points of view of four public school teachers during the implementation of CBP. The authors claimed that the benefits of this approach are an increase in the students' engagement, motivation, family participation, and appreciation of local knowledge. Sharkey et al. (2016) gave evidence that CBP can be used as practices within a curriculum. Local knowledge and community are assets for teaching and learning; nonetheless, the authors account for the compliance with standards that teachers must handle.

The aforementioned theoretical tenets deem CBP as a means of creating curriculum while considering different viewpoints such as students' socio-cultural backgrounds, context, community resources, and knowledge from their professional discipline for achieving learning, teaching, and standards goals, and most importantly, students' needs and interests. In addition to this view, there is an intertwined component, which is critical literacy. The consideration of community and its particularities, apart from serving the purpose to enhance learning and teaching in the EFL setting, also has the function to develop an analytical perspective towards the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). One must be mindful that the world is loaded with discourses that shape our identities (Gee, 1996; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), and this

entails social transformation as those messages are redesigned to create knowledge (Janks, 2012). Thus, this transition of debunking the taken-for-granted viewpoint is guided by the comprehension of sociopolitical issues (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lewison et al., 2002; Luke, 2012; Vasquez et al., 2019) leading to agency within one's community.

This practice of critical literacy as an overtly political act in the classroom has been widely applied in education. As an example, Batista-Morales, Salmeron, and Dejulio (2019), using a case study methodology, presented how bilingual students from a local school in the U.S. engaged in social transformation using critical-literacy instruction led by pre-service teachers. This study provides valuable insights into the transformation that can be enacted from the classroom. Another example is the implementation carried out by Gil (2018). The author, through a qualitative study, utilized critical literacy to unveil how ten senior students' practices informed their concern for social issues. Gil (2018) presented her students' own interest in becoming social agents to change their worlds.

This study considers the introspection process that students went through in order to position themselves as active participants of the world. Thus, it is evident how the grasp of socio-political and cultural issues relying on funds of knowledge can be resources in the EFL classroom to promote pertinent and context-based social change. Our intention throughout this exploratory research and pedagogical project is to foster emancipation and critical view of the world among students as future business leaders.

Digital Literacies and Multimodality as Tools

A relevant situation that must be considered in the development of this project is the fact that it began within a pandemic. This required an online adaptation of classes. This abrupt and sudden virtualization led to other types of considerations in the project, in addition to the abovementioned ones. Owing to such worldwide emergency, the coordinators provided the students and professors at the university with tools to carry out lessons by using Microsoft Teams and useful apps available on the same widget. First, this hasty shift involved a process of online exploration of tools to develop lessons; second, EFL students also needed to adapt to the new technologies (Walsh, 2010).

A salient angle to reflect on is the use of digital multimodal texts. Even though there has already been a necessity to extend semiotic resources in the classroom for students' and teachers' use (Janks, 2010, as cited in Vasquez et al., 2019), in this teaching context, the mobility to an online world became prominent given the circumstances. Kress (2003) argued that "the book has now been superseded by the screen in the role of dominant medium of communication – using screen as a shorthand term for the new communication and information technologies" (p. 12). Considering this point of view, we see that isolating

literacy practices from the digital world given the massive array of social, technological, and economic factors is hardly possible (Kress, 2003).

Considering the nature of this innovative project under pandemic circumstances, we draw on the multiple digital modes to construct knowledge. According to Jewitt (2008), the basic assumption to multimodal perspectives is the construction of meanings through many representational and communicative resources. In a study carried out by Walsh (2010), the author discussed evidence as to how sixteen teachers implemented printed-based literacy along with digital communication technology. Walsh (2010) claimed that literacy education needed to be redefined within current curriculum contexts and teachers' awareness of the digital communication practices. Thus, multimodal practices are intensified by digital technologies (Lotherington & Jenson, 2011, as cited in Medina et al., 2015). Considering the above-mentioned circumstances of remote teaching, we can see that this exploratory research aimed at making use of the possibilities offered by digital literacies and its multimodal texts for students to construct knowledge of their own worlds.

As the project aimed to examine how business administration students problematized their communities to propose social solutions during the pandemic, this research sought to unveil how students problematize the dynamics of their communities. Also, the intention of the study was to identify learning implications in EFL students when they were engaged in community-based pedagogy and foster EFL learning using varied semiotic resources. Thus, in the next section, we provide a description of the methodology employed to accomplish the above objectives.

Methodology

This qualitative exploratory research project, informed by critical literacies and community-based perspectives that value local and community resources for teaching, proposes a pedagogical transformation aimed at creating social entrepreneurship projects with university EFL students. In the professional literature, exploratory research is conducted to achieve a better understanding of an existing problem, but usually does not lead to a conclusive result. Researchers use exploratory research to gain familiarity with an existing phenomenon and acquire new insights into it to form a more precise problem. For Heigham and Croker (2009), qualitative research is useful because it is exploratory; it mostly focuses on understanding the particular and the distinctive and does not necessarily seek or claim to generalize findings in other contexts. Additionally, Rossman and Rallis (2003) consider that "A ... feature of qualitative research ... is a reliance on sophisticated reasoning that is multifaceted and iterative, moving back and forth between the parts and the whole" (p. 47).

Participants

As stated in the needs analysis above, the participants in the study consist of 23 EFL undergraduate students in the Business Administration Program at a private university in Bogota, Colombia. Their ages ranged from 18 to 47. They were senior students in their seventh academic semester of the major. Out of 23, 19 students signed the consent forms and granted us permission to use their real names in the article and utilize the data collected in the EFL class for analysis and publication purposes.

Instruments

We collected data through three main instruments: reflective journals, students´ artifacts, and a survey. Reflective journals invited the participating students to write responses to a guiding question that aimed at provoking reflection during the five weeks of the project. The question '*What aspects of the community are important for my company?'* generated responses that evolved during the students' inquiry and implied further reflections and understandings about people's needs towards different products within the situational changes emerging from the pandemic.

In groups of three, the students worked on putting ideas together to create their company. The final outcome was shared with the whole class through a poster that presented their 11 business ideas (see Table 1 in the section of Data Analysis and Findings). They used different free applications available such as Photoshop, Adobe Spark, and Canva to portray their business ideas. A final survey was used to gather their perceptions about how this project contributed to their professional and personal growth, in addition to their proficiency in the English language.

The following section provides details about the pedagogical and curricular choices negotiated with the students during the implementation of the project. There were rich dynamics within the groups throughout the design of the project.

Reading the World under Critical Lenses: Our Curricular Proposal

The curricular project was developed under critical reading of the world to achieve social awareness in the EFL classroom. The curriculum proposed is founded on inquiry principles. As stated by Short and Burke (1991), curriculum as inquiry contains beliefs that support how learning is achieved: (1) Learning is inquiry and vice versa, (2) Inquiry questions are posed by all the participants in the inquiry, (3) Trust allows a continuance of engagement in inquiry; finally, (4) Exploration is paramount to engaging in inquiry. These

beliefs guided the curriculum applied in this pedagogical experience since they positioned the participating students as authors of their own worlds and experiences, and, at the same time, positioned teachers as learners of those contexts (Luke, 2012). Additionally, we walked the students through a five-week scaffolding process to provide them with the tools to design their business idea. In this curriculum, we utilized the six scaffolding strategies proposed by Walqui (2006) (See Figure 1 below).

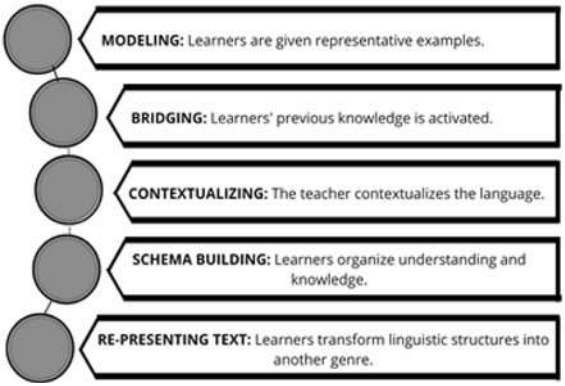

Figure 1. Scaffolding Strategies by Walqui (2006)

In consideration to this framework, the following Figure 2 summarizes the implementation.

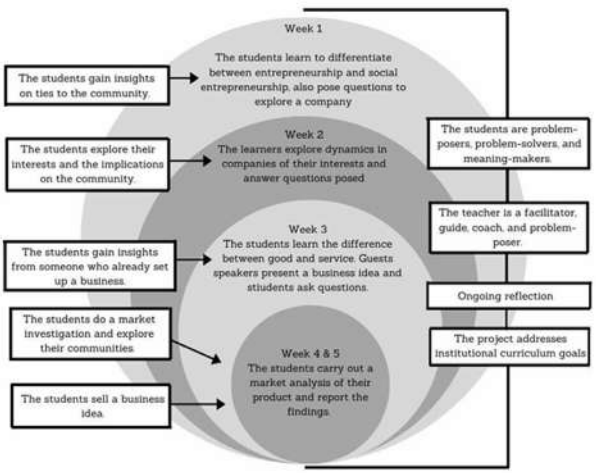

Figure 2. The Implementation Process

Throughout the process presented in the above Figure 2, students explored a wide range of websites, tools, and widgets. To explore, investigate, and present findings, the participating students used programs such as Prezi, Microsoft Power Point, social networking sites, YouTube, Classtools.net, and websites just to name a few. The students were actively involved in the design and production of texts that were the result of other texts analyzed (Vasquez et al., 2019). Jhooni's role as the classroom teacher came along as "a coach, problem-poser, and facilitator" (Demarest, 2015, p. 5). The students were provided with guiding questions, but also, they posed their own questions.

Furthermore, during the entire implementation, students were provided with feedback and ideas to do research on their communities. Following their process of creating their own business as social entrepreneurs, the students presented their business ideas in the last class; this presentation contained much of the insights that they had gained during the project. In the following lines, we analyze the data gathered based on their reflective journals, artifacts, and a survey. This is possible, considering that they comprised the complete set of appreciations in the inquiry.

Data Analysis and Findings

As mentioned earlier, the participating students were invited to create their own business projects with a social purpose and integrating the community resources available. We observed that most of the students developed a sense of place, which means they developed the ability to closely observe and analyze their landscapes (Demarest, 2015) for the purposes of creating their business. In order to demonstrate this hypothesis and to respond to the objectives set at the beginning of this project, we analyzed the data gathered in the students' artifacts (e.g., Word documents, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, oral presentations, comments, posters, and chat lines), the students' reflective journals, and a survey. In total, there were 11 projects; therefore, the data resulted in a vast array of outcomes (See Table 1 below)

Table 1. Students' Business Ideas

Business idea	Description
 Vives Coffee	This project was based on the idea of selling coffee from Guayabal de Siquima.
 Stock App	An app that allows users to find nearby supermarkets and to separate food for pick up.

Business idea	Description
 V & M Reflection style	This project was intended to sell decorations for the house.
 Pet Store & Hakuna Matata	These ideas were about pet accessories and pet food.
 Mader App	This app was thought to help carpenters and prospective customers connect for carpentry services.
 Little Fast Picadas	This idea was intended to sell fast food to local customers in their neighborhood.
 Feed your Dog	This project was based on a vending machine for pet food.
 Fantasy Tours	A travel agency intended to help to activate the economy after the pandemic.
 Chef's Delicacies	It was a business to sell desserts.
 Industrial DI Medical	The idea was based on the necessity of people to wear masks. The main purpose was to sell surgical masks at a reasonable price.

In the process of exploring the community, finding information, making decisions, and getting involved in their projects about their community, the students genuinely engaged in a multimodal experience. To carry out the project, the students made use of an array of digital tools to illustrate their work. The amount of data implied that the students went through a process in which digital tools served as mediators to visually represent the products and services their businesses could offer. Therefore, varied sources such as videos, articles, websites, and apps, among others, were explored and employed in order to support their insights. Thus, the semiotic resources available came in handy for them not only to cope with the difficulties of the COVID-19 emergency but also to engage in a multimodal experience.

As presented in Table 1 above, the students' business ideas were about the following products or services: Surgical masks, two cellphone apps, marketing coffee, decorations, bakery products, fast food, two pet-store products, pet food and accessories, and a travel agency. In their own ways, they explored different issues related to people's needs in their communities. Considering the data gathered, we relied on Miles and Huberman's (2000) steps on data management and analysis. This process implied *data collection, data reduction*, *data display,* and *conclusions: data presentation*. The information was organized in a matrix where we identified salient categories. The following Table 2 summarizes how the students problematized their communities to propose social solutions during the pandemic.

Table 2. Main Categories

Research question	Problematic issues in the community	Category
How do business administration students problematize their communities to propose social solutions during the pandemic?	– Online vs. in-place shopping.	*Cultural practices in shopping*
	– Price gouging. – Coffee growers badly paid. – Artisans unable to sell their products due to pandemic restrictions. – Tourism economic crisis.	*Economic issues*
	– Pets being abandoned. – Pets labeled as a source of virus spread.	*Pet-related cultural issues*

The examples in the following subsections have been chosen since they contain a rich variety of data that not only answered the research question but also captured the representativeness of the categories in Table 2 above.

Cultural Practices in Shopping

Several of the participating students explored people's shopping habits during the pandemic (e.g., Mader App, Little Fast Picadas, and Industrial DI Medical). As an example, Christian, Carolina, and Elizabeth proposed *Stock App*. It was an application intended to allow shoppers to search for nearby products and have them packed and ready to go, so they could pick them up without lining up. They remarked that due to the capacity restriction in public places set by the government, many times people waited for so long to go into a supermarket only (See Appendix B) to realize that the product was sold out: "*Example, my mom had to stand in a long line to go to the market, and she go to the supermarket, there were no products*" (Excerpt 4, taken from Carolina's group oral presentation, May, 30th 2020). [sic]

The students stated that this situation would not contribute positively to the pandemic situation as more people would pile up leading to more people infected with the virus. The students looked at the issue of people not wanting to buy online and suggested that clients could have the products ready to go so the customer could see the product without walking about the store to pick up the item; therefore, avoiding the risk of spreading the virus. This piece of evidence shows how the students suggested possibilities for improvement in the community (Vasquez et al., 2019).

Another illustrative example is *Mader App*. Kelly and Luisa proposed an application to help local carpenters in Soacha to connect with clients to sell their products (See Appendix C). According to the students, the app would serve as a bridge between carpenters who have been affected by the pandemic restrictions and customers who need comfortable furniture with which to work from home. Kelly and Luisa interviewed carpenters to give evidence of the need that they had to show their products and be able to work:

> *"Luisa: Would you be willing to be part of Mader App?"*
>
> *"Interviewee: Yes, because we've been forced to close our shops to the public and it's been difficult to sell as nobody is allowed to go out. Also, people are using technology to buy more than ever before." (Excerpt 5, My translation, taken from Luisa and Kelly's interviews. April, 2020)*

The main idea was to have pictures of furniture displayed in the app so as to create the contact between customer and carpenter to quote products at a distance. Both examples *Stock App* and *Mader App* explored cultural shifts in practices when shopping due to the COVID-19 situation. Students got involved in their communities exploring different situations where the issues identified impacted their community's culture shopping practices. However, they not only pinpointed these problematic situations but also started to propose possible solutions through their business ideas in English class.

Economic Issues

A couple of groups unveiled economic issues, and this inspired them to think about business ideas that could help improve the situation (e.g., Fantasy Tours, Industrial DI Medical, and V & M Reflection style). In order to exemplify this theme, we rely on *Vives Coffee*. Miguel and Viviana's idea had to do with the coffee business in their region. Their experiences became narratives of their family history as coffee growers that justify their social entrepreneurship. Viviana stated that she was originally from Guayabal de Siquima, a small town in the state of Cundinamarca, Colombia. She was interested in talking about their hometown and the different kinds of coffee there were (Sharkey et al., 2016). Miguel had also been thinking about the feasibility as he expressed how cheap it would be to start a factory of coffee there. When they presented their business idea, they stated that the coffee growers in Guayabal de Siquima were badly paid by middlemen. Given this fact, the middlemen would buy cheap and later make a great profit selling it in the city (See the following excerpts from the students' artifacts).

A fair payment without middlemen **(Students' artifacts 1, April, 2020)**	
Yes, because Viviana's parents and neighbors have been coffee producers for many years, sales are favorable and if the business is strengthened and without intermediaries, it would favor the producing community, and coffee is also a product that is exported and well received at the national level.	https://www.larepublica.co/consumo/las-tiendas-de-cafe-cambiaron-en-los-ultimos-cuarenta-anos-al-ritmo-del-consumidor-2971876
– We seek to generate employment and regarding production, we seek that the farmer receives a fair payment and increases the potential of his productive work.	

The students illustrated that problem by using a WhatsApp audio from Viviana's father. In their proposal, they manifested the feasibility of the product appreciating the properties of the land, the knowledge of the local coffee growers and the culture of people with a fondness for coffee (Moll, 1994) (See Appendix D). These students were able to bring into the classroom an issue concerning Viviana's community in Guayabal de Siquima (Freire & Macedo, 1987). They problematized Viviana's father's unfair trade to sell coffee (Medina et al., 2015; Lewison et al., 2002, Luke, 2012).

One more example of this category is in Luisa and Daniel's business proposal. They were the authors of *Industrial DI Medical*. This pair stated that the pandemic has affected the residents of Kennedy due to the emergency restrictions issued by the mayor's office in Bogotá. According to these students, this situation has led to price gouging and economic recession in the sector. See the following excerpt from the students'artifacts:

Economic implications **(Students' artifacts 2, April, 2020)**
Our product helps the community and especially the Kennedy sector, since this is today among the towns on orange alert by COVID-19  **https://youtu.be/pSy3cSSstMQ (Video)**
We know that this sector has been one of the most vulnerable due to the current pandemic and is on yellow alert. The economy is not very strong but here comes our purpose to help people in this sector due to price gouging, the masks have risen in price and have made immediate access difficult for people.

The students stated that they could manufacture cheaper facial masks as a family relative of theirs had experience making them. In the above projects, the groups exemplified how some economic issues became a salient point of discussion due to the pandemic emergency in the country.

Pet-Related Cultural Issues

There were a considerable number of students concerned with pet-related culture treatment (e.g., *Hakuna Matata* and *Feed your Dog*). For instance, Maria and Catalina worked on a project related to a pet store in Chapinero, a traditional neighborhood in Bogota, Colombia. These students' business idea consisted of establishing a place to sell all kinds of pet accessories (See Appendix E). They carried out interviews in the market-research analysis they did. They asked interviewees what practices they had identified that people do because of the pandemic; they found out that dogs were being abandoned:

"Maria: How do you think dogs have been affected by the coronavirus issue?"

> *"Interviewee: Due to the pandemic, eh… many people are experiencing lack of knowledge, they believe that they are a source of contamination and they abandon many of them." (Excerpt 6, taken from Maria and Catalina's interviews. April, 2020)*

In addition, they showed the importance that pets have in people's lives. They relied not only on the interviews, but also on news on the internet to support these practices. Maria and Catalina expressed that they would like to contribute to the situation; hence, they looked on Instagram for accounts that helped stray animals. They reported what to do in case someone found a pet in need by using this account.

In the same vein, Yised and Julian, whose business idea was *Hakuna Matata*, coincided with Maria and Catalina's findings. They also found that pets were being abandoned due to people's fear of getting infected with COVID-19, and also because people did not have enough money to take care of them considering the economic recession caused by the same pandemic. This group relied on online news from different sources to support their claim (See Appendix F). This group proposed to establish a network with other people interested in helping stray animals in two ways: First, they could spare a small amount of pet food for any stray animal passing by when customers buy food. They proposed they could encourage clients to donate a small percentage of what they buy for this purpose. Second, they could create a social networking group in order to help stray animals relocate:

> *"With people having all sorts of information on apps such as: Instagram, Facebook and many others. We create another group dedicated to posting pictures with information of pets needing a new owner. There are people looking to help." (Excerpt 7, taken from Yised's oral presentation, May, 30th 2020).*

In this section, it was our intention to display the major themes extracted from the data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 2000) to shed light on the way the business administration students problematized their local realities from a socio-critical perspective (Freire & Macedo, 1987) in order to propose social solutions during the pandemic. It is relevant to point out that CBP (Moll, 1994; Demarest, 2015) played a relevant role in the students' empowerment to intertwine their EFL learning and their immediate community practices under pandemic circumstances. The problematization led by their authorship positioned them as critical readers and solvers (Demarest, 2015) of their own reality.

Discussion

As revealed in the previous lines, the participating students could observe and problematize their context by engaging actively in the exploration process. They first began reading about the dynamics in companies of their interests. The students identified if companies were tied to the community and the ways they served the community. This process led them to ponder other aspects within companies' practices that, as they expressed,

had never been exposed. For example, Harold (a student) expressed that his view about his career had merely served monetary purposes up until this project.

The students developed a new understanding about the concept of social entrepreneurship through their collaborative experience and became problem-posers and problem-solvers of their immediate context in this pedagogical innovation (Demarest, 2015). Thus, they investigated how the pandemic has changed people's practices on different levels and thought of possibilities to enact changes considering those issues. This was aided by relying on and acknowledging local knowledge (Demarest, 2015) and on immediate community assets (Moll, 1994; Medina et al., 2015; Sharkey et al. 2016) through the use of multimodal texts on an online setting (Kress, 2003, Jewitt, 2008; Walsh, 2010).

Furthermore, we point out that the route paved for students to get involved in their community was possible through the inquiry and scaffolding process. As the intervention was being implemented, students were provided with tools to start problematizing those dynamics with which they were concerned. Furthermore, EFL instruction was ubiquitous throughout the curriculum. Students, in the different activities, made use of the target language. They expressed that the project contributed to their personal and professional lives and the activities were interesting and allowed them to practice all the abilities in a context of their interest (See Appendix G).

Conclusions

In this exploratory project, we posed the question '*How do business administration students problematize their communities to propose social solutions during the pandemic*?' Throughout the study, we could see that the students transformed themselves into inquirers of their own reality in the EFL classroom. They acknowledged the assets of their communities and were able to pinpoint immediate issues in their context in three major categories: *cultural practices for shopping*, *coffee economy,* and *pet-related cultural issues*. In addition, they not only discovered those problematic situations within their milieu, but also suggested ideas context-responsive and practical solutions through their businesses. Moreover, this study turned out to be developed under two scenarios: a virtual classroom and a pandemic considering the COVID-19 emergency.

During the entire study both the students and the teacher researcher went through a virtualization process that allowed them to cope with teaching and learning difficulties that were part of the health emergency globally. Hence, both the teacher and the students engaged in a multimodal experience as they utilized the different semiotic resources, available online, as a means to convey and create meaning in the target language. The study also served the students' needs in regard to what was meaningful for them as it was interwoven with their

professional field. It is pivotal to argue the necessity to position EFL students, regardless of their backgrounds, as socio-critical thinkers and accountable in todays' society despite any adversity that may arise.

It was a fruitful experience bearing in mind the insightful lessons provided by the collaboration between a teacher researcher and a university teacher educator. It provided an opportunity to implement a more pertinent and context-responsive approach to EFL teaching and learning. Furthermore, this experience paved the way to revise a pedagogical approach that responded to top-down institutional policies, and instead plant this emancipatory paradigm through which the students generated social entrepreneur projects that responded to their personal and professional interests. Feeding this new perception, as well as continuing to utilize the vast array of resources and assets from our local context, is meaningful.

An important consideration under these critical lenses in pedagogy is the type of power relations that have emerged in the EFL world. Most of the time, as English language teachers, we get absorbed by discourses that do not contribute to our teaching practice; on the other hand, they continue to indoctrinate us into passive and submissive ways of teaching. These critical perspectives allow us to take up creating and employing more pertinent pedagogies.

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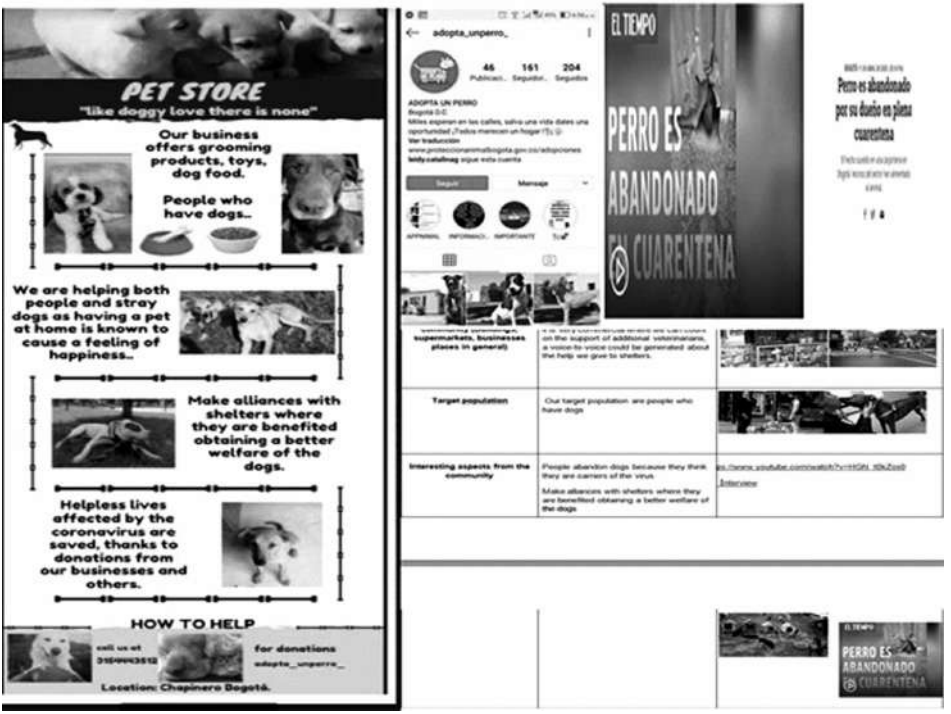
Appendix A.
Students' PowerPoint Presentations

Appendix B.
Students' evidence and poster (Stock App).

Appendix C.
Students' evidence and poster (Mader App).

Appendix D.
Students' evidence and poster (Vives Coffee).

Appendix E.
Students' evidence and poster (Pet Store).



Appendix F.
Students' evidence and poster (Hakuna Matata).

Appendix G.
Survey answers by students.

¿Considera usted que el proyecto aportó a su carrera profesional? Justifique su respuesta.
26 respuestas
Sí, porque quiero tener mi propio negocio ya tendría como una idea para desarrollar.
Sí, pues ya anteriormente se había manejado actividades diferentes, y esta realmente fue un complemento.
Sí, el proyecto ayudó en mi carrera profesional porque adicional de indagar de otra forma y aspectos el proyecto que tenemos en mente con mi compañera nos ayudó a mejorar nuestro vocabulario.
Dí, el hecho de pensar en una idea de negocio nos ayuda a plantearnos preguntas de como iniciar nuestra propia idea de negocio.
Sí, como mencioné anteriormente, en ningún otro curso de inglés se había propuesto trabajar temas más corporativas como es el lenguaje de todo este ámbito empresarial.
Bueno, simplemente con la oportunidad de expresar una idea, es un gran avance en el desarrollo profesional, así que pienso que si fue muy útil.
Sí, la carrera que se cursa requiere de este tipo de ejercicios en los cuales podamos empezar a crear "empresa" y darnos cuenta de lo que esto requiere.

Aparte del aspecto profesional, ¿cree usted que le aportó en otro ámbito? Justifique su respuesta.
26 respuestas
Personal, ya que para la obtención de resultados se requiere de las relaciones personas. Entonces pues fortalece mucho esa parte y le da la comunicación.
Desarrollo de habilidades cognitivas, es una manera de entender otra cultura.
Sí, se dio aporte a muchos términos que sirve para cualquier ámbito.
Personal, ya que muchos de los aspectos realizados y vistos en el proyecto nos hace ver el lado perseverante de las cosas.
Tengo que desarrollar más mi comunicación social y ésto me ha ayudado,
Sí, porque es bueno tener en cuenta unos aspectos de la oportunidad se más solidario con las personas y no solo pensar en uno mismo.
Sí, quizás a tomar la decisión de implantar el negocio a futuro, asimismo contribuyó un poco en mi aprendizaje de inglés.

Durante el desarrollo del proyecto, ¿cree usted haber desarrollado habilidades en el idioma inglés? Justifique su respuesta.
26 respuestas
Aprendí vocabulario, y me exigí en la pronunciación ya que me cuesta muchos
Sí, porque aprendí nuevas palabras y en especial en cuanto a la pronunciación considero que reformé y habla y logré conocer palabras nuevas, así como su pronunciación.
Sí, pero también soy consciente de que el idioma debo practicarlo con mucha más frecuencia.Sí, me ayuda a pronunciar mejor el inglés además de aprender vocabulario.
Sí, aprendí nuevs palabras y conceptos para manejar en lo que se trascurrió de la materia.
Sí, con cada tema en el que se avanza, se va aprendiendo terminología y temas de interés para entablar una conversación.
sí, sobre todo en la parte de escucha ya que al estar atenta a mis compañeros se podía afianzar la habilidad de "escucha" del idioma.

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A Task-based Teacher Development Program in a Rural Public School in Colombia

Un Programa de Desarrollo Profesional Docente Basado en Tareas en una Escuela Rural Pública de Colombia

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Abstract

This document reports on a research study carried out in a rural public school in Colombia. The aim of the study was to identify the impact of a task-based teacher development program on three primary school teachers' teaching practices. To this effect, we used a survey, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews before and after the implementation of the development program. We identified that teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and realities in their teaching practice influenced their performance, inside and outside the classroom. The results also showed that participants improved

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their teaching practices regarding the processes of lesson planning and materials design. They also improved their English language performance regarding pronunciation and vocabulary use.

Keywords: primary education, teacher professional development, rural education, task-based approach

Resumen

Este documento informa sobre un estudio de investigación realizado en una escuela rural pública de Colombia. El objetivo del estudio fue el de identificar el impacto de un programa de desarrollo docente basado en tareas en las prácticas de enseñanza de tres docentes de primaria. Para lograr esto usamos una encuesta, observaciones de clase y entrevistas semiestructuradas antes y después de la implementación del programa de desarrollo. Identificamos que las percepciones y creencias de los docentes en su práctica docente influyeron en su desempeño dentro y fuera del aula. Los resultados también mostraron que los participantes mejoraron sus prácticas docentes con respecto a procesos como la preparación y diseño de materiales de la clase. También mejoraron su competencia lingüística en inglés en cuanto a la pronunciación y el uso del vocabulario.

Palabras claves: educación primaria, desarrollo profesional docente, educación rural, enfoque por tareas

Introduction

The Colombian Ministry of National Education established the General Education Law 115 in 1994; regarding L2 teaching, it aimed at "the acquisition of elements of conversation, reading, understanding, and ability to express [oneself in] at least one foreign language" (own translation). Ever since then, learning a foreign language was introduced in Colombia, and in 2004 the Ministry of National Education launched the National Program for Bilingual Education for students in primary and secondary education. This program was proposed as visionary and futuristic since it claimed that "mastering a foreign language represents a comparative advantage, an attribute of their competence and competitiveness" (Ministry of National Education, 2004). Regarding the eagerness and ambition to enter the globalized world, it focused on following the Common European Framework (CEF) which evoked a standardized learning and a mismatch in the education system.

Standardized learning is based on what the Ministry of National Education (2006) proposed in the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages: English. Its purpose is to contribute to having citizens capable of communicating in English, with internationally comparable standards (Ministry of National Education, 2006). It was also created as a key guideline for the academic community to know the communicative competences that students were expected to reach. However, for a long time, scholars have reported that students do not achieve those language proficiency levels in English. According to Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación (ICFES, 2018), the highest Colombian 11th graders'

result on the English language test in 2014, 2015, and 2017 was 51 points out of 100; in 2016 and 2018 was 53 and 52, respectively. That is why Cárdenas, González, and Álvarez (2010) convey that the reality established in the CEF should have been adapted to the conditions of Colombian educational institutions, namely infrastructure, curriculum organization, use of foreign languages in the academic and cultural domains of the country, working hours, and competences of language teachers (p. 3), before adopting it as the guideline for English Language Teaching in Colombia. Sánchez and Obando (2008) also point out the gap between public and private education. For them, the first can neither comply with the high standards of education nor cope with the challenges posed by the disadvantages such as lack of resources, lesser involvement of families, overcrowded rooms, restriction in class hours and a huge diversity of students.

The problems mentioned above represent just the tip of the iceberg. Below the surface, the division of rural and urban areas deepens the gap for public education. Rural public schools have fewer resources than the ones in the urban areas causing a decline in teachers' numbers and students' enrollment, that is, fewer teachers teaching and students enrolled in formal education. In fact, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD henceforth, 2016) states that "Net enrolment levels vary widely across the country, from 26% in rural areas to 48% in urban ones. The current capacity of the system is insufficient to accommodate full enrolment…" (p. 10). One consequence of this insufficiency is precisely that the number of subjects and grades to be oriented relies on few teachers in the school, and that teachers assume all-subject teaching, especially in primary schools; being this a factor that may affect students' English language communicative competence development since most primary school teachers have had none or not enough training in this subject. In fact, there is a general tendency for these teachers to privilege Spanish and mathematics learning because they are perceived as the rural communities' most immediate needs.

From the previous panorama, and being two of us part of the rural public teacher community, the following research question emerged: What is the impact of a task-based teacher development program for primary teachers in a rural public school in Colombia? We wanted to involve more teachers in the path to answer this question, so we invited three primary school teachers who are not certified in ELT to enroll in an intensive teacher development program to both learn English and how to teach it.

Theoretical Framework

We based our research study on three main constructs: teaching English in rural areas, professional development, and the task-based approach. Their concepts and theoretical implications will be defined next.

Teaching English in Rural Areas

Pérez (2001, as cited in PNUD, 2011) defines and understands rurality as a result of four components: territory (source of natural resources), population, the settlements (exchange of people, goods, and information), and the public and private institutions (provide the framework within which the entire system works) (p. 27). In the Colombian context, while DANE (2018) reported that 15.8 % of the country's territory is rural, and 77.1% of the population lives in urban areas; the OECD (2016) reported that "taking density and distance into account, a little more than 30% of the population and between 60% and 76% of municipalities can be considered rural" (p. 3). There is no doubt that the remoteness of rural areas, the states of the roads, and the difficult access to them, cause deterioration in the people's quality of life (Delgado, 2014).

Regarding teaching English in a rural area, the high expectations proposed by the government and the urban-rural gap present challenges for teachers. Isolation, cultural adaptation, misconceptions that rural families have about education, motivation, infrastructure, and violence are some of them (Ramos Holguín & Aguirre Morales, 2016). Actually, the policies proposed by the government were designed under standardization patterns and consequently, there is also a lack of coherence between what is expected and the results that can be obtained in the particularities of the rural context (Delgado, 2014; Roldán & Peláez, 2017). In many cases, due to the lack of resources available in rural areas, teachers have come to "develop creative contextualized practices where they make the most of their localized expertise and resources available" (Cruz-Arcila, 2018, p. 66). Thus, English language teachers are responsible for adapting the contents and activities to the students' specific needs and the rural area in which they are immersed (Buitrago, 2017, p. 16), creating connections with their social reality (Cruz-Arcila, 2018), and getting closer to the inclusion of the cultural particularities of the context into the curriculum (Ramos Holguín & Aguirre Morales, 2016). These particularities are a syllabus [curriculum] that includes the cultural particularities of rural areas, the proper introduction of teachers to the community, the participation of the community in the planning process, the access to learning resource centers, and local support.

Professional Development (PD)

Because of the rapid changes of the world, teachers need to be updated for which they need to have further teacher education and professional development. Freeman (1989) refers to PD as a "strategy of influence and indirect intervention that works on complex, integrated aspects of teaching; these aspects are idiosyncratic and individual" (p. 64). To complement this concept, Richards and Farrell (2005) state that it "serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate the growth of teachers' understanding and themselves as teachers. It often involves

examining different dimensions of the teacher's practice as a basis for reflection" (p. 4). Figure 1 represents the dimensions of PD:

Figure 1. Professional Development Dimensions (Richards & Farrell, 2005)

(In Figure 1 above, should be Professional career advancement. Also, students' learning levels).

The model presented in Figure 1 above has two dimensions. In the individual sphere, the professional development areas focus on the teacher, without forgetting that there are students (understanding of the learners) and an institution (understanding the curriculum). In the institutional sphere, the institution seeks to improve three domains that are outlined in the figure: the development of the institution, the teachers, and the students.

As mentioned before, rural education has proven to be a disadvantage when compared to urban education (Perfetti, 2003). The amount of population attending educational institutions, especially in remote rural areas, allows the government to invest less, which as a consequence opens up scarce initiatives to implement teacher development programs. Bonilla and Cruz-Arcila (2018) highlight this aspect asserting that rural teachers' professional growth does not follow parallel routes like those of teachers in urban areas (p. 125). It happens because of different reasons: among others, there are not enough opportunities or offers for rural teachers to participate in training courses, rural teachers do not have enough technological or economic resources, means or time for transportation to participate in the teacher development programs that are offered in the urban areas, and their needs are different from the ones in urban milieus (Bonilla-Medina & Cruz-Arcila, 2013). PD is an essential construct for this study because through its practice, the researchers helped

teachers to grow professionally and as a consequence we triggered the transformation of their teaching practices when teaching English.

Task-Based Approach (TBA)

The pedagogical intervention for this study was based on the Task-Based Approach (TBA). According to Buitrago Campo (2016), the TBA exposes students to develop communicative skills in the target language in the learning process, but that exposition requires the implementation of tasks (p. 97). In addition, learning revolves around the completion of meaningful tasks (Zakime, 2018; Córdoba Zuñiga, 2016; Peña & Onatra, 2009) that are not only characterized by removing teacher-centered instruction, providing opportunities for spontaneous interaction in the foreign language, and ability to interact in real-life contexts (Willis, 1996), but by implementing/fostering activities "where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (p. 23). Furthermore, tasks emphasize the *how* – process of doing things – and the *what* – the content – of Language teaching (Sánchez, 2004). Thus, TBA proposes that teachers ask learners to carry out a series of tasks where they will need to learn and recycle specific items of language (Peña & Onatra, 2009). Willis (1996) claims that TBA consists of three phases: Pre-task, Task Cycle, and Language Focus (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Willis' Task-Based Cycle (1996, p.38)

Pre-task		
Introduction to topic and tasks		
Teacher explores the topic with the class, highlighting useful words and phrases. Learners may be exposed to examples.		
Task cycle		
Task	**Planning**	**Report**
Students do the task in pairs or small groups. Teacher monitors; mistakes do not matter.	Students prepare to report. Accuracy is important, so the teacher stands by and gives advice.	Students exchange or present reports. Teacher listens and then comments.
Language Focus		
Analysis	**Practice**	
Students examine, then discuss.	Teacher conducts practice of new words.	

The table above shows that the *pre-task* introduces the topic to the class by providing words and phrases which are related to the topic. The *task cycle* encourages the holistic use of the language which favors an inductive and cognitive style to recreate natural learning conditions in the classroom. Finally, the *language focus* allows a closer study and assessment of the features used during the task cycle. To plan and develop the activities for the primary school teachers that were part of this study, we followed Willis' cycle since it made the researchers' planning easy and effective.

Methodology

This research study followed a qualitative approach, which focuses on "... understanding people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions" (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013, p. 192). We wanted to cater to our participants' needs and listen to their voices to come up with a plan that could contribute to developing their abilities to teach English as a foreign language in a rural context. Then, we aimed at planning a teacher development program to generate a real impact on the primary school teachers who were part of it. To this effect, we collected data by means of an initial interview to know our participants' perspectives on how education has changed in terms of teaching practices, how they had been teaching English, and their perceptions about professional development. We gathered data from a collaborative action research basis, which helps to improve the community in which one's practice is embedded through participatory action learning (Riel, 2019, p. 3). It also develops a four-staged spiral process (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Riel, 2019).

In the first stage we, teachers and researchers, *planned* the activities collaboratively in accordance with the teachers' needs and the curriculum. Then, in a second stage, we *acted* by carrying out the plan through a six-lesson pedagogical intervention (see its description in the section below). As a third stage, we *observed* each of our participants while teaching three lessons. Finally, in a fourth stage, after each of the lessons had been observed, we all *reflected* on the teachers' practices and collected data on their own perceptions about strategies, activities, and practices that could be transformed during the following lesson.

To know the effects that the teacher development program had on our participants' teaching practices, we made three initial classroom observations so we could identify their English language teaching strategies before the implementation of the program. Then, we contrasted our data with three new classroom observations per teacher and a focal group interview after the implementation. The teachers were given the opportunity to reflect on those results and share their opinions.

Pedagogical Intervention

Considering the school curriculum and the teachers' needs and voices, we planned to pursue two objectives for the pedagogical intervention; the first was to teach the English language at a basic level; the second was to teach the English language didactics. Thus, basic functions of the language and basic vocabulary related to daily routines, colors, alphabet, school supplies, and animals in English were taught through six lessons. The pedagogical intervention took place over two years: three lessons were taught between October and November 2018, and the other three lessons between February and April 2019.

Regarding English language didactics, it was decided that the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, the storytelling approach, and the principles of collaborative work and learning by doing were the most suitable ones for primary school teachers so as to cope with the challenges posed by the context. While TPR is defined as "a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action, it attempts to teach language through physical activity." (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 87) Storytelling is defined as an "approach that helps students to develop language skills such as listening, imagination and predicting" (Mutiarani & Izzah, 2015, p. 72). The principles of collaborative work and learning by doing are based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act in which the participants talk among themselves in group work (Gerlach, 1994) and that students learn from their experiences in the classroom (Kolb, 1984).

The two-hour six interventions (see Appendix A) were carefully carried out under the parameters established by Willis' (1996) task-based cycle (TBA). We considered TBA because it "enhances the creation of learning tasks that suit the needs of learners and help them master all skills successfully by providing different class exercises to complete their work" (p. 14). The participation of the teachers was focused on sharing experiences and thoughts about their strengths and weaknesses in the English language. To carry out the activities, we planned three cycles. For each cycle we planned two lessons, we put them into effect, observed how teachers developed the activities, and together reflected upon the activities.

Instruments

The techniques and instruments implemented in this project were a survey to select our participants, classroom observations before and after the pedagogical intervention, and individual and focal group semi-structured interviews.

Participants

The participants of this research study were three female primary school teachers. The oldest teacher was 55 years old, had a bachelor's degree in mathematics and 18 years of

teaching experience. She taught all subjects to first graders. Another participant was 46 years old; she had a bachelor's degree in mathematics, 15 years of teaching experience and taught all subjects to second graders. The youngest teacher was 29 years old, had a bachelor's degree in pedagogy and five years of teaching experience. She was in charge of kindergarten. They had previously taken some English language courses, so they taught English language for one hour per week. They were given codes (T1, T2, and T3) to protect their identities. As part of the collaborative action research project, the participants were collaborators in the design of the activities for the task-based teacher development program.

Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents the data analysis procedure and the research categories. We followed six steps both simultaneously and iteratively: data collection, information preparation, data reading, data coding, text coding in themes, and description of the codes (Cresswell, 2012, p. 237). We classified the information into two categories that responded to the specific objectives of our research study: a) teaching beliefs about English teaching practices and b) transforming the teachers' attitudes toward the English class. The first category gives an overview of the relationship between the teachers' expertise in the English classes and their underlying beliefs. The second category provides a general understanding of the changes in teachers' practices, attitudes, and beliefs regarding their English language lessons after the implementation of the task-based teacher development program.

Impact on Teachers' Belief System about Teaching Practices

Throughout the years, primary school teachers' experiences shape their beliefs about teaching and their teaching practices. Malderez and Bodóczky (1999) metaphorically explain teachers' practices through the image of an iceberg: While the tip of the iceberg shows the teacher's professional behavior, the bottom shows the factors that affect it, namely, teachers' feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and values. In order to unveil their perceptions and beliefs about their own teaching practices, we asked the participants to reflect and contrast their initial and latest teaching practices. Data showed that their beliefs evolved not only throughout their working years, but also as a result of their participation in the task-based development program. Experience and education are the most relevant categories that have incidence in teachers' practices transformation.

The participants perceived that their teaching practices had changed with time since those were teacher-centered in the past; they also believe that planning used to focus on fulfilling compromises with the schools and themselves. Now, they think that their teaching practices are more flexible and student-centered. For example, T3 mentioned some differences:

"Nowadays I find more scenarios in my teaching practices; I assume a reality from another point of view. I work with my students to offer results. Then yes, there is a great difference. It is great because I feel more at ease with my students. I used to think that I had to compromise myself [while teaching for another school] back then." [sic]

T1 perceived that teaching was complicated but with time she started focusing more on her students:

"When I was studying [(in) the undergraduate program], my teaching practices were complicated, but I acquired taste for it as I interacted more and more with my job... At the beginning I believed that education was strict and rigid, but now I feel that education is more flexible. Now, I do my best for my students to understand and learn the subject." [sic]

Complementarily, T2 said, "Yes, the undergraduate teaching practice purpose was to acquire knowledge about how to teach and then teach with those theoretical bases… I was more like a way of following a matrix, following... yes, an established schedule" [sic]. Now, she believes that teaching practices are less structured:

"But at the moment of being in the classroom, the class varies a lot and I look to follow my pupils' pace, not my own… So now I want to identify my students' needs and take knowledge to them… but also take into account their previous knowledge and what the context demands. We need to know the students' profile [where they come from and where they are going]. That is what we need the most these days". [sic]

Regarding education, the participants' beliefs changed after graduation, when they started to work. Primary school teachers thought that education consisted of learning and teaching theories, but when confronting reality, they found significant differences between theory and practice. They understand now that keeping updated with methodologies and theories for the subjects they teach is crucial. They also understand that the basis of teaching is not only beliefs but involves teachers' attitudes and values, too, and that these lie in the culture where teachers work. Part of their everyday teaching practices must be devoted to improving their teaching.

Regarding English language teaching, by means of the classroom observations we concluded that the three participants' practices were pre-communicative (Bachman, 1990), represented in the activities with a focus on isolated vocabulary learning and practice. The following are excerpts from the observations that took place before the teacher development program:

"T1 writes the numbers on the board, T1 recommends looking for the numbers the students do not know in the dictionary." (FCOR1).

"T1 writes a list of verbs in English on the board and the students have to search its translation in Spanish." (SCOR1).

"T2 starts a bowling game in which one student (leader) per group goes in front of the empty bottles and s/he has to say food vocabulary correctly, s/he watches the flashcards and pronounces the words according to each picture. If s/he pronounces wrong, s/she does not throw the ball." (FCOR2).

"The T3 sits down and spends the last 30 minutes on her desk. She checks her cell phone." (FCOR1)

"T3 gives a guide to the students, students have to color, draw and write the parts of the face in the guide." (SCOR2)

Considering the excerpts mentioned above, the constant use of Spanish as support to teach English is evident. However, the teachers spoke in Spanish all the time, which made the English dictionary the most used tool to develop the activities since those were based on translating words that were decontextualized. It means "Translation is a change of form" (Syah, 2013, p. 3). For example, when teaching numbers, the teachers limited themselves to teaching how to write numbers in English and Spanish.

We also found that, most of the time, the students completed worksheets in class. Núñez, Téllez, and Castellanos (2013) claim that "Materials are socio-cultural resources that facilitate not only linguistic interaction but also cultural exchanges between the various human groups. Moreover, they are forms of social mediation that allow flow of knowledge" (p. 10). Nevertheless, the use of coloring guides, a dictionary, a board, and a marker did not give students much possibility to have a social mediation with the language being learned. We found that the participating primary school teachers had different attitudes, understood as "...a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (Allport, 1935, p. 810) towards their lessons. For example, T2 used strategies such as games in her classes, and she usually involved students in the learning process. However, T1 and T3 spent their class time on word-translation coloring-guide exercises.

All in all, before the implementation of the program, the teachers perceived that their teaching practices were greatly influenced by the years of experience they had accumulated. This fact highlights that "teachers intuitively tend to make the most of their expertise, the limited resources available, and the local lingua-cultural repertoires in an attempt to help students make sense of English" (Cruz Arcila, 2018, p. 65). The teachers taught English from their own experience teaching Spanish, mathematics, or biology. Although they did not have command of the English language and knew little about pedagogical strategies to teach it, the teachers, as is the case in T2, tried to use games to teach. Despite not having the necessary resources such as English language textbooks, the teacher used realia. In this way, her class was dynamic and showed that creativity develops with practice and experience. Finally, to contrast the teachers' teaching practices before the implementation of the task-based program, T1 and T3 evidently had a structuralist language view, T2 was more empathic to teach English.

Transformation of Teaching Practices

The transformation of the teaching practices was evident in two main aspects: (1) lesson planning and class materials design, and (2) linguistic development of vocabulary range and pronunciation patterns. We will present those results next.

Lesson Planning and Class Materials Design

After the implementation of the task-based teacher development program, we as the researchers, observed changes in the teachers' teaching practices regarding lesson planning. Not only did interviews and lesson observations give evidence of a more structured plan that mirrored the task-based approach we used in each one of the pedagogical interventions, but also showed that to plan their lessons the teachers asked for professional advice from the English language teacher at school. By acknowledging the importance of giving a purpose to the English language lessons, the teachers started planning and designing materials in collaboration with their peers to achieve their purposes. To this respect T2 and T3, expressed:

> "...I am more motivated because I count on your support. Now [when] I am going to plan an English lesson and I can go to ask you how to pronounce this, or what I can do, or what else you would advise me to include… having your support, well, is more...You put more effort to better review the lessons and all that [lesson materials] ..." [sic] (T2PI)

> "I think that by observing you we can also learn. For example, if I would have taught the Baby Shark song I would have played it a thousand times..., but by observing you I realized that you paused it, and repeated it, and mimicked it … I used that song in class and it helped me to review the family members. I think you have many ideas that we can also use." [sic] (T3PI)

During the post interview, T3 mentioned that she liked the idea of using the materials we shared with them during the interventions and T2 showed preference towards adapting them:

> "[I would like to have] all the materials we worked on… For example, the poem about the colors." (T3PI)

> "...We could have done the tale in Spanish and where there was a color, we could paste the color… such color, and we could say the poem and there they could stop, for example, to say blue or red, or sticker color." [sic] (T2PI)

Moreover, post-observation excerpts support these findings. From the first observation, we reported the following:

"T2 starts showing the students some pictures and gives away candies for students to eat; she pastes the images around the classroom and repeats the name of the candy and the color. Then the teacher explains the game rules they will play next." (SCOR2)

"T2 associates the pronunciation of some words in English with a movement." (SCOR2)

"T3 gives photocopies to the students for them to write the body parts they have learned in class; then, she reproduces a video to complement students' activity." (FCOR2)

"T3 says they are going to listen to a song because they know the family members." (SCOR2)

The teachers started to leave behind their translation activities and the dictionary as the main class resources; instead, flashcards, videos, and songs started to become incorporated into their lesson plans. This gives evidence of a shift in their perceptions of language teaching. All the same, they began to elaborate the English lessons in a more detailed and creative way. They put aside pre-communication activities (Bachman, 1990) and began to create activities that had been taught in the task-based teacher development program. Therefore, the program had a positive impact since it allowed the teachers to explore different pedagogical strategies to teach the foreign language.

Linguistic Advancement of Teachers

The participating primary-school teachers had linguistics advancement through the task-based teacher development program. Changes in this area can be demonstrated by contrasting the teachers' language use before and after the implementation of the program.

Before the implementation of the program, the teachers expressed the great need that they had regarding pronunciation. In relation to this, T3 expressed: "It is very difficult for me to pronounce English." T2 also espoused pronunciation as the aspect with more relevance to be learned since "the most important is the pronunciation because sometimes you are too focused on theory, on the structure, all this about writing, but not on the pronunciation." This participant also claimed having no preparation in pronunciation: "I just pronounce the word my best. I pronounce it in a way or another, but I do not know if my pronunciation is accurate."

Pronunciation is understood as "the production of sounds that we use to make meaning" (Yates, 2002, p. 1). The way the teachers usually mispronounced words in English was evident in the classroom observations. For instance, in the third classroom observation, T1 instead of pronouncing *['sneɪk],* the students pronounced *[snac]* for the word *snake*. In the first classroom observation, T1 pronounces the word *shoes,* as it is read in Spanish */'shoes/*. Being one of the teachers' priorities to improve their pronunciation, we included basic aspects of pronunciation in the task-based development program. After this pedagogical intervention, the participants improved two aspects: phonological and phonetic awareness.

As is related on line 12 from the observation 1 that we carried out to T3: "*She tries to have a more accurate pronunciation*." We noted this on that day since the class was about parts of the body and T3 made an effort to pronounce the vocabulary of that lesson. Post-observations are marked with the effort of the teachers to pronounce the words accurately, especially when teaching new vocabulary to students; besides, the use of English as a means of instruction (giving commands and instructions, asking and answering short questions) was more prominent after the intervention process. The following are excerpts from the initial observations:

> *"T1 speaks all the time in Spanish."* (FCOR1)

> *"T2 ask the students; 'what do you eat for breakfast?' in Spanish."* (FCOR1)

In contrast, the following are excerpts from the post-observations:

> "*T3 mentions parts of the face in English."* (FCOR1)

> "*From her desk, T3 calls students one by one and practice[s] pronunciation with them."* (FCOR1) [sic]

At the end of the task-based teacher development program, the teachers achieved linguistics advancement in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary and basic functions of the language such as commanding, asking and answering questions, and paraphrasing explanations briefly. That shows the beginning of a new change in their teaching practices and a new way of gaining self-confidence when teaching English.

Conclusions

This study focused on how the implementation of a task-based teacher development program influences the teaching practices of three rural primary school teachers from a public school in Colombia. In line with Richards and Rodgers (2001), we believe that TBA "enhances the creation of learning tasks that suit the needs of learners and help[s] them master all skills successfully by providing different class exercises to complete their work" (p. 14). Although the participants did not develop linguistic skills to a high proficiency level, their pedagogical practices when teaching English moved from focusing on grammar and vocabulary translation to a more functional, student-centered practice.

Collaborative action research and the task-based program allowed the participants to learn from themselves and learn from each other to benefit their students' learning processes, responding to their institutional and students' immediate needs. Even though rural primary school teachers had different perceptions regarding their experiences in education and English language teaching, they became aware of the importance of aspects such as lesson planning, materials design, and the approaches to teach the language. Not only did they

become aware, but they also proved that theory can and should be taken into practice in the language classroom; showing the gap between theory and practice can be reduced through constant practice. An evident consequence of the teachers' changes in beliefs, paradigms, and practices, is that their students became directly and positively influenced by these new ways of approaching foreign language learning.

We also want to highlight that despite "the use of L1... a common occurrence in foreign language teaching contexts... [that] often receives criticism for its interference with the target language acquisition" (Pan, 2010, p. 87), we see the use of the L1 as a positive aspect in the target language learning; in fact, the use of the target language in the classroom corresponds to an important achievement in our research study. It is a change in the teachers' attitudes and practices that allowed them to develop more active and interesting lessons for their students. We recognize that among the limitations of the proposed task-based teacher development program is the fact that the linguistic skills of the teachers were not fully developed to the level of competence that a basic user of the language should hold; to achieve that purpose, longer periods of intervention and tutoring should take place.

All in all, based on the pieces of evidence of this study, we want to insist on a general call to the Ministry of National Education for the implementation of PD programs in the rural areas of Colombia since they are key and the accessible means to provoke significant changes in English language teaching-learning-assessing processes. Those programs give teachers opportunities to work collaboratively to build and share their knowledge of this discipline, for which it is necessary for them to be in constant monitoring. It is not enough to give isolated training activities to achieve a real improvement in English language teaching classes; teachers involved in these kinds of programs should be willing to provide constant feedback so that the program can have/cause a major impact in the long run.

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Appendix A. Interventions

Intervention No. 1	**Topic: Pronunciation**
Objective: Use the correct pronunciation of vowels.	
Task Cycle	
Pre-Task: R3 taught the pronunciation of vowels and then showed flashcards with vocabulary related to the poem "Mrs. Moon" by Roger McGough. Task: Teachers read the poem with R3's help Planning: Teachers prepare a report about their insights about the poem. Report: Teachers reported their insights about the poem. Language focus: Teachers and R2 analyzed the activity.	
Resources	
T.V., flashcards, markers, laptop, white sheet of paper, pens, pencils, HDMI cable.	
Intervention No. 2	**Topic: School Supplies**
Objective: Identify and use vocabulary related to school supplies and colors.	
Task Cycle	
Pre-task: R2 taught some vocabulary about school supplies and colors. Also, she taught how to build simple sentences such as: *The sharpener is blue.* Task: Teaches read a conversation in which the school supplies vocabulary is contextualized. Planning: Teachers made a conversation following an example given by R2. Report: Teachers read and act out their conversations. Language focus: Teachers and R2 analyzed the activity.	
Resources	
T.V., flashcards, markers, laptop, white sheet of paper, pens, pencils, HDMI cable.	
Intervention No. 3	**Topic: Daily Routines**
Objective: Report daily routines.	
Task Cycle	
Pre-task: R2 taught vocabulary related to the daily routines and created sentences about daily routines based on teachers' daily routines. Task: The teachers practiced daily routines pronunciation and R2 presented an example. Planning: The teachers wrote their daily routines from Monday to Sunday. Report: The teachers reported their daily routines orally. Language focus: Teachers and R2 analyzed the activity.	

Resources	
T.V., flashcards, laptop, HDMI cable.	
Intervention No. 4	**Topic: Living in the countryside**
Objective: Describe a farm animal.	
Task Cycle	
Pre-task: R2 taught vocabulary related to farm animals (nouns and adjectives). Then, she built and wrote short sentences to describe animals. Task: The teachers chose one animal they liked. Planning: The teachers created a puppet of the chosen animal and wrote a description of it. Report: The teachers read the description and showed their puppet. Language focus: The teachers analyzed the activity.	
Resources	
Paper bags, colors, a pair of scissors, glue, flashcards, laptop, T.V., HDMI cable.	
Intervention No. 5	**Topic: Stories**
Objective: Tell stories.	
Task Cycle	
Pre-task: R2 presented and taught the vocabulary from the tale "The farmer and the Beet." Task: R2 read the tale "The farmer and the Beet" with good intonation and pronunciation. Planning: The teachers prepared themselves to retell the tale. Report: The teachers retold the tale. Language focus: The teachers analyzed the activity.	
Resources	
Flashcards, tale "*The Farmer and the Beet"*, laptop, T.V., HDMI cable.	
Intervention No. 6	**Topic: Lesson Planning**
Objective: Identify the parts of the lesson planning (pre, while, post). Plan a two-hour lesson to be implemented and observed by R2.	
Task Cycle	
Pre-task: R2 taught how to plan a lesson. Task: The teachers chose a topic of their preference. Planning: With the topic in mind, a two-hour lesson was planned. They followed the steps given by the R2. Report: The teachers shared their ideas and gave feedback to each other. Language focus: The teachers planned and carried out a lesson, which was then observed by R2.	
Resources	
T.V., flashcards, markers, laptop, white sheet of paper, pens, pencils, HDMI cable.	

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Promoting Dialogic Action through the Expansion of English Language Learners' Communicative Repertoires

Promoviendo la Acción Dialógica a través de la Expansión de los Repertorios Comunicativos de Aprendices de Inglés

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Abstract

This action research study sought to foster dialogic action through the expansion of English language learners' communicative repertoires in a 6th-grade class at a public school in a Colombian town. During the first action research cycle, the restricted concept of communication of the grammar-based syllabus and the competitive and violent interactions between the learners were identified as key issues to address. From a critical perspective of pedagogy and literacy, this study understands that communication in language education should transcend the use of a standard target language, and include multiple linguistic codes and multimodal representative forms. Considering these principles and the issues identified, we designed an action plan for the second action research cycle. This plan consisted of activities that sought to expand English language learners' communicative repertoires and promote reflections on violence and conflict resolution through the analysis and creation of different visual representations. Data were collected through journal entries, semi-structured interviews, and students' artifacts. Findings show how the learners have a diverse and differentiated access to communicative repertoires and how they manipulated available representations to transform meanings. As a conclusion, not enough evidence of the emergence of dialogic action was found since competitiveness and violent

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interactions in the classroom did not significantly change during the intervention. Nonetheless, embracing the learners' communicative practices created spaces for reflection on complex social and moral topics in the classroom, even if their English linguistic resources were still limited.

Keywords: communicative repertoires, critical pedagogy, dialogic action, multiliteracies, multimodality

Resumen

Este artículo reporta una investigación acción que procuró promover la acción dialógica a través de la expansión de los repertorios comunicativos en una clase de sexto grado en una escuela pública de un municipio de Colombia. Durante el primer ciclo de la investigación acción, se identificó la mirada limitada de comunicación del plan de estudios y las interacciones competitivas y violentas en la clase como asuntos que se debían abordar. Desde una perspectiva crítica, este estudio entiende que la comunicación trasciende el uso de una lengua objeto estándar e incluye códigos lingüísticos múltiples, así como representaciones multimodales. Siguiendo estos principios y los problemas identificados, se diseñó un plan de acción para el segundo ciclo investigativo. Este plan consistió en actividades que buscaban expandir los repertorios comunicativos de los aprendices y promover reflexiones acerca de la violencia y la resolución de conflictos. La recolección de datos se realizó por medio de diarios de campo, entrevistas semiestructuradas y artefactos de clase. Los resultados muestran cómo los aprendices tienen un acceso diverso y diferenciado a los repertorios comunicativos, y cómo manipularon las representaciones disponibles para transformar sus significados. En conclusión, no se encontró suficiente evidencia de la emergencia de la acción dialógica dado que la competitividad y las interacciones violentas en el aula no cambiaron significativamente. Sin embargo, incluir las prácticas y repertorios comunicativos de los estudiantes creó espacios para la reflexión sobre temas sociales complejos, a pesar de que los recursos lingüísticos del inglés eran aún limitados entre los aprendices.

Palabras clave: literacidades críticas, multimodalidad, repertorios comunicativos, pedagogía crítica, representaciones visuales

Introduction

From language teaching approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT), communication in the language classroom consists of developing linguistic skills and interaction through the use of the target language. Despite the great acceptance of these teaching methodologies worldwide, different authors have pointed to the restricted idea of communication that represents this model, taking the native speaker communicative patterns as the norm (Kumaravadivelu, 2016), presenting idealized conversational situations (Kramsch, 2008), and disregarding the complex use of linguistic codes and nonverbal resources in communication (Álvarez, 2016; Castro-Garcés, 2021; Losada & Suaza, 2018; Quintana, 2020; Rincón & Clavijo, 2016). In contrast, critical approaches to literacy and post-structuralist perspectives of language have expanded the concept of communication, understanding language and communication not as a set of fixed

rules and patterns but as social practices localized historically and spatially (Canagarajah, 2017, Ortega, 2019).

These new conceptions have sought to cope with a new communication environment mediated by multimedia and multiculturalism by understanding meaning-making as a complex process in which different linguistic and semiotic resources could be used. From this perspective, the English language class is not only concerned with the use of a standard target language; instead, learners' communicative practices encompass the use of learners' mother tongue and other languages, as well as representative forms such as drawings, visuals, memes, videos, and music.

Knowing of the relevance of new modalities of communication in recent years, especially among young learners, I became interested in observing these practices when conducting my teaching practicum in a 6th grade class at a public urban school in Marinilla. This town is located in the department of Antioquia, Colombia, having about 57,000 inhabitants. Through informal conversations with the students at this school, I concluded that they were engaged in diverse communicative practices to interact online and offline both in English and Spanish. Specifically, they used different kinds of audiovisual modalities such as gaming and TV series. I also noticed that regular class activities and the grammar-centered English language school syllabi were not incorporating these modalities and interests. That is why, when I started planning and teaching English language lessons, I decided to incorporate modalities from the online world with which the students were familiar such as memes, emojis, and chats.

Despite the prominence of these new forms of communication, most language education studies have drawn on a restricted concept of communication which focuses on the development of learners' communicative competence or particular linguistic skills. In Colombia, some studies have focused on methodologies such as project-based learning (Vaca & Gómez, 2017) or TBLT (Buitrago, 2016; Peña & Onatra, 2009), authentic materials and activities (Herazo, 2010; Ramírez & Artunduaga, 2018), and games (Urrutia & Vega, 2010). Even if these studies report improvements in language learners' communicative competence, they seem to have focused on a particular model of conversational and authentic communication that privileges oral production and functional exchanges in real-life situations, disregarding other communicative practices that could have taken place in the classroom.

In contrast, studies from emergent lines of inquiry in Colombia have drawn on critical and post-structuralist perspectives seeking to understand and incorporate different modalities of language classes at public schools. Specifically, Ortega (2019) documented a teacher's pedagogical experience in which language learners were encouraged to use both English and their mother tongue in the classroom, validating their linguistic and cultural repertoires.

According to the author, the diversity of linguistic repertoires in the class allowed learners to reflect on their realities and negotiate power relationships in the classroom. Also, in an action research study, Rincón and Clavijo (2016) promoted the creation of multimodal texts such as blogs and videos as a way for learners to inquire about their communities. This experience showed that learners could communicate using different modalities and English while they reflected on community issues. Additionally, a number of studies have been framed within multiliteracy principles to understand connectivity and hypermediality (Quintana, 2020), video-mediated listening activities (Losada & Suaza, 2018) and learners' meaning-making of their social realities (Castro-Garcés, 2021).

Other studies have concentrated on how critical pedagogy could promote not only the acquisition of linguistic repertoires but also dialogue, collaboration, and reflection in the English language class (Contreras & Chapetón, 2016; Contreras & Chapetón, 2017; Echeverri & Pérez, 2014). For instance, in a collaborative action research project, Ortega (2018) describes the implementation of lessons that addressed bullying and violence at the school. This experience enabled the learners to be conscious of the normalized violence there and collaborate to take concrete actions. These critical-oriented studies show an emergent interest in expanding the view of communication in Colombian language classrooms. Nevertheless, further exploring the new dynamics of meaning-making in language education is necessary as well as incorporating multimodal communication in curricula and teaching materials (Álvarez, 2016).

In addition to the necessity of expanding the modalities of communication in my classes, as I continued teaching, I observed several issues of social interaction among the students. Specifically, class activities tended to be individual and a competitive environment was enhanced. Thus, the learners were constantly comparing their grades when working in groups, low-achiever students were rejected, and conflicts frequently arose among them. In those cases, instead of dialogue, the students resorted to violent physical and verbal interactions. Therefore, to face those problematic interactions, and inspired by the previously mentioned studies, I wondered how drawings, memes, comics, or emojis could enable the students to learn a new language, and to communicate, cooperate, and relate peacefully.

In particular, I decided to design an action plan considering the diversity of the learners' communicative practices and the problematic ways in which they interacted. Specifically, I designed a series of activities that sought to address violence explicitly and promote cooperation and reflection among the learners through the use of modalities of representation such as comics, infographics, collages, or pictures. To implement these activities, I sought to (1) understand and incorporate the learners' communicative practices and repertoires in the English language class, (2) expand their communicative repertoires, (3) generate reflections on violence and conflict resolution, and (4) promote dialogue and cooperation among them. In light of these aims, the action research project followed this research question: How

can one foster dialogic action through the expansion of language learners' communicative repertoires?

Theoretical Framework

In this section, I present the theoretical approaches and concepts that illuminate this study. In the first place, I briefly define the traditional concept of communication in language education, outline a number of criticisms of this concept and present a view of communication as a situated social practice. Then, I describe how traditional views could be broadened from a critical and post-structuralist perspective of language and education. Finally, from a critical pedagogy, I introduce the concept of dialogic action which goes beyond communication as a mere linguistic exchange, and understands communication as an opportunity to reflect, deliberate, and transform society.

Limitations of Communication as Competence

"Communicative" is a label that has become commonplace in language education. From the 1980's, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become a dominant force that has shaped every aspect of language pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). It continues to exercise an undeniable force in many contexts, including Colombia, where its principles have been adopted in different linguistic policies (MEN, 2006) through the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001). Despite the great acceptance of CLT, a number of scholars have pointed to the restricted concept that this model conveys. On the one hand, this theory is framed in a center-based model of communication, taking the native speaker's communicative patterns as the reference (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). On the other hand, there is a tendency to present idealized communication situations that disregard power relationships, and clearly ignore the asymmetries of power between different subjects and cultural groups. As stated by Kramsch (2008):

> The prototypical communicative exchange found in foreign language textbooks usually includes two or three interlocutors, who all conduct the interaction in the same standard (target) language, all agree on what the purpose of the exchange is and what constitutes a culturally appropriate topic of conversation, all have equal speaking rights and opportunities. (p. 390)

In other words, since communicative competence is defined as an abstract set of abilities, the assumed neutrality of language leads to a disregard for the topics of the conversation and the contents that are taught through language in CLT. Furthermore, CLT only contemplates nonverbal communication as a complement of verbal communication, taking individual

languages as separate entities with clear borders with respect to other languages and semiotic modalities.

Towards a Broader Concept of Communication

In the last two decades, post-structuralist theorizations of language have emerged in the field of critical applied linguistics and have dramatically expanded the concept of communication in various ways. From these conceptions, language is no longer conceived as an abstract competence placed in the speaker's mind, but as a social practice that is localized historically and spatially (Canagarajah, 2017). Many concepts such as multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), translingual practices (Canagajarah, 2017) and translanguaging (Pennycook, 2017) have created a new paradigm in which the plurality, multiplicity, and hybridity of language is highlighted (Kubota, 2014). Hence, this new understanding of language and communication has many implications for language education. Specifically, the fluid and decentralized nature of linguistic resources imply that languages are not statically framed in individuals, communities, or territories. On the contrary, grammars and meanings emerge and are negotiated in localized communicative practices (Canagarajah, 2017). Furthermore, the borders between different languages and semiotic modes are questioned and rather understood as intrinsic parts of communicative practices that are articulated in particular situations and moments (Pennycook, 2017).

Another way in which communicative repertoires have been expanded is by understanding communication beyond verbal interaction and including other modalities of representation. In this sense, critical conceptions of literacy have sought to cope with the new communication environment brought about by social realities such as multiculturalism, multilingualism, and the extended use of information and communication technologies (Álvarez, 2016; Quintana, 2020). One of these approaches is *multiliteracies* that theorizes on how new communication practices draw upon different modes of representation or modalities as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Modalities of Representation and Examples. Adapted from Cope and Kalantzis (2009)

Modality	Examples
Written language	Handwriting, printed, on screen
Oral language	Live or recorded speech
Visual representation	Still or moving image, sculpture, craft

Modality	Examples
Audio representation	Music, ambient sounds, noises
Tactile representation	Touch, smell, taste, physical contact
Gestural representation	Movements of the hands and arms, expressions of the face
Spatial representation	Interpersonal distance, architecture, landscape

To understand how communication and meaning-making occur in any of these semiotic modalities, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) propose the concept of *design*. From this conceptualization, *designs* are both a structure and a process of creation. That is to say, in any of the modes described above, there could be (1) *available designs* as found in representational forms, (2) *designs*, as the appropriation and use of available designs, and (3) *redesigns* as the transformation of the world and people through the act of designing.

In conclusion, from this broader perspective of communication, language education should not be restricted to developing linguistic skills and conversational interaction in a standard target language. On the contrary, all the linguistic repertoires and representation modalities that learners bring to the class should be valued and considered. The purpose of language teaching should be to expand those repertoires to different linguistic and representational modalities, allowing the learners to participate in society, and exercise the transformative power of communication.

Dialogic Action: Communication for Transformation

To understand the transformative power of communication in the context of education I drew on the concept of Dialogic Action proposed by Freire (2018). Apart from an expansion of the concept of communication from a linguistic point of view, consideration of the contents, the roles, and the purposes of communicative practices in language education is necessary. In this sense, avoiding the restriction of the role of communication in language education to the use of linguistic resources is paramount to understand how education in general could be considered as a process of communication. From critical pedagogy, education is conceived as a process of dialogue (Freire, 2018) in which different cultural elements are brought to the conversation between the participants in the educational setting. From this perspective, the ultimate purpose of dialogue is the emancipation of the oppressed (Freire, 2018). In that sense, from critical literacies, language education should go beyond the acquisition of the ability to exchange information through the encoding and decoding of different modalities (Álvarez, 2016; Castro-Garcés, 2021; Losada & Suaza, 2018; Quintana, 2020; Rincón & Clavijo, 2016); furthermore, communicative repertoires should

serve the purpose of critically analyzing the unjust contexts and realities of language learners to transform them.

From a Freirian perspective, dialogic action is defined as a contra hegemonic force that seeks to overcome antidialogical forces, by creating public spaces for participation and deliberated action. Accordingly, for Giroux (2001), schools should constitute democratic public spheres where learners can exercise discussion and participation in order to constantly question the hegemonic assumptions in society. By doing so, dialogic action allows the oppressed to emancipate themselves through trust, cooperation for transformation, union for liberation, organization, and systematic and deliberate action (Freire, 2018). Dialogic action allows overcoming the oppressive forces of antidialogical action that prevent the humanization of peoples, by neglecting their right to use the word to construct their own realities, and dividing oppressed peoples through individualism, manipulation, and cultural invasion (Contreras & Chapetón, 2016; Contreras & Chapetón, 2017; Echeverri & Pérez, 2014).

Method

This study was framed on the principles of qualitative research since it aimed at understanding a particular phenomenon in its context from the perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, this project followed an action research design as it intended to be a self-reflective, critical, and systematic process of classroom inquiry about my own practices as a teacher (Burns, 2009). This process followed the action research cycle steps proposed by Mills (2011), namely, (1) identifying an area of focus, (2) collecting data, (3) analyzing and interpreting data, and (4) developing an action plan. This project consisted of two complete cycles that took place during my teaching practicum year. During the first semester, I worked as an assistant teacher and identified a focus for the study, collected and analyzed data, and designed an action plan to address the identified issues. In the second semester, I was in charge of teaching accompanied by a cooperating teacher. In this cycle, I implemented the action plan, collected, interpreted data, and reported research findings.

Participants

During the first semester, I conducted my practicum with a sixth-grade class of 34 students. In the second semester, I implemented the actions with a different group of 35 sixth-grade learners. In both groups, the students ranged from 11 to 14 years old, most of them belonging to middle and low socio-economic strata. Some of them came from different regions of Colombia as well as there were some Venezuelan migrants. As I was conducting my undergraduate practicum in this context, the English language teacher also participated in the class and the research project by being in the class and providing constant feedback

to me. A consent form was signed by all the parents of the learners who participated in the interviews, or provided class artifacts as part of the data collection. In this report, their identities have been protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Action Plan

After having observed and taught the English language class for a semester, I proposed the following actions to be implemented during 10 sessions, one weekly, of 2 hours each. Their main purpose consisted of promoting dialogic action through the expansion of language learners' communicative repertoires. What is more, I decided to address issues of violence explicitly, as there were recurrent situations that I observed at the institution. Additionally, I sought to do so through the creation of visual representations as they were one of the communication modalities with which the students were most familiar. I planned to conduct four do-it-yourself workshops and a collaborative project. In groups, the students were going to work on a project in which they could reflect on violent situations in the media, their neighborhoods, or the school, by both analyzing visual representations and creating a visual design to present a reflection around violent situations in their daily lives (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Action Plan to Address Issues of Violence Using Visual Modalities

Modeling			
Week	**Action**	**Purpose**	**Materials**
1	Learners survey each other about media preferences	Understand learners' communicative practices	Survey model
2	Analyzing different formats of visual representations	Model different formats learners could use to represent: poster, collage, infographic, and flyer.	A model of each visual design
3	Analyzing photographs about different types of material and symbolic violence	Learners choose a type of violence to address in their project	Eight photographs depicting material and symbolic violence
Do-it-yourself Workshops			
4	Using emojis to show emotions in the classroom	Talk about feelings in the class	Cardboard, markers and paint

Week	Action	Purpose	Materials
5	Analyzing a cartoon movie about superheroes	Analyzing violence in media	A superhero short film
6	Analyzing and creating memes	Recognizing physical and verbal violence	Collection of memes depicting violence
7	Creating a bubble dialogue	Reflecting about bullying and cyberbullying	Paper and markers
Project Work			
8	In teams, collecting information for a visual design about a violent situation in their context	Create visual representations	Cameras, smartphones, internet connection
9	Learners create their visual design		
10	Final presentation in an institutional public space	Share learners' reflections with the school community	Visual representations created by learners

Implementation of Actions

During the first weeks of this intervention, I had to adapt my action plan in order to fulfill the requirements of the official grammar-centered syllabus of the school. After the 5th week of the intervention, a sanitary emergency was declared in Colombia as a consequence of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is why all the students went on a break for a month and the sessions were resumed after being redesigned to be conducted through a distance-learning modality. I redesigned the activities for the students to develop independently. I sent instructions via instant messaging. In several cases, I sent physical copies to the students that did not have access to internet connection at home. The distance modality posed many challenges for the implementation of the actions because several students had no access to internet connection, which made communication with them so difficult. Furthermore, developing collaborative work was hardly possible; thus, I was unable to observe the students' interactions during the final weeks of the intervention.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study included different sources of data that were collected throughout the process from the different student participants and the institution. I kept a journal of each of the sessions (36 entries) in which I took notes about the students' interactions during the session,

their use of language, and the different forms of communication during the development of the activities. Additionally, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with a number of the students; I purposefully selected them because their use of communicative resources was illustrative regarding theoretical categories such as mode of communication, design, and dialogue (Creswell, 2012). Following the same criteria, I gathered 10 students' artifacts from three different do-it-yourself workshops containing visual representations and texts. Most data collection was carried out at the school, but after the confinement, a number of artifacts were scanned and sent by students via instant messaging, and several interviews were conducted through video conferences or telephone calls.

The process of data analysis was both inductive and deductive since I defined pre-established categories based on theoretical concepts such as multimodality, design, and dialogic action; I also used emergent categories from data as I considered them relevant regarding the research question. For example, excerpts from journal entries and interviews were categorized as violent interactions, media influence in learners' communication, and differential access to communicative resources. For journals, class artifacts, and learners' interviews, I applied Miles and Huberman's (1994) process of coding and categorization of data assisted by a software called QualCoder (Curtain, 2020). I applied the process of coding to journals and learners' interviews after having read them carefully. I also purposefully selected several class artifacts according to theoretical concepts and coded them following the pre-established categories. After coding and categorization, I displayed the emergent codes and categories visually to identify relationships among them.

Findings

The data analysis described above allowed me to conclude that enabling learners to use different communicative repertoires and express themselves created spaces for the reflection and transformation of meanings about their realities, even if there is not enough evidence of the emergence of dialogic action among them. Hence, in this section, I present the findings that emerged during data analysis: (1) Learners Communicative Repertoires: Diversity and Difference, (2) Playing around with Forms and Transforming Meanings; and (3) Swimming Upstream: Keeping Relationships among Learners Untouched at School.

Learners' Communicative Repertoires: Diversity and Difference

One of the aims of this study was to understand and incorporate the language learners' communicative practices and repertoires in the class. In this section, I describe how the learners' communicative repertoires and practices are as diverse as their interests and cultural backgrounds and how they have differential access to these resources.

Diverse Communicative Practices and Repertoires

From the analysis of collected data, I could identify a great diversity among the learners in terms of age, gender, socioeconomic background, and geographic origin. This diversity was also reflected in a varied list of communicative repertoires and interests. In particular, during the interviews and class activities, the learners showed familiarity with different media forms including social networks, instant messaging, video games, video streaming platforms, music, films, and television. Despite this wide range of communicative practices in the group, individual learners tended to concentrate on particular formats of communication and personal interests. For example, various learners reported being interested in rap music, YouTubers, anime, and gaming. When I asked one of them about his preferred ways of expression, he answered: "I like to sing mentally (...) the music that I like (...) I like heavy metal and rap music and so on"[2] (Interview with Santiago 03/09/2019).

Despite this diversity, an element was common to most of them, namely, the visual modality. According to Kress (2003), this predominance of visual representation is explained by the transition from the page to the screen as the dominant site of representation, where the logic of the image dominates semiotic organization of different texts. In this vein, the learners not only reported being acquainted with visual representations, but they also were more engaged during activities involving reading and creating visual representations.

I could also identify the use of different linguistic resources among the learners. During the observations, I noticed that Spanish was used as the language of interaction and instruction, and English was used mainly in rehearsed classroom routines. Nevertheless, outside the classroom, a few learners reported using words from English in their interactions in instant messaging, listening to music, watching videos, and interacting with English speaking people through video games: "I have an Xbox, so I have some friends that speak English, so I speak with them to learn" (Interview with Andrés, 03/09/2019).

From the previous analysis, apparently, the diversity in the learners' communicative repertoires and practices comes not only from the use of English and Spanish in the classroom but also from their use of different tools and media in online and offline environments. As reported by Quintana (2020), the use of technological devices in the class allowed learners to produce multimodal texts by hybridizing the digital and the analogous.

Differential Access to Communicative Repertoires

The differential access to material resources emerged as one of the factors that could explain the differences in the learners' communicative repertoires. This was particularly

[2] All the excerpts were translated from Spanish for publication purposes.

evident during the development of the activities on a distance learning modality due to the pandemic. As communication with several learners was limited because of their lack of access to the internet, or technological devices, they needed to work on paper, and in some cases I was unable to receive their work.

In the two interviews I conducted at the end of the implementation, apparently, the differences in the access to material resources such as internet connection or electronic devices had an impact in the communicative repertoires to which the learners had access. One of the learners without an internet connection at home reported using his dictionary to look up words when working at home. When asked about internet connection at home, he replied that he usually rented a computer in a stationary store, as many students in Colombia do: "I don't, [have a computer] so I go to a stationary store to look up for the answer"[3] (Interview with Juan 11/05/2020).

On the contrary, another learner manifested having a cellphone, a computer, and internet connection at home. This learner also expressed that when working on the activities: "We do research, or we also have a lot of books, or sometimes the things that mom knows"[1] (Interview with Tomás 12/05/2020). He usually looked up vocabulary on an online translator and had studied English and French in his former private school. The use of linguistic repertoires was also reflected in the work of a number of learners, who have had access to English language courses in private settings or at their former public schools in which they were able to transcend simple formulaic sentences (see Figure 2 below) to present more elaborated ideas (see Figure 3 below).

The contrast between these two cases shows how the material access to resources plays a role in the symbolic access to differentiated communicative repertoires. Following Janks (2010), "access to discourse is highly regulated and that system of exclusion produces distinctions which privilege those who get through the discourse gates" (p. 133). In this sense, this author points to the way different discourses, literacies, and linguistic codes are differentiated, in the sense that they have different statuses. At the same time, they are differentiating in the sense that they classify subjects according to the discourses to which they have access.

Playing around with Forms and Transforming Meanings

The implementation of the action plan sought to embrace and expand learners' communicative repertoires and generate reflections on violence and conflict resolution in the class. In this section, I explore how embracing those practices and resources in the English

[3] In the town of the study, stationary stores or paper supply stores often rent out computers with internet connections to the public on an hourly basis.

language class created spaces for the learners to manipulate various forms of representation, engage in reflections, and transform meanings.

Using and Breaking Molds

When manipulating the available designs introduced in the lessons, there were various degrees of transformation both in the linguistic forms and in the visual representations. When I presented linguistic and multimodal designs to the students, they tended to manipulate and transform them in different ways. According to the data, I could identify that these differences could be attributed to some extent to the different attitudes towards the English language and the diverse and differential communicative resources of the learners.

On the one hand, I could observe how various learners' attitudes and beliefs about the English language did not favor their ability to use the language creatively. Since the class and the official syllabus focused on grammar, they tended to think of language as a fixed set of rules, and thus were fearful of committing mistakes. On the other hand, the differential communicative repertoires of the learners could explain how a number of them were attached to the linguistic models presented in class, while others were able to make more significant transformations to those designs by using more complex grammatical structures to express their ideas.

Nonetheless, the fidelity to the available design, or its redesign, was also evident when working with visual representations. In one of the do-it-yourself workshops, I presented the learners with Marvel superheroes and asked them to create their own superheroes. Different learners created their own versions of Marvel superheroes; others created superheroes that consistently kept their mainstream characteristics; commonly, the learners created more human and close versions of superheroes. When asked about the process of creation, one learner replied that he "was inspired by his pet and also by Dragon Ball, or other movies that I have watched with my cousin, for example Batman, Superman, or movies that we have like the Justice League"[1] (Interview with Tomás 12/05/2020). As explained by Dovchin, Pennycook, and Sultana (2018), the engagement with different forms of popular culture not only provides content to the conversations but also voices and linguistic resources. In this line, Losada and Suaza (2018) also point to the role the media play in learners' understanding of different cultures and contexts.

With their limited English linguistic resources, some of the learners were prevented from expressing complex ideas; however, in some cases, they were able to use visual representations or Spanish to do so. For instance, after reading a comic about bullying in English, one of the learners wrote the following reflection in Spanish: "The reflection could be that sometimes problems could be solved with a smile and talking, we cannot discriminate [against] other people, and maybe give a hand to those who need it can help us find a new

friend"[1] (Class artifact 18/05/2020). This is consistent with the experience of Janks (2010) in a primary school third level class in a multilingual context in South Africa, where she found that the limited linguistic ability of children "limits what can be said" (p. 131), and that they could convey more meaning by using visual representations.

Transforming Meanings

The analysis of different class artifacts allowed me to confirm that the redesign of available visual and linguistic representations served the purpose of transforming the meanings conveyed in those representations. In several cases, the available designs that were presented in class were transformed in order to express facts about the learners' realities. For example, one learner created a more human superhero that could help save lives during the Covid-19 pandemic (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. A Learner Presents a Medical Doctor as a Superhero
Note. "Hi, I'm super doctor, my job is to save people with covid 19" (Class artifact 19/05/2020)

Sharing these visual representations with the class was an interesting exercise as other learners started creating new transformations to this design. A few learners made modifications in order to create something they could identify with. Others reported having imagined themselves as superheroes in the process of creation of their superhero. One of them created a version of a doctor with whom she could identify and named her "*doctora*" in Spanish, which allowed her to make her gender explicit (see Figure 2 below).

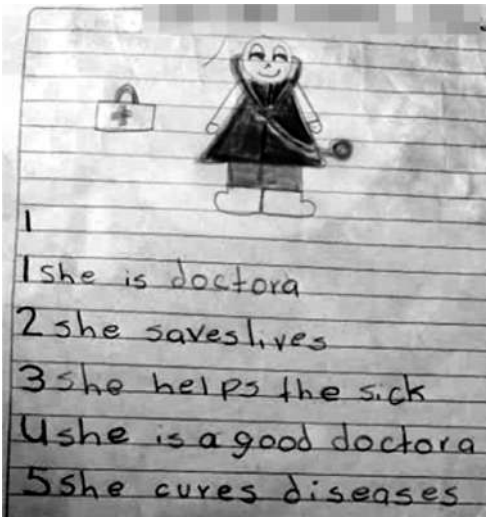

Figure 2. A Learner Creates a Female Doctor
Note. "1 she is doctora / 2 She saves lives / 3 she helps the sick / 4 she is a good doctora / 5 she cures diseases" (Class artifact 19/05/2020).

In other cases, these transformations took place in order to present more complex reflections using Spanish or English. One learner created a short comic story in which she compared Superman with a doctor, and presented doctors as superheroes explicitly with words (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3. A Learners' Complex Reflection Using Visual Modality
Note. "hi my name is tom / hi my name is superman and i am a superhero / i am doctor / unbelievable so you are the true superhero" (Class artifact 19/05/2020).

The way the learners transformed their designs in order to convey new meanings shows how they were reflecting on their realities. This created a space of dialogue that involved different voices such as mine as their teacher, media's, and the learners' themselves. In several cases, this dialogue implied a critical reflection on the learners' realities in the sense that they were able to express facts about their lives, challenge the messages of mainstream media, and create new meanings. Even if this kind of dialogue did not always take place, these examples show how the creation of spaces for the learners to play with linguistic and visual designs creatively allowed them to express their reflections.

Swimming Upstream: Keeping Relationships among Learners Untouched at School

One of the aims of this project was to promote dialogue and cooperation among the learners, and transform their violent and competitive relationships. The classroom management strategies sought to foster group work, listening, and participation during the lessons. However, during the implementation of a distance learning modality, I was unable to observe these interactions during an important part of the intervention. Furthermore, during the time of quarantine, the interactions among the learners were considerably reduced. In one of the final interviews with them, I asked one about his contact with their partners: "Well, with my partners I don't [have any contact], just with one, that I have on my father's Whatsapp"[1] (Interview with Juan 11/05/2020). Nonetheless, during the weeks I conducted the actions at school, the interactions I had observed did not change significantly. Even if the classroom management strategies helped with listening during certain activities, and lessened violent interactions, they continued to be recurrent during the time I carried out the action plan. This contrasts with the experience of Contreras and Chapetón (2016), where they were able to foster students' interaction and cooperative learning from a critical dialogical perspective by challenging traditional teaching practices.

In this sense, although spaces for dialogue, reflection, and transformations of meaning were created, dialogic action was not reflected in a change of the learners' attitudes and their relationships in the classroom. Apart from their own limitations of this intervention, this could be due to the fact that antidialogical action exercises a pervasive force that explicitly and implicitly preserves the relations of oppression in society (Freire, 2018). Different authors in critical pedagogy (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2001) have pointed to the way schools play a role in the production and reproduction of social relations of power in society through the norms and values that are implicitly taught and that legitimate the hierarchical power relations in society (Apple, 2004). In that sense, the school practices that I observed, such as individual assessment, the segmentation of knowledge, and the promotion of competition among learners, exercise a constant force that could prevent dialogic action from taking place. Nevertheless, following Giroux (2001), this force is not deterministic and could be

resisted if we, as teachers, construct an emancipatory curriculum that creates spaces for dialogue in which all the participants' voices can be heard.

Conclusions

This action research project aimed at promoting dialogic action through the expansion of language learners' communicative repertoires. After the process of data collection and analysis, I can say that the expansion of communicative repertoires in the English language class favored the creation of spaces for dialogue, reflection, and transformation of meanings around the participating learners' realities. Nevertheless, there is not sufficient evidence of the emergence of dialogic action, since the characteristics of antidialogical action of violent interactions and competitiveness did not significantly change during the intervention.

The findings of this study present multiple implications and challenges for language education in Colombia, where the heterogeneity of learners' communicative repertoires could be explained by both a great cultural diversity and wide social and economic disparities. Findings point to the need to embrace learners' communicative practices and repertoires in language education. This implies opening spaces for the modalities of communication that learners use, and to bring all those voices to a broader conversation in the class.

This study also challenges two assumptions that have prevented language educators and curriculum designers from implementing critical literacies in language education. Firstly, the segmentation of linguistic codes has promoted the idea that the mother tongue should be banned from the English class (Phillipson, 1992; Ortega, 2019), and that the limited linguistic resources students have could prevent reflection about complex social and moral issues in the English class (Lau, 2012). Secondly, the segmentation of language from other forms of communication has compartmentalized modes of representation in different subjects in the school curriculum (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

The impact of this action research project was limited by different factors. The time constraints of the class and the need to cover the grammatical contents in the official syllabus provided limited space for conducting just a few of the planned activities. The school resources and my lack of knowledge did not allow me to work with music, audiovisual, kinesthetic, or other representational forms. Additionally, implementing the distance learning modality after the Covid-19 outbreak was challenging since providing explanations and feedback to the learners was not always possible due to their limited access to internet connection.

Finally, this study also opened the landscape for new teaching and research initiatives. New lines of inquiry should consider including other modalities of representation, the work on cross-curricular projects, and more sustained interventions and studies that could have a greater impact on the actions and transformation of learners' realities.

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Speaking in Worlds of Adventure: Tabletop Roleplaying Games within the EFL Classroom

Hablando en Mundos de Aventura: Juegos de Rol de Mesa en el Aula de EFL

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Abstract

Fostering spoken communication in a foreign language classroom is not an easy task. With that in mind, this paper explores a proposal to motivate students' L2 oral communication through the practice of narrative games called tabletop roleplaying games adapted as task-based activities. It implied an action research process in which the teacher-researcher with his students reflected and intervened on the identified problematic situation: Lack of oral communication in L2. In that sense, it started with a diagnostic test that showed the current state of verbal communication in L2 in a Colombian rural public school. Next, the teacher-researcher chose to appeal to the gamification of the classroom along with the adoption of a task-based framework to activity design aiming to improve students' motivation to take the risk of communicating in L2. The teacher-researcher applied sets of activities that progressed from traditional role-play to a tabletop roleplaying game. In accordance, video

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recordings, narratives, artifacts collections, and semi-structured interviews were essential to collect data. Afterward, the teacher-researcher analyzed the data with an emic approach to identify patterns in the information that uncovered the categories and subcategories of information. Consequently, the teacher-researcher concluded that the students feel better motivated using L2 if the learning environment offers opportunities for social interaction, collaborative work, and scaffolding in task-based exercises embedded in a fictional world game.

Keywords: gamification, motivation, oral communication, tabletop roleplaying games, task-based activities

Resumen

Fomentar la comunicación oral en un aula de lenguas extranjeras no es tarea fácil. Con eso en mente, este artículo explora una propuesta para motivar la comunicación oral en L2 por medio de la práctica de juegos narrativos llamados juegos de rol de mesa adaptados como actividades basadas en tareas. Esto implicó un proceso de investigación-acción en el que el docente-investigador con sus alumnos reflexionó e intervino sobre la situación problemática identificada: Falta de comunicación oral en L2. En ese sentido, se inició con una prueba diagnóstica que mostró el estado de la comunicación oral en L2 en una escuela oficial rural colombiana. A continuación, el docente-investigador optó por apelar a la ludificación del aula junto con la adopción de un marco basado en tareas con el objetivo de mejorar la motivación de los estudiantes a tomar el riesgo de comunicarse en L2. El docente-investigador implementó conjuntos de actividades que progresaron de juegos de roles tradicionales a juegos de rol de mesa en el aula. De acuerdo con ello, la grabación de video, narrativas, la recolección de artefactos y entrevistas semi-estructuradas fueron esenciales para recopilar datos. Posteriormente, el docente-investigador analizó los datos con un enfoque émico para identificar patrones en la información que develó las categorías y subcategorías de información. En consecuencia, el docente-investigador concluyó que los estudiantes se sienten mejor motivados para usar L2 si el entorno de aprendizaje ofrece oportunidades para la interacción social, el trabajo colaborativo y el andamiaje en ejercicios basados en tareas en el marco de un juego de mundo ficticio.

Palabras clave: actividades basadas en tareas, comunicación oral, ludificación, motivación, juegos de rol de mesa

Introduction

English over time has become one of the most used languages around the world thanks to its political and cultural power and evident influence in technology, scientific advancements, communication, and education (Christiansen, 2015; Martin-Rubió, 2018). As a consequence, the importance of English as an international language has made it a necessary subject in all Colombian schools (MEN, 2016). Nevertheless, in many EFL classrooms around the world, it has been hard to help students achieve successful/proficient oral communication in L2 (Coşkun, 2016; Rivera, 2010; Vaca & Gómez, 2017; Vargas, 2015).

Therefore, teachers usually look to adopt and implement strategies that facilitate the speaking process and raise the students' pleasure of talking regarding their L2 proficiency level, needs, expectations, and learning styles. In that vein, I, as a teacher-researcher, proposed the use of tabletop roleplaying game mechanics (Grouling, 2010; Reinhold, 2018) to present engaging and fun task-based activities focused on oral communication in an L2 (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2018).

With than in mind, I carried out this action research proposal in a rural school setting where I was an English as a foreign language teacher. The school was a public, rural institution in Icononzo, a town in the department of Tolima, Colombia, where students showed great difficulties expressing their ideas orally and spontaneously in English, as the target L2.

In respect to that matter, this research question emerged: How does the application of tabletop roleplaying games (TRPGs), used as task-based activities, give evidence concerning the development of speaking English as a foreign language process?

Accordingly, this research question proposal followed these research objectives: First, to describe how to use TRPGs as task-based activities. Second, to evidence how TRPGs could affect seventh graders' EFL speaking development if used as gamified task-based activities. Finally, to explore TRPGs as an alternative to impact the EFL classroom learning environment and motivation.

Eventually, this action research study could be helpful for those teachers who look for strategies to raise their students' motivation to communicate in L2 intervening in their EFL classroom environment through gamification. As such, a study about the use of TRPGs in an EFL classroom could identify possible alternatives to face barriers towards oral activities. Thus, teachers might find the study useful to modify interactive exercises in classrooms different from TRPGs that have similarities; for example, sketches, performances, monologues, role-plays, and simulations (Scrivener, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

Gamification

Nowadays, the requirement/necessity of motivating students has led to a search for strategies that involve games as a way of making students feel better at learning. Cassie (2016) points out that many professionals have looked for answers in game-based education, using games designed for curricula and lesson integration. However, others are not focused on specific games but in-game mechanics to modify the classroom environment, a strategy better known as "gamification" (Cassie 2016; Crocco, 2016; Woods 2016). Montoya and Uribe (2016) explain that gamification implies adopting game mechanics to improve students'

motivation to work on a task. Hence, the focus of the exercise becomes the learning objective rather than the recreational nature of a game. It is necessary to keep it in mind because teachers must plan gamified activities thinking first of the pedagogical value of such exercise, setting a clear learning objective, but without forgetting the enjoyment of the task.

Thus, a gamified classroom looks for motivating students through game mechanics like achievement systems, experience points, and skill trees (Cassie, 2016). For example, Crocco (2016) states that gamification can be of great use in the classroom if roleplaying games' mechanics are adapted. For example, he explains that grades can be taken as experience points and that record sheets are good ways of keeping track of progress (p. 285).

Perdomo and Rojas (2019) also reflected on gamification as a pedagogical tool in a Colombian context. Accordingly, they found it positive to offer students the opportunity of getting immediate feedback through the implementation of gamified activities where students can earn badges, tokens, and levels that indicate their progress. However, they highlight that it is necessary to equilibrate both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation proposing satisfactory and meaningful "tasks" for the student. While experience points, badges, and levels give good extrinsic motivation, it is essential to foster feelings of self-realization and achievement to strengthen students' intrinsic motivation.

Finally, to comprehend why gamification works, Woods (2016) states that gamification requires the understanding that learning is always happening with any activity, and in that case, it is much better if that activity is fun and engaging. Hence, the idea behind gamification is that what makes players play is not only aimed at games but can be adopted in different contexts to promote learning by participating in communities of practice and fun (Woods, 2016).

Tabletop Roleplaying Games – TRPGs

Gaming mechanics, context, and challenges are elements common to TRPGs. These are leisure activities developed around 1970 as a variant of board wargames but focused on storytelling (Rocha, 2018; Grouling, 2010; Reinhold, 2018). Likewise, they are cooperative games with clear rules and goals to exert control over the narrative exercise wherein there are no losers (Ferreira & Carvalho, 2013, p. 81).

In that sense, TRPGs are a form of storytelling activity that makes use of the idea of taking roles similar to the 'role-play' classroom activity. Therefore, TRPGs offer learners the opportunity to adopt fictional roles in non-threatening environments (Gower et al., 2005; Scrivener, 2005; Mackey & Gass, 2005). Moreover, these games have the particularity that the players' interactions are unscripted and many situations in the game can change due to players decisions or bad luck, consequently, affecting the story being told.

To summarize, these games have the following characteristics: First, they are collaborative tabletop storytelling games, contrary to competitive games. There are two types of players: character players, who assume the roles of main characters, and the game master (or storyteller), who adopts the rest of the secondary characters and antagonists in the story. Second, people can find TRPGs comercially in sets of books that give details and images of landscapes, people, politics, ecology, artifacts, and creatures about the universe proposed for the game. Third, they offer systems to determine the possibility of succeeding or failing narrative actions, usually through statistics, simple mathematics calculi, and polyhedral dice. Fourth, they stem heavily from pop culture tropes (Mackay, 2001; Crocco, 2016).

Figure 1. Examples of Tabletop Roleplaying Games
Note. Cthulhutech (n.d.) is a registered trademark of Wildfire Publishing; The Expanse Roleplaying game (2019) is a registered trademark of Green Ronin Publishing; and Star Wars Force and Destiny Roleplaying Game (n.d.) is a registered trademark of Fantasy Flight Games. Source: The photograph is my own elaboration.

In that regard, a number of authors have come to reflecting on TRPGs as a strategy for the EFL classroom. For instance, Woods (2016) presented an essay about TRPGs as a viable methodology for instruction in classrooms thanks to the possibility of creating a learning environment that fosters agency and emotional engagement in the process. In that vein, he highlights that TRPGs directly affect students' socialization skills and, as such, it strengthens language production. Moreover, Rocha (2018) carried out a project that gives evidence of

TRPGs' effectiveness in answering students' lack of interest, a common problem in EFL classrooms. Also, he points out that TRPGs have an innate task-based nature that teachers could make the most of. Poovey (2014) presented in the Wake Forest University Magazine the experience of a Latin language teacher that adapted TRPG mechanics to create fictional situations wherein students could practice Latin. Another research work in a Brazilian medical program (Ferreira & Carvalho, 2013), although not an EFL study, showed that TRPG activities improve students' social skills and scaffolding, offering conditions where collaborative work becomes desirable and necessary. The authors highlight that TRPGs present opportunities for peer instruction deemed meaningful for academic progress.

Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning (TBLT)

Richard and Rogers (2001) summarize task-based language learning and teaching as tasks that involve real communication in which language is used for carrying out meaningful activities that promote learning (p. 223). Hence, social interaction is necessary, and in that sense, TBLT suggests roles for the classroom participants: as learners who take the role of group participants and communicative partners working in pairs or small groups. Furthermore, they become monitors of their language learning process and need to be risk-takers and innovators to answer to the communicative challenges that teachers present them. There are also teacher roles as selectors and sequencers of tasks; teachers need to select and organize tasks in a coherent way regarding students' needs, interests, and language skill levels (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Nunan (2004) defines tasks as "a piece of classwork that encourages students to manipulate, comprehend and interact with the target language focusing on meaning rather than form" (p. 4). Nunan (2004) divides "task" into two types: "Rehearsal tasks" and "activation tasks" (pp. 19-22). Rehearsal tasks are activities in which students practice functions and notions that reflect what students will need in the real world. On the other hand, activation tasks are activities that look for activating emerging language skills. Although the practice of functions and notions is a good start, teachers and learners should move from a reproductive model of language use to one of language production, applying their emerging language skills, and developing sociolinguistic, and paralinguistic competencies in real and innovative contexts (Nunan, 2004). For example, Nunan (2004) presents an activation task in which students find themselves on a sinking ship. The participants must decide what items are the most necessary ones to take, survive, and escape (pp. 20-21).

Furthermore, Ellis (2018) explains that a task is a "work-plan" to use language in a pragmatic form to achieve a communicative outcome and convey the appropriate content. As such, a task presents the context whereby a learner can use L2 meaningfully. As a work-

plan, tasks have the following criteria: first, focus on meaning; second, learners must fill a gap when the task is over; third, learners must rely on their linguistic resources and communication strategies; and fourth, tasks should/must have a clear communicative goal. Therefore, evaluation takes into account what students achieve to communicate (p. 16). In summary, as Córdoba (2016) described in a Colombian study, TBLT is a methodology in which a teacher challenges students with activities that they could find in their daily life and that require the application of competencies and language skills. Therefore, language becomes a means to execute a plan. Hence, this methodology presents several advantages that Rodríguez and Rodríguez (2010) highlighted in their study in a Colombian university. First, they concluded that task-based learning encourages autonomy. Second, past experiences and previous knowledge support learning. Third, there are several types of "tasks" (as based on daily-life activities), which make classes more varied. Finally, language becomes a means to reach a goal rather than being the goal itself.

Oral Communication

Monsalve and Correal (2006) interpreted oral communication as a process in which input and output of spoken language are constantly generated with the aim of negotiating meaning. Thus, oral communication is any form of interaction that makes use of words in spoken form and is received through listening both face to-face or through technological devices (Juneja, 2019). Oral communication can be formal or informal. Examples of formal oral communication are presentations in academic or business contexts, speeches in ceremonies, and classroom reading activities. Examples of informal oral communication are face-to-face conversations, cellphone conversations, discussions in meetings, and competitive and collaborative games (Swarthout, 2019).

However, speaking in a foreign language can be a difficult skill to develop in EFL classrooms, especially in state institutions where methodologies and resources are not the best. Several studies have touched upon this problem. For instance, a Turkish study described the problem as the "I can understand English, but I can't speak it" syndrome (Coşkun, 2016, p. 4); this author concluded that traditional grammar-focused foreign language teaching is not useful to the encouragement of speaking. Second, a Colombian study found that it is imperative to check the way students and teachers generate oral communicative interaction among themselves, it being especially imperative to check teaching methodologies (Rivera, 2010). Third, another Colombian study dealt with students' lack of motivation to produce oral communication due to grammar and teacher-centered practices (Vaca & Gomez, 2017). Finally, a Costa Rican study showed how the verbal skill is affected by the lack of motivation, learning environment, and interference from the mother tongue due to the lack of a context that demands the exclusive use of English (Vargas, 2015).

Learning Environment and Motivation

It is essential to encourage students to learn from the process of interacting in the classroom on a student-student and student-teacher basis, conveying meaning from oral or written messages that are meaningful and interesting for them (Rivera, 2010). Therefore, the teacher must transform the classroom into a place where confidence leads to active verbal participation in social exchanges. Consequently, activity design should improve motivation and foster an environment wherein verbal communication can be spontaneous and enjoyable. Accordingly, teachers should regard students' individualities to let them apply their learning styles and offer them challenges that can be meaningful for them. These challenges or tasks become significant if they allow students to feel part of something, a group. When students themselves feel part of a group, they invest more in their ability to communicate and will see opportunities of expressing their talents to collaborate in their group. In that regard, to interact and express themselves, students will invest more in their EFL learning process and, thanks to social cohesion and group support, they will improve their self-confidence (Peirce, 1995). In that way, students will identify the target language as necessary in order to be part of a social group, which fosters intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic identified motivation is described in Vansteenkiste, Lens, and Deci's (2010) self-determination theory. This theory places a strong emphasis on the necessity of fostering self-regulated motivation in students via offering them activities that they can identify with as beneficial and enjoyable (Vansteenkiste, et al., 2010, p. 21). Therefore, it is necessary to appeal to teaching practices that regard students' individualities in contingent interaction activities (Rivera, 2010) and interconnected learning processes where everyone learns from each other, facilitating scaffolding (Garcia, 2016).

Methodology

The present study seeks to understand a problematic situation in an EFL classroom (student motivation and speaking production). With that in mind, an action-research methodology was applied, that is, a research model that seeks to foster teacher and student development in pedagogical practices (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Action research invites teachers, along with students, to reflect on their practices and try to identify a problem and think of a way to figure out the possible solutions to it (Burns, 2009).

Context

This study was carried out in a government, rural educative institution in the town of Icononzo, in the department of Tolima, Colombia. It deals with school levels from first to eleventh grade with an average socio-economic stratum of one or two (low). There is an

average of twenty-five to thirty students per classroom. Additionally, there is not an English language teacher at elementary school (first to fifth grades); for middle and high school (sixth to eleventh grades), there is only one English language teacher in charge of all the courses. Students at the school showed great difficulties in expressing their ideas orally in the foreign language classroom. Moreover, contextual hindrances made the production of spoken communication harder, namely: the lack of resources at the school, an inadequate learning environment, and the lack of an English language teacher for the elementary school. The participants in this study were 18 seventh-grade students, with ages ranging from 11 to 13 years old, and their sole English language teacher. Time-allocation for English classes was of three hours a week. There were no appropriate spaces to give and take language lessons (classroom exposed to constant street noise), but there was access to video beam.

Research Stages

Action research, as proposed by Nunan (1992), follows a series of stages: initiation, preliminary investigation, hypothesis, intervention, and evaluation. The process starts with the identification of a problematic situation during my teaching practices: in this case, the lack of students' oral production in English as the L2. In preliminary observations, I, being the teacher-researcher, evaluated the participating students' level of oral production at the beginning of the study using the CEFR Grid for Speaking Test designed by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (2014) as a reference. I made use of a rubric based on a design by the Alkor School that follows the KET placement test parameters (Colegio Alkor, 2016). From the results, an initial hypothesis was formed: Students are good at learning and using prefabricated patterns but are weak at spontaneous oral communication.

The intervention stage implied the application of four activities to foster oral communication in English as the L2 as seen in Table 1.

The first and second intervention activities were pilots to start preparing the participating students for more complex TRPGs. The first activity was a board role-play game named "The Touristic Town, Icononzo" that was projected via video beam. I organized the class into four groups of four or five students (the process repeated in each one of the interventions). To reach the end square, they had to interact with fictional situations and characters that were impersonated by me in most of the squares. The second intervention activity was closer to a traditional role-play, also to prepare the students for more complex TRPGs. In this case, the fictional context simulated the students' town. The students were given other identities in the role-play activity named "Tourist guide in Icononzo (role-play)." I gave the students a general description of the situation and set the task for them: to find a place to have lunch with the tourist. These activities took one week and three sessions.

Table 1. Activity interventions.

Activity name	Objectives	Materials	Procedures
The Touristic town, Icononzo	Preparation to role-play.	Video projection of board game, dice.	Group conformation. Explanation of game rules. Solution of communication challenges in each square to reach the game's end.
Tourist guide in Icononzo (role-play)	Practice of fictional roles in simulated context. Preparation for TRPGs.	Video projection of fictional characters and situations.	Presentation of a task in a simulated context that requires interaction with fictional characters to find a resolution.
Hunting a monster	TRPG mechanics implementation. Roleplaying characters in fantasy context. Resolution of tasks.	Video projection of fictional characters, scenarios and context. Dice.	Group conformation. Game rules explanation. Storytelling and presentation of a fictional situation that requires solving a series of tasks to reach resolution.
Finding the Castellan's son	TRPG mechanics implementation. Roleplaying characters in fantasy context. Resolution of a series of tasks.	Video projection of fictional characters, scenarios and context. Dice.	Group conformation. Game rules explanation. Storytelling and presentation of a fictional situation that requires solving a series of tasks to reach a resolution.

The third and fourth intervention activities were full-fledged TRPGs. The students were already familiarized with the concept of taking on fictional roles. Therefore, for these activities, I proposed as tasks to hunt a fictional monster that was lurking in a forest near a town and rescue a fictional character lost in that forest. Again, the students were organized in groups, each group assigned with a fictional character with a general description of skills, as well as physical and mental attributes. They were explained the game mechanics of skill score plus die roll to determine failure or success of an action. These activities took two weeks and six sessions to be resolved.

The evaluation stage implied data collection and analysis. This study obtained data from three sources: video recordings observations, artifacts, and audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews. Being an emic approach to research, the data in this action research suggested

the basic categories for organizing and analyzing the collected information (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

Data Collection Procedures

The goal of data collection techniques was to gather information in a naturalistic way while retaining the consistency of the information (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The following techniques were the most suitable ways to collect data answering to the objectives of this study:

- *Diagnostic test*: This test worked as the preliminary investigative stage. During this test, the students' L2 speaking performance was analyzed. The test had as the main topic "family and friends". The required grammar was the present simple tense. 18 seventh-grade students were invited to take the test freely with three days of anticipation.
- *Class observation video recording*: It implied first-hand observation of game exercises backed up by video-recordings and journal narratives. The games took place for three weeks, each game taking from one to three sessions with 18 seventh-grade students.
- *Audio recorded semi-structured interviews*: these documented the participating students' opinions and possible suggestions about TRPGs, which collected pieces of evidence of satisfaction level and possible suggestions for improvement. I prepared three basic questions: (1) What is your opinion about the activity? (2) How much do you think you learnt or progressed in English? (3) How did you feel at the moment of speaking in English? I held interviews with four groups of four and five of the participating students. Each interview took between four and five minutes.
- *Students' artifacts*: I kept samples of the students' production. The artifacts offered tangible pieces of evidence of changes in the students' EFL learning process. These artifacts were samples of language production in the students' notebooks. These samples required digital scanning of notebook pages.

Data Analysis

This study started the data collection process with a diagnostic test applied to 18 students of seventh grade at the rural school. Their English language proficiency level was A1, according to the competences described in the CERF (ALTE CEFR Special Interest Group (SIG), 2016). The diagnostic test implied an inductive approach to coding and categorizing this instrument. It was analyzed by comparing the students' speaking performance with a rubric with ranging criteria on grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension with scale performance based on the marking ranges in the school's SIEE (Institutional system of students' evaluation). The scales were as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. *Range Scales of Performance in the Diagnostic Test.*

Performance	Range
Excellent	9,6 - 10
Good	8 – 9,5
Satisfactory	6 – 7,9
Low	1 – 5,9

I organized the data sets of numerical values into the subcategories of excellent, good, satisfactory, and low under the category performance according to the rubric scales. Thus, I used simple mathematical calculi to determine their percentage in the total of answers. In this way, I got information to get a hypothesis, namely: Students are good at learning and using prefabricated patterns but are weak at spontaneous oral communication.

Once I had a diagnosis about the participating students' speaking performance in English as the L2, observation and analysis of information were necessary from inside the research context. From this point on, this study followed an emic approach to research. Thus, the data in this action research suggested the basic categories for organizing and analyzing the collected information (See Tables 3, 4, and 5 for details). Data analysis followed a procedure inspired by Burns' (2009) suggestions to analyze and synthesize qualitative data with her "categorizing" and "talk analysis" procedures. "Analyzing talk" entailed the analysis of spoken interaction following the next steps; first, information gathering: data collection in the form of video recordings and semi-structured interviews. Second, general characterization: It means identifying the kind of interaction. Third, identification of grossly apparent features: implies identifying the participant's roles and actions. Fourth, focus on structural elements: interpretation of participants' actions and decisions. "Categorizing" implied the coding of patterns in the video recordings and semi-structured interviews descriptions and artifacts as the third source of data. Hence, it led to the identification of theme frequencies that gave numerical references that facilitated the data analysis and categories classification.

Findings

The first set of data to be analyzed was the diagnostic test. This diagnostic test was applied to the 18 seventh-grade participants before the interventions. I applied the diagnostic test in the form of an interview about family members and their professions, placing emphasis on present simple grammar and the use of can and can't. The graphics in Figure 2 below show results per category of performance in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and listening comprehension.

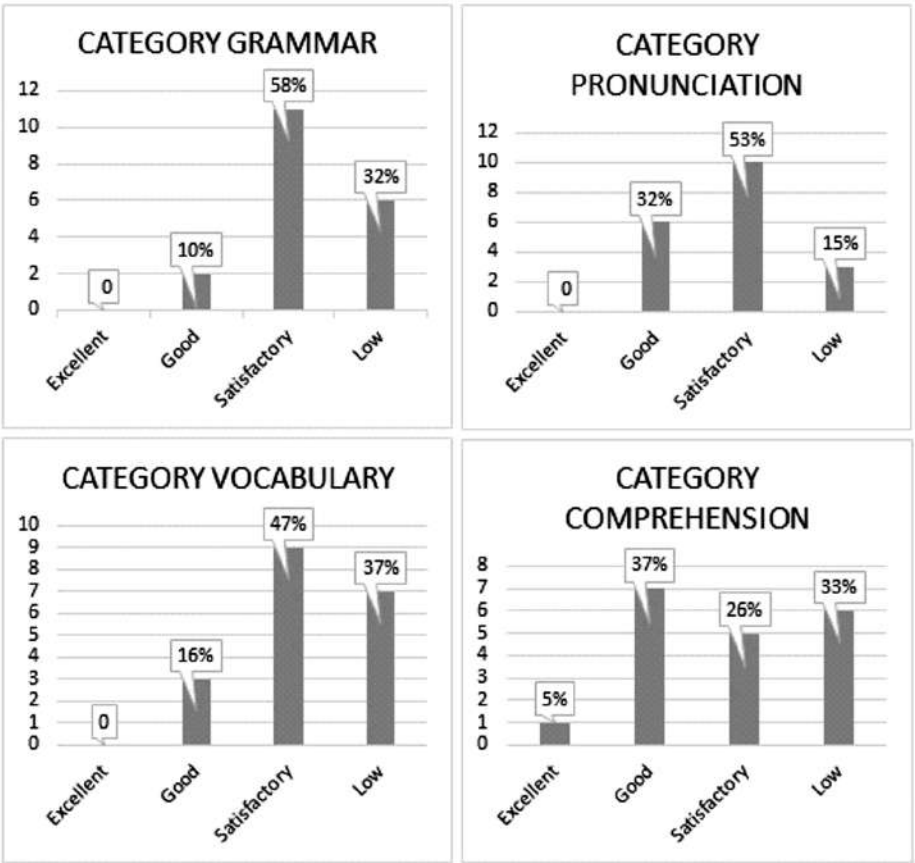

Figure 2. Percentage of Results per Category in the Diagnostic Test.

In general, the diagnostic test showed a tendency toward a satisfactory level of performance on oral activities prepared in advance; in this case, an interview about family members and their professions. However, what happened with the 32% of low results in grammar? The 15% low results in pronunciation? The 37% of low results in vocabulary? And the 32% of low results in listening comprehension? I decided to inquire about these from the participating students that got low results. They declared that they did not learn phrases or dialogues by heart. It coincided with my observation of heavy use of prefabricated patterns (Dörnyei, 1995) on the part of the students that achieved positive results. Thus, I came up with a hypothesis: Students are good at learning and using prefabricated patterns but are weak at spontaneous oral communication.

After the intervention stage, the first data source consisted of 198 minutes of video recordings of six class sessions. I adopted a chart to keep a journal of narratives about what happened in the videos. I labeled each chart with the name of the intervention and a short description: Tourists in Icononzo (Intervention one, board game, role-play, 20 minutes); Tourist guides in Icononzo (Intervention two, role-play, 35 minutes); "hunting a monster" (Intervention three, TRPG, 35 minutes); "Finding the Castellan's son" (Intervention four, three classes, TRPG, 108 minutes). Next, I looked for identifying critical events in the labeled charts to figure out grossly apparent features, such as reception, performance, and possible shortcomings. Then, I looked for identifying and codifying the structural elements that would become the basis for the general feature categories; for example: to explain the reception, seeing the synergic relationship among enjoyment, teamwork, teacher's monitoring, and learning styles is necessary. Below, Table 3 shows the codes of this analysis and their frequency; in the last column, the category that better suits them appears.

Table 3. Codes and Categories from Video Recordings

Code Entry Description	# Entries Intervention 1	# Entries Intervention 2	# Entries Intervention 3	# Entries Intervention 4	Categories
Enjoyment of gamified activity	5	6	7	7	Reception
Stimuli to learning styles	4	4	3	4	
Teachers' monitoring	1	5	0	5	
Teamwork	5	3	3	6	
Spontaneity of language use	8	7	8	10	Performance
Emerging skill activation (language, sociolinguistic, and paralinguistic competencies)	5	4	3	5	
Group size	0	0	0	2	Short-comings
Discipline issues	0	0	0	2	
Total Entries		**121**			

To facilitate the comparison of code frequencies in the interventions, I used a Microsoft Excel worksheet to make a graphic that would show the frequencies. Figure 3 below displays that graphic.

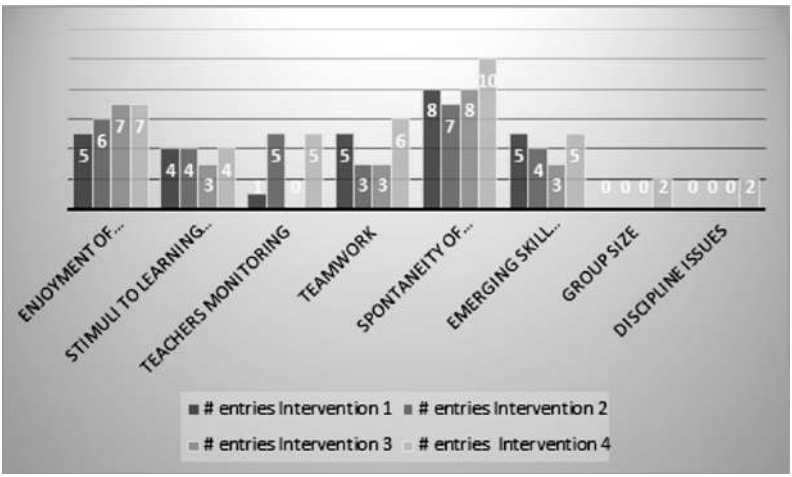

Figure 3. Comparison of Code Frequency in Video Recording Narratives

According to the frequencies, the participating students showed a good level of reception of/as regards the activities agreeing with the emerging code "enjoyment of gamified activity", which synergized with the codes "stimuli to learning styles", "teamwork", and "teachers monitoring" as presented in Figure 3. Regarding the code "enjoyment of gamified activity", I saw a positive evolution in the frequency of entries from role-plays to TRPGs. Also, I observed that the code "stimuli to the students' learning styles" emerged with a small difference in favor of role-play activities. Furthermore, teachers' monitoring contributed to the reception of the activity. The students felt they could count on my help at any moment. To exemplify how students enjoyed the activities, I share an example of an entry in the narrative journal: "*Students celebrate the success of rescuing one of the characters. Again, it is clear that students tend to enjoy the story twists that happen thanks to the game mechanics of a tabletop roleplaying game.*" In several cases, the students' enjoyment had to do with the unscripted nature of TRPGs. In other words, TRPGs do not have a set script, and events can change dramatically according to participants' decisions. Hence, the gamified factor and uncertainty of results were part of the game appeal of TRPGs.

Additionally, the students' performance also showed a positive evolution in all the interventions. In effect, the spontaneity of language use was the code with the most frequencies having more entries in the TRPGs narratives. Under the category of *performance*,

the "emerging skills" code appeared with higher incidence during the interventions with emphasis on role-play activities. This code contemplated the development of sociolinguistic and paralinguistic competencies during the interventions, which implied that students actively engaged in communication events taking into consideration the correct approximation to the interlocutor and interpretation of gestures and body language. Additionally, I saw teamwork as a key element that showed a positive evolution. Next, I cite one example of an entry in the narrative journal about spontaneity, sociolinguistic competence, and teamwork: "*Students exchange ideas among them[selves], proposing ways to rescue the friend that fell into the river, they discuss it in Spanish and star looking the way of communicating it in English, this is a clear show of collaborative work.*"

However, I detected shortcomings at the moment of working on the interventions. In particular, the fourth intervention, being the longest one, showed the problems that could appear; misbehavior and the difficulty of working with large groups. I cite one example from the narratives: *"…disciplinary issues can arise, in this case, was not a big problem, but it was evident that students tend to divert themselves easily due to the close interaction in the groups.*"

For the artifacts, I deemed it necessary to keep written texts from the students due to the students' procedure of designing their discourses in written form before they shared them orally. Once I got the students' samples of language production, I organized them into "interventions". I read each set of samples looking for generalities; the creation of meaningful texts to share orally was evident although they presented English language accuracy problems. Hence, I thought of the general category that I called *performance*. In that sense, I searched for structural elements that would give sense to my general category. My aim was to find pieces of evidence of text production that was meaningful due to the context and minimal grammatical elements. I called these fragments of text production "thoughts": ideas, proposals, reactions, questions, and opinions. As a result, three codes emerged from the data: thoughts with some inaccuracy, thoughts with basic accuracy (basic clauses), and incomprehensible texts. In table 4 below, I organized the codes and their different numbers of samples per intervention.

Table 4. Codes and Categories from Artifacts

Code Entry Description	# Samples Intervention 1	# Samples Intervention 2	# Samples Intervention 3	# Samples Intervention 4	Category
Thoughts with some inaccuracy	8	7	11	22	Performance
Thoughts with basic accuracy	0	1	1	3	
Incomprehensible texts	0	0	1	5	
Total Samples	**59**				

Then, I facilitate the comparison among those interventions by entering the information in a Microsoft Excel worksheet to make a graphic. Figure 4 below shows that graphic.

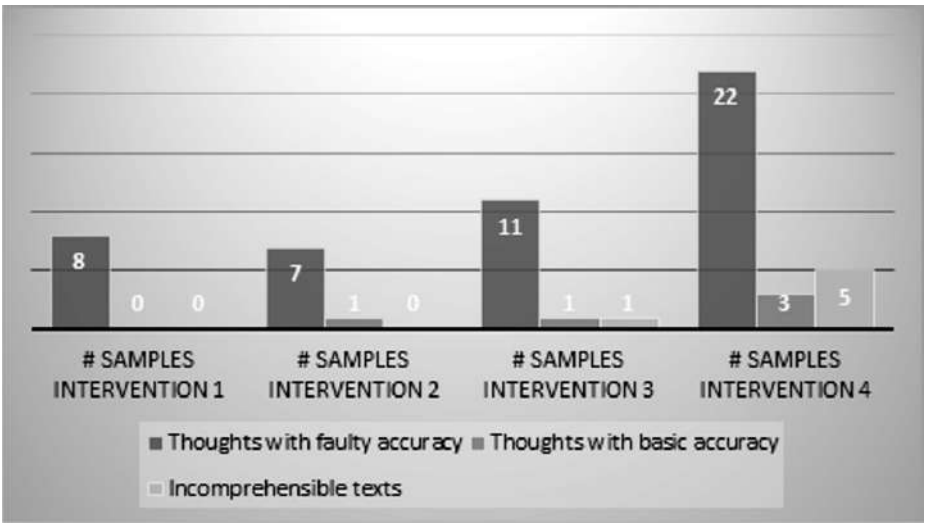

Figure 4. Code Frequency in the Artifacts

In light of the data, I saw a progressive increase in the number of text samples with comprehensible meaning, achieving the highest number in the fourth intervention, which had/allowed more time to be developed. However, intervention three had the same time as intervention two, and yet, there were more samples of "thoughts" in the third intervention. Intervention four presented twice as many samples in twice the amount of time as had the third intervention. One important thing about the time spent in the fourth intervention was the easiness/its facility and possibility of continuity. While an isolated role-play lasted for a class period, a TRPG could last for several lessons appealing to the shared narrative experience (Grouling, 2010). Below, I share three examples of the students' language production.

The third source of data to be analyzed was the students' voices regarding their opinions about the application of TRPGs as a class activity. Three questions led/guided the answers: 'What's your opinion about the TRPG activity?', 'How much do you think you learned or progressed in English?', and 'How did you feel at the moment of speaking in English?' The answers fell into three categories: reception, progress sensation, and suggestions for implementation.

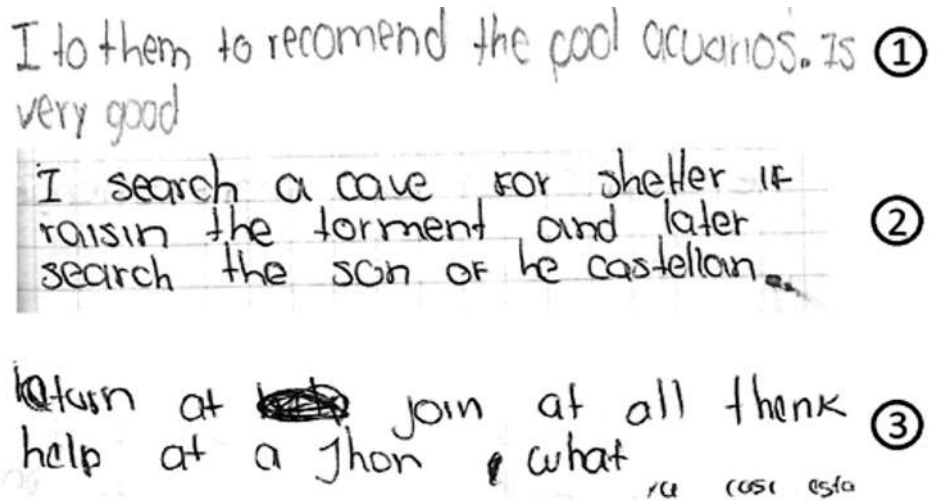

Figure 5. Examples of Students' Language Production
Note. Example one: thought with faulty accuracy.
Example two: thought with basic accuracy. Example three: incomprehensible text.

The first category was the general reception of the activity, and quickly, once I read the different answers, the word that arose was *enjoyment*. Hence, the students stated that thanks to more enjoyable class activities, they were able to learn better. Thus, enjoyment was codified and became part of the category *reception*.

The second category was *progress sensation*. Learning and improving language knowledge were the most common words used by the students. Besides, how the students highlighted teamwork as a critical element for them to achieve confidence was significant. In that sense, I identified the following recurrences: learning awareness, confidence, and teamwork. These recurrences became the codes for the category *progress sensation*.

The third category of information was students' *suggestions for implementation*: Many students declared that they felt comfortable with the activities. Nevertheless, a number of answers in the interviews that suggested more variety and maybe more realistic fictional settings were considered. The identified recurrences were: feeling comfortable with the activity and desire of variety. A summary of the emerging codes and their categories is presented in Table 5 below. On the table, the number of recurrences for each code and the category that these gave me as a result can be seen.

Table 5. Recurrences, Codes and Categories in the Semi-Structured Interviews.

Code Description	Number of Recurrences	Category
Enjoyment	15	Reception
Learning awareness	17	Progress sensation
Team work	8	
Confidence	10	
Feeling comfortable with the activity	15	Students' suggestions for implementation
Desire of variety	8	
Total	73	

Discussion

Crossing information from the three sources of data; video-recorded narratives, semi-structured interviews, and artifacts, I came to the following conclusions to finally answer the research question.

First: How may a teacher use TRPGs as task-based activities in the English language classroom? Certainly, it is possible. According to my observation of the students' enjoyment, answers, and opinions about TRPG games, the procedures followed in this study to implement TRPGs as task-based activities can work. I recommend the following steps: First, organizing groups considering students' individualities; second, presenting examples of interaction in a fictional context by applying role-play as rehearsal tasks; third, explaining the games' fictional context and introducing students to the game mechanics. Fourth, performing examples of mechanics resolution and narrative interaction. Once the teacher has followed the before-mentioned steps, it is necessary to present games sessions as series of activation tasks with clear objectives (Nunan, 2004).

Also, based on the observations and students' declarations, it is crucial to propose challenges that imply different solutions with degrees of uncertainty; for example: To search for a lost person in a forest, treat that person's wounds, cross a river and take the person to a town. The uncertainty of TRPG game sessions is what makes players improvise solutions and courses of action. Therefore, using visual and kinesthetic aids (teacher's body language, mimicry, use of images, sounds, and posters) are important to stimulate students' imagination and immersion in the experience. Hence, students can appeal to their different learning styles (Brown, 2007; Gilakjani, 2012).

Nonetheless, TRPGs are storytelling activities that imply social interaction, and imagination; additionally, participants have to resolve tasks to progress in their own story with TRPGs. Therefore, their implementation demands constant teacher supervision to motivate and help students as well as to prevent disruptive behavior. Hence, the teacher must adopt an active monitorial role, becoming a temporary member of each of the students' groups, performing characters that give students interaction opportunities to use their emerging skills, and offering spontaneous advice and correction (Nunan, 2004; Scrivener, 2005 p. 94).

However, I saw something worth reflecting on and clarifying. The observations and video recordings showed more stimuli to learning styles and emerging skill activation during role-play activities than in TRPGs (see Table 3 above). That is not contradictory. TRPGs are role-play exercises with game mechanics. Hence, if role-plays affect aspects such as language skills activation and development of sociolinguistic and paralinguistic competencies, TRPGs can do it too.

On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that TRPGs are prone to disciplinary difficulties and do not work well with large groups. I see that this kind of activity works well with a maximum of 20 students divided into five groups. Furthermore, TRPGs as task-based activities demand from the teacher several skills like acting, mimicry, storytelling, and familiarity with pop culture elements that can be interesting in order for students to propose contexts and tasks interesting for them to see in a narrative experience (Mackay, 2001; Garcia, 2016).

Second: Did the application of TRPGs as task-based activities give evidence of the seventh-grade students' L2 speaking skill? Was there any sign of change in the students' performance? I observed that the students did reach/achieve progress in their L2 language performance between the first and fourth implementations. The samples from intervention one to four become progressively more complex. In intervention one, the students limited themselves to asking for permissions and help and expressing opinions as good, bad, delicious, etc. They sometimes made use of prefabricated structures for greetings, introductions, and functions to interact in restaurants, bus stops and hotels. In intervention two, the students tried to react to unscripted situations such as a sudden lack of money and necessity of discounts. In interventions three and four, focused on fantasy TRPG (Crocco, 2016; Ferreira & Carvalho, 2013; Garcia, 2016; Grouling, 2010; Reinhold, 2018), the students not only reacted, but manipulated the fictional situations in their favor by preparing ambushes for a fictional monster and planning how to rescue a fictional person. In that regard, they were more likely to be risk-takers, experimenting with language using different communication strategies (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), activating emerging skills, and conveying meaning (Ellis, 2018; Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Third: What did the researcher notice about exploring an alternative to affect the foreign language classroom learning environment and motivation in the form of TRPG games? Social interaction in the frame of a collaborative game, in which there are no losers, helped increase the students' confidence and motivation (Ferreira & Carvalho, 2013). Remarkably, the students highlighted that collaborative work was essential; teamwork made interconnected learning possible, boosting scaffolding processes among peers (Garcia, 2016). Moreover, this close interaction among classmates working for a common goal increased their shared necessity of using L2 (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2010).

Conclusion

Finally, to give an answer to the research question, "How does the application of tabletop roleplaying games (TRPGs), used as a task-based activities, give evidence concerning the development of speaking English as a foreign language process?", I observed elements that facilitated verbal communication in the EFL classroom, namely: learning awareness, collaborative work, written and oral language experimentation, and scaffolding processes.

In that order of ideas, the application of adapted TRPGs helped the participating students to produce language that was pragmatic and meaningful in a gamified classroom context. They were able to work with the resources at their disposal and that appealed to their different learning strategies (Brown, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). These, in turn, positively affected other skills like writing and social interaction (Nunan, 2004).

Also, the implementation of TRPGs in the classroom presented a safe environment for the students to experiment with language, fostering social interaction, and experience interconnected learning among peers; all this raised their levels of confidence (Garcia, 2016). Positively, the implementation of those kinds of games helped deal with the following elements: motivation, methodology, and learning environment (Coşkun, 2016; Rivera, 2010; Vargas, 2015). Accordingly, the generation of ZPD in scaffolding processes was possible, emerging among peers and not only with a (professional) "expert" (Ortega, 2009, p. 225). Besides, the sense of belonging to a group raised the identified necessity of using English as the L2 to enjoy the groups' participation in a game (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2010).

However, TRPGs, although beneficial, can be demanding for teachers. Teachers should have competence in storytelling and knowledge of game mechanics. Teachers should also be knowledgeable in current pop culture movies and literature. All these activities require more work on the part of the teacher, and as collaborative activities, require constant monitoring. In that regard, these activities can present challenges to classroom management.

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Inflamed EFL Learning: A Qualitative Study to Explore Factors Affecting EFL Learning

Aprendizaje Exacerbado del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera: Un Estudio Cualitativo para Explorar los Factores que Afectan este Aprendizaje

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to conduct a qualitative content analysis to explore factors affecting EFL learning in Iran. To achieve this aim, the researcher carried out face-to-face unstructured interviews with 10 EFL teachers and 12 university students. The researcher used MAX QDA 10 (Qualitative Data Analysis) software to analyze the data. In order to organize the data, open coding, creating categories, and abstraction processes were used. Using the conventional content analysis method, 950 primary codes were collected based on the participants' own statements in the original codes. The researcher immersed himself in the data, listened to the interviews, reviewed transcribed notes several times, excluded overlapping codes and, finally, obtained 640 open codes out of 950 primary codes which were classified into 42 subcategories. This reduction process in all categories and subcategories continued until the researcher reached four main categories and finally one abstracted main theme. The four main categories were factors associated with 'language planning and policy', 'teacher characteristics', 'environmental/social elements', and 'learners' individual characteristics.' It was concluded that the absence of the four mentioned factors leads to 'inflamed EFL learning'. Finally, implications are drawn for language planners and policymakers (LPP) and EFL teachers.

Keywords: content analysis, EFL, factors, Iran, qualitative study, speaking

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Resumen

El propósito de este estudio es realizar un análisis de contenido cualitativo que explore los factores que afectan el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera en Irán. Para alcanzar este propósito, se llevó a cabo entrevistas no-estructuradas presenciales con 10 profesores de inglés y 12 estudiantes universitarios. Se usó el software MAX QDA 10 para analizar los datos. Para organizarlos se usaron codificación abierta, creación de categorías y procesos de abstracción. Al usar el método convencional de análisis de contenido, 950 códigos primarios se tomaron de las declaraciones de los participantes en los códigos originales. Al escuchar las entrevistas, revisar varias veces los apuntes trascritos y descartar los códigos duplicados, se obtuvo 640 códigos abiertos, los cuales se clasificaron en 42 sub-categorías. Este proceso de reducción se llevó a cabo hasta que se obtuvo cuatro categorías principales y un tema capital. Las cuatro categorías son los factores asociados con la política y planeación de lengua, las características de los profesores, los elementos sociales y de ambiente y las características individuales de los aprendices. Se concluye que la ausencia de estos cuatro factores conlleva a un aprendizaje exacerbado del inglés como lengua extranjera. Finalmente, las implicaciones del estudio conciernen a los planeadores y hacedores de política de lengua y a los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: análisis de contenido, inglés como lengua extranjera, factores, Iran, estudio cualitativo, habilidad oral

Introduction

The significance of learning English as a second or foreign language is very high in the contemporary world of globalization. Along with the strengthening of the position of English for international communication, the development of speaking skills has become increasingly important in the English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) context. Learning to speak in EFL is especially challenging for foreign language learners because it requires more than grammatical rules; it needs the ability to use the language appropriately in social contexts. Finding the factors affecting EFL speaking ability, especially qualitatively, can be effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations.

From the beginning of teaching English in Iran, it was taught at secondary school, high school, and university. During the last decades, English took on a special significance when the Iranian government felt an emergent need to increase its international role in the world. The number of schools, institutes, universities, both private and non-private, was increased. Despite already teaching English courses at secondary school and high school, it seems that English language learning problems still exist in Iran. Although a number of researchers have investigated factors affecting the EFL speaking ability, findings are not yet conclusive.

Furthermore, almost no study has followed the same purpose qualitatively through content analysis. The present study tries to bridge the gap between *reality* and *truth*; in other words, to make a contrast between what really and quantitatively is and what truthfully and

qualitatively might be true. The purpose of the present study is to conduct a qualitative content analysis method to explore factors affecting EFL learning, especially EFL speaking from the perspectives of EFL teachers and students in different disciplines in West Azerbaijan province, Khoy, Iran. Using this method, the researcher goes beyond some statistically appealing numbers and rather sees the social reality in a subjective but scientific manner.

Review of the Related Literature

Theoretical Background

It becomes clear to us that speaking or oral communication has been considered an important language skill for second/foreign language learners. It is also apparent that, naturally, to speak is not only to convey a message that someone else needs or to get information which has not been known, but, more importantly, to interact with other people. Learning to speak English requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. Students need to know how native speakers use the language in the context of structured interpersonal exchange. In other words, as Schumin (2002) stated, "effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions" (p. 204). Due to the importance of the notion of communicative competence, a number of language and language teaching experts (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1971) elaborated on the nature of this concept. Hymes's (1971) theory of communicative competence consists of the interaction of grammatical, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and probabilistic language components. For Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence includes four components of competence: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. In the context of foreign language learning, Canale and Swain's interpretation of communicative competence has been frequently referred to.

English language teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, was faced with significant challenges due to the political and diplomatic relations between Iran and the United States as well as the conservative view of the Iranian people towards the United States and the problems between the two countries. But in recent years, despite the possibility of teaching other foreign languages such as Russian, Chinese, French, Italian, German, Spanish, etc., much emphasis has been placed on teaching English as a foreign language in Iran.

Because English language teaching is considered a tool for globalization and personal development, in recent years, much emphasis has been placed on teaching this language in schools and universities, both public and private, and even informally in primary schools. Today, after several decades of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and despite the emphasis on teaching English and creating a suitable platform for this, there are still many problems in

teaching English in general (Farhady, Hezaveh, & Hedayati, 2010; Iranmehr & Davari, 2018) and the speaking skill in particular (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016; Mahmoudikia & Ahmadi, 2020; Sadeghi & Richards, 2015). In general, English language teaching problems in Iran can be attributed to inadequate curriculum, a low number of capable teachers, traditional education, political, cultural, social, historical, and ideological factors (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017; Farhady, et al., 2010). Sadeghi and Richards (2015) also added that the nature of the speaking skill is generally misunderstood by both EFL teachers and teacher trainers in language institutes in Iran.

Philosophy is the way individuals think about human phenomenon and research. There are two major philosophical traditions, *positivism* and *post-positivism (naturalism)*. In education, the quantitative studies may be classified under positivism while the qualitative approach research is described based on naturalism. One of the principal differences between quantitative and qualitative methods, as Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, and Namey (2005) proposed, refers to the term flexibility. Qualitative methods are typically more flexible. They ask mostly 'open-ended' questions that are unique to each participant. There are different classifications for types of qualitative studies. Content analysis is only one out of various kinds of qualitative studies which can be done both quantitatively and qualitatively. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) compared qualitative and quantitative content analysis and stated that quantitative content analysis seems to be more deductive but qualitative content analysis is mainly inductive, grounding the examination of topics and themes, as well as the inferences drawn from them in the data. Qualitative content analysis, in some cases, attempts to generate theory (as a basis for grounded theory). Regarding sampling techniques, quantitative content analysis uses the/a random sampling procedure while qualitative content analysis usually applies some purposively selected texts. Also, the quantitative approach produces numbers that can be manipulated with various statistical methods. By contrast, the qualitative approach usually produces descriptions or typologies, along with expressions from subjects reflecting how they view the social world. Finally, qualitative content analysis considers unique themes that indicate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts.

Different classifications for methods of data collection in qualitative studies were introduced (see, e.g., Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Bolderstone, 2012; Cresswell, 2003; Woods, 2006). The interview, as a data collection method, has three common types: highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Hancock, 2002; Nunan, 1992). In structured interviews, like questionnaires, the interviewer asks a set of scheduled questions in advance. Semi-structured interviews, which sometimes refer to focused interviews, involve a series of open-ended questions. The in-depth or unstructured interview lacks a high and fixed structure and is more directed by the responses of the interviewee rather than the agenda of the researcher. That is, a restricted set of questions are discussed and the interviewer

forms the questions on the bases of the interviewee's previous responses. In this type of interview, the interviewer has little control over the interview and it seems to have a relatively unpredictable direction.

Empirical Studies

In his study, Schumin (2002) identified (a) age or maturational constraint, (b) the aural medium, (c) sociocultural factors, and (d) affective factors as four key themes affecting EFL speaking ability. Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, and Jamieson (1999) also carried out a qualitative study with 15 former ESL students and six mainstream classroom teachers to discover their perceptions of their experiences in ESL. Data analysis showed four main themes of (a) the age cap, (b) the school climate, (c) personal relationships with peers and teachers, and (d) personal goals.

Several studies explained how and why policies have certain effects in particular contexts. Cummins (1986, as cited in Wong, 1996) proposed a four-element framework for empowering minority students as a useful starting point for formulating institutional policies that support language minority students. Donato and Terry (1995) asked several foreign language specialists to share their opinions on the evolution of foreign language learning. They advocated five different factors affecting EFL learning, to wit: (a) early language instruction, (b) implementing special programs, (c) changes that affect early adolescents, (d) implementing language learning as a continual process, and finally, (e) the development of standards.

Regarding the effect of teacher characteristics on EFL learning, Li (2001) carried out a case study approach to investigate Korean teachers' perceptions of the implementation of CLT. EFL teachers' perceptions were collected through a pilot study, a written questionnaire, and interviews. Findings revealed six teacher-related problems in the implementation of CLT: (a) deficiency in spoken English, (b) deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence in English, (c) lack of training in CLT, (d) few opportunities for retraining in CLT, (e) misconceptions about CLT, and (f) little time and expertise for developing communicative materials.

Chen (2012) conducted a study to find the favorable and unfavorable characteristics of EFL teachers, as perceived by Tai university students. The results reported two main themes: personal trait-related characteristics and classroom teaching-related characteristics. Concerning the impact of social environmental factors on English learning, Fathman (1976) conducted a study to examine the effect of certain environmental variables upon learning to speak English as a second language. She mentioned seven environmental variables as: 'grade in school', 'hours spent in ESL class', 'number of foreign students speaking same native language in school attended', 'number of foreign students in school attended', 'size of ESL class', 'teaching emphases of ESL class', 'type of instruction in class', and 'schools.' Kovács (2011), in the same vein, proposed two social environmental circles. The first is the

immediate micro-environment that consists of family and friends. The second, outer circle, is labelled the exo-environment which comprises the workplace, the language teacher, and the language school.

In order to examine the importance of individual differences as regards EFL learning, Ellis (1994) compared three outstanding classifications for individual learner differences (Altman, 1980; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Skehan, 1989, all cited in Ellis, 1994). He separated the term learner strategies and put them in different classifications. Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford (2003) classified individual learner differences into the three categories of 'learning style', 'learning strategies' and 'affective variables.' Dornyei and Skehan (2003) considered 'foreign language aptitude', 'learning style', 'learning strategies', and 'motivation' as four major variables of individual learner differences.

Finally, the present qualitative study sought to explore the following research question: What are the factors affecting EFL learning, specifically the speaking ability from the perspectives of EFL teachers and students in Iran?

Methodology

Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher utilized the *face-to-face* method of the *unstructured* interview. Following Bolderstone (2012), McNumara (2009), and Turner (2010), the researcher used the following five steps as the backbone for research interviews.

Selecting the Participants

The researcher used *purposive sampling*. The last decision on sample numbers was based on evidence of *data saturation*. The interviewer reached this saturation point when he interviewed 10 EFL teachers and 12 university students. Only those potential participants that had insight, understanding, interest, and intent on the research topic were selected. The research participants had the following demographic characteristics: Teachers were all from the same city and ranged in age from 35 to 48. Sixty percent of them were female and 40% were male. Only 20% held Ph.D.'s and the rest had M.A.'s in TEFL. They all had teaching experience at university, and 40% had previous teaching experience at secondary and high school levels. Students were all from the same city and ranged in age from 19 to 27. Fifty percent of them were female and 50% were male. All students were B.A. and B.S. students in EFL, nursing, management, and mechanics majors. On average, they all attended supplementary English conversation classes for two to six semesters.

Preparation for the Interview

Probably the most important phase of the interview process is preparation. First, the interviewer made an appointment with each participant at a time which suited them. A quiet, private, and comfortable place was prepared and the recording equipment was checked beforehand. In order to build a rapport, the interviewer provided tea and water, especially when he allowed some small talk before initiation of the interview. He gave a brief but necessary explanation about the research. All the participants were reminded of their right to leave the interview session and withdraw from the study at any time as part of the informed consent process. In short, McNamara's (2009) eight principles were applied to the preparation stage of interviewing.

Conducting a Pilot Test

Piloting is a key aspect of every research. According to Kvale (2007), piloting helps the researcher to determine the probable limitation and weak points within the interview design and lets the interviewer make necessary revisions prior to the study. In the present study, piloting helped the researcher to exclude two participants who showed less interest and provided less information to the interviewer.

Taking an Appropriate Role for the Interviewer

The researchers followed Bolderstone's (2012) five suggestions for adapting an effective role for the interviewer. The interviewer tried to:

1. Be more a listener rather than a corrector or an educator.
2. Pay much attention and listen attentively.
3. Avoid turning the interview into a counseling session.
4. Not be afraid of silence. Sometimes interviewees need time and silence to organize and reflect on the topic.
5. Avoid demonstrating bias. He tried to be more neutral and avoided comments such as 'good', 'excellent', etc.

Timing

The length of each interview depends on a number of factors, including the type of interview, complexity of questions, the number of key questions in the interview, the interviewee's familiarity and previous experience with interview, and the size of the group.

Considering all the above-mentioned factors, on average, the researcher conducted a 45-minute interview with each participant.

Data Analysis

Analysis can be an ongoing process that is conducted concurrently with gathering the data (Creswell, 2009). Following Tesch (1990), when the researcher immersed himself in the data and was satisfied that the text had become accessible to him, he delineated all meaningful units throughout the entire interview transcription, decided which ones were relevant to the research questions, then bound the meaning units that contained them. The present study used 'conventional qualitative inductive content analysis', in which coding categories are derived directly and inductively from the raw data.

Coding

Elo and Kyngas' (2008) coding steps as *open coding*, *creating categories,* and *abstraction* were taken at this stage. During the open coding stage, notes and headings were written in the text while reading it. As Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stated, after reading meticulously the entire written material several times, the interviewer should write down in the margin as many headings as necessary to describe all aspects of the content. The collected headings formed the coding sheets and thus categories were freely generated. Following McCain (1988) and Burnard (1991), after this open coding process, the lists of categories were grouped under higher order headings (both cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2008). When formulating categories inductively, the researcher decided to put suitable things in the similar categories. Abstraction means formulating a general description of the research topic through generating categories (Burnard, 1996; Robson, 1993; both cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Then each category was labeled using content-characteristic words. Subcategories with resembling events and incidents were grouped together as categories, and categories were grouped as main categories. The abstraction process continued as far as was reasonable and possible.

Trustworthiness (Rigor)

Trustworthiness is a term for establishing validity and reliability in qualitative research. It indicates if the research accurately represents the experiences of participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined the assumptions of trustworthiness in Table 1 and contrasted them with their non-qualitative counterparts.

Table 1. Comparison of Trustworthiness and Validity Criteria

Qualitative	Non-Qualitative
Credibility	Internal Validity
Transferability	External Validity
Dependability	Reliability
Confirmability	Objectivity

Krefting (1991) added some more criteria to Guba's (1981, as cited in Krefting, 1991) and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) list of strategies. (Table 2) illustrates some strategies used in the study.

Table 2. Summary of Strategies to Establish Trustworthiness

Strategy	Criteria	Description
Credibility (Are the reported findings true?)	Prolonged and varied field experience	Allows the researcher to check perspectives and allows the informants to become accustomed to the researcher, trusting relationships
	Member checking	Data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stake- holding groups from whom the data were originally collected.
	Interview technique	The reframing of questions, repetition of questions, or expansion of questions on different occasions.
Transferability (whether findings can "fit" for settings beyond that of particular study)	Dense description	It is critical that researchers provide dense background information about the informants and the research context and setting to allow others to assess how transferable the findings are.
Dependability (Consistency) refers to the stability of data over time and under conditions	Peer examination	The use of colleagues and methodological experts for checking the research plan and implementation.

Strategy	Criteria	Description
Confirmability refers to the objectivity or neutrality (free from bias) of the data. Guba viewed neutrality not as a researcher objectivity but as data and interpretational confirmability.	Confirmability audit	This strategy involves an external auditor attempting to follow through the natural history or progression of events in a project to try to understand how and why decisions were made. In addition, auditability suggests that another researcher could arrive at comparable conclusions given the same data and research context.

Note. From "Naturalistic inquiry," by Y.S. Lincoln & E. G. Guba (1985).

Results

As was mentioned before, the researcher reached this saturation point when he ended conducting interviews with 10 EFL teachers and 12 university students. The researcher used MAX QDA 10 (Qualitative Data Analysis) software to analyze the data. The process of data collection and data analysis was conducted concurrently. In order to organize the data in the present inductive content analysis, the researcher used open coding, creating categories, and abstraction processes. Using the/a conventional content analysis method, 950 primary codes were collected based on the participants' own statements in the original codes. The researcher was immersed in the data, listened to the interviews; reviewed handwritten notes several times, excluded overlapping codes, and finally obtained 640 open codes out of 950 primary codes. The researcher meticulously read the open codes over and over, classified them in similar and condensed categories until he reached 46 subcategories. This reduction process in all analysis units and in all categories and subcategories continued until the researcher reached one abstracted main theme.

The 43 subcategories of content analysis were grouped under the 4 main categories of: Barriers associated with 'language planning and policy', 'teacher characteristics', 'environmental/social elements', and 'learners' individual characteristics.'

First Category (Barriers Associated with Language Planners and Policymakers)

Language Planning and Policymaking (LPP) determines the overall aims of the curriculum and is influenced by special interest groups. Policymaking encompasses 'curriculum design'

and 'instructional design'. Students' achievements are influenced by much more than any individual teacher. In the present study, factors related to this category are classified under nine factors such as: Aging or maturational factors, inappropriate content in books, insufficient number of teaching hours, lack of supervision or monitoring of teaching and learning processes by the relevant authorities… (For more information, see Table 8 below).

In order to be familiar with interviewees' statements, some examples are included in this section. A university student stated that: "*If I learned EFL from primary school, I would become more interested in higher levels and the lessons would be more attractive to me"* (Aging or maturational barrier). An EFL teacher said: "*Unfortunately, the onset of EFL learning in Iran is secondary school. Since learning does not start from the beginning, we're actually missing out on the best age (7-14) to learn"* (Aging or maturational barrier). A university student complained of an insufficient number of EFL teaching hours as: "EFL *teaching hours should be more at all levels which unfortunately are too few. Contrary to the expectations, teaching hours in university are not enough either"* (insufficient number of EFL teaching hours). Another university student majoring in mechanics stated that: "*I was never pleased with English teaching in university. I read only two books during four years. A 3-credit general English and a 2-credit ESP and just two or three lessons from each"* (insufficient number of EFL teaching hours).

Second Category (Barriers Associated with Teachers)

Teachers play essential roles in EFL teaching. They are directly affected by educational policy and may affect any nationally-instituted educational policy. Teachers' knowledge, skills, and their personal traits may affect the whole process of language learning as well as teaching. There are 11 factors classified under this category such as: Poor or inappropriate teaching methods, use of force, inadequate knowledge or lack of strong will to teach or speak English, lack of enough understanding of learners… (For more information, see Table 8 below).

In order to be familiar with interviewees' statements, some examples are included in this section. A university student revealed that: "*A significant number of my EFL teachers lacked enough energy, interest, and familiarity with English teaching and innovative teaching methods as well. Some of them were not even able to speak English or did not want to talk"* (Inadequate knowledge or lack of strong will to teach or speak English). A university student believed that: "My *EFL teachers put much emphasis on English to Persian translation. This causes students to be lazy. If translation, as a teaching or testing technique, is necessary in the class, it should be an English-to-English translation. This increases learners' concentration and expands the range of vocabulary as well"* (Use of traditional methods in both teaching and testing). Another university student added that: "*My EFL teachers, at all levels, were too text bound. They did not use supplementary books and materials such as English newspapers. Newspapers make the students more familiar with new words and daily expressions"* (Absence of supplementary books along with other main course book). An EFL teacher

stated that: "*I am still influenced by traditional methods. I highly emphasize reading and grammar and ignore listening skill"* (Poor or inappropriate teaching methods).

Third Category (Barriers Associated with Social / Environmental Factors)

Social environment plays a vital role in individuals' cognitive and affective developments. This idea was first proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979, as cited in Kovács, 2011). Kovács (2011) reconstructed this idea and designed a theoretical model for adult EFL learners. There are 16 factors classified under this category such as: Lack of enough equipment and teaching aids, failure of national media to broadcast English programs, inability of national media to produce English programs to fit the local culture, inappropriate perspective of English language… (For more information, see Table 8).

In order to be familiar with interviewees' statements, some examples are included in this section. A university student revealed that: "*I remember when we were talking about English language; everyone said that it was very difficult. Perhaps this was due to their unpleasant memories of English learning. Or maybe because they took it as an alien language*" (Induction of the common view that English is an alien language that is difficult to learn). An M.A. university student believed that: "*Along with many language institutions available now, absence of a valid language institute with an integrated language system got more sense"* (Absence of standard and reputable language institutions in all cities and if there are any, they are still problematic). An experienced EFL teacher declared that: "*I have got enough teaching experience at various levels. I feel that multiplicity of English language institutes distributed language learners in different institutions. Our placement tests are not taken as good entrance criteria for different levels. I remember some managers who were just lining their classes with learner of different language levels"* (Absence of standard and reputable language institutions in all cities and if there are any, they are still problematic).

Fourth Category (Barriers Associated with Learners' Individual Characteristics)

It is obvious that people differ from each other. How and why, they differ is not clear and is the subject to individual differences. Individual differences are regarded as the key element in foreign language learning. Different classifications for individual differences were proposed by various scholars (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003; Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003; Ellis, 1994). There are five factors classified under this category such as: Individuals' lack of interest and motivation, individuals' lack of English aptitude, individuals' lack of sufficient time to learn EFL, individuals' absence of 'need' to learn EFL… (For more information, see Table 8).

In order to be familiar with interviewees' statements, some examples are included in this section. An M.A. university student stated that: "*I lack the motivation to learn and speak the language, perhaps due to absence of tourism in Iran, or the inability of my family to travel abroad. The mentioned factors can help learners to become motivated"* (Individuals' lack of interest and motivation). The interviewer asked an experienced EFL teacher: "I: *With all the problems and barriers that exist in language learning, there are still people who learned the language well and have a good command of it. In your opinion, what factors led to the development of such successful English language learners in Iran?* T: *Personal interests can be one of the effective factors in language learning. I had some students whose parents or classmates spoke English at home or school, it highly motivated individuals to learn. Individual aptitude can be another effective factor too. But I rarely had such distinctive students with high English aptitude. I feel environmental factors are more effective than individual factors. Maybe individual factors are influenced by environmental factors* (Lack of interest and aptitude).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study, as mentioned earlier, was to explore factors affecting EFL learning, especially EFL speaking from the perspectives of EFL teachers and students in Iran. To achieve that goal, the researcher conducted a qualitative content analysis method. To do so, the researcher carried out face-to-face interviews with different participants. Data analysis revealed 43 subcategories grouped under 4 main categories: a) 'language planning and policy', b) 'teacher him/herself', c) 'environmental/social elements', and d) 'learners' individual characteristics'.

In a study to find factors affecting EFL speaking ability, Schumin (2002) considered (a) age or maturational constraint, (b) aural medium, (c) socio-cultural factors, and (d) affective factors as four key themes affecting EFL speaking ability. She argued that EFL learners should begin in early childhood through natural exposure. Second, listening skill should be taught and emphasized before speaking proficiency. In order to have a successful EFL experience, Schumin (2002) stated that individuals must know how the language is used in the social content. Finally, affective factors such as learners' emotions, self-esteem, anxiety, motivation, etc. have significant influence on one's success or failure in language learning process.

Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, and Jamieson (1999) carried out a qualitative study with 15 former ESL students and six mainstream classroom teachers to discover their perceptions of their experiences in ESL. Data analysis showed four main themes: (a) the age cap, (b) the school climate, (c) personal relationships with peers and teachers, and (d) personal goals.

As Table 3 below illustrates, in some respects, the findings of the current study are inconsistent with the findings of other studies and are in some ways more complete. Barriers to language learning are not exclusively related to environmental and affective factors.

Instead, those related to LPP and teaching methods/techniques used in the class can have a significant impact on language learning, which have been overlooked in Derwing et al. (1999) and Schumin's (2002) studies. Also, the age factor is only one of several subcategories under LPP which were investigated in the two mentioned studies just as a single case.

Table 3. Main Themes Comparison

Schumin (2002)	Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, and Jamieson (1999)	Present study
– age or maturational constraint	– the age cap	– language planning and policy
– aural medium	– the school climate	– teacher him/herself
– sociocultural factors	– personal relationships with peers and teachers	– environmental/social elements
– affective factors	– personal goals	– learners' individual characteristics

Language Planning and Policymaking

Data in Table 4 compared subcategories of LPP in the present study with two other known studies. Several research studies explained how and why policies have certain effects on certain influences in particular contexts.

The aim of every study should be both obtaining concrete and understandable findings for all and having a practical and operational function. Contrary to Cummins's (1986, cited in Wong, 1996), Donato and Terry's (1995) research findings, which seemed somewhat intangible, subjective and too general, the present study described the subcategories underlying LPP in a more concrete and detailed way.

Findings of the present study are consistent with those reported by Webster (2019), who conducted a study to examine the practical knowledge development of four early career English language teachers. It was concluded that there is a lack of development in early career teachers' practical knowledge of teaching the speaking skill. The findings further highlighted the need for some educational institutions to improve the quality of teaching and change the static nature of language (Macalister, 2018) into a dynamic one. Findings of the present study are also in line with Aghagolzadeh and Davari (2017) and Sadeghi and Richards (2015). They regarded the socio-political, cultural, and ideological issues as key factors affecting EFL learning in Iran. Sadeghi and Richards (2015) further added that the nature of developing speaking skills is misunderstood by both EFL teachers and teacher trainers in language institutes in Iran.

Table 4. Taxonomy for Language Planning and Policy

Cummins's (1986)	Donato and Terry's (1995)	Present Study
School should take an additive rather than a subtractive view toward minority students' language and culture.	Advocating early language instruction	Aging or maturational factors
Second, school should favor community participation in the school	Implementing some special programs such as immersion programs	Inappropriate content of books
Pedagogy should be reciprocal and interactive	Taking into account some changes that affect early adolescents	Insufficient number of teaching hours
Assessment should support language minority students	Viewing and implementing language learning as a continual process	Lack of supervision or monitoring of teaching and learning process by the relevant authorities
	The development of standards in order to align all levels of education and orient them toward the same goals.	Mere use of Persian texts in other courses and ignoring the use of English books
		Ineffective or lack of training courses for EFL teachers
		Ignoring Listening and Speaking skills in acquisition order
		Gap between EFL learning resources/equipment and current needs of learners
		Overlooked priorities: The vagueness of 'what should be learned' & 'how should it be organized for teaching'

Characteristics of Teachers

The personal characteristics of the teacher are one of the most important and influential factors in learning a foreign language. Various factors such as the teacher's personal factors, his/her emotional and communication characteristics, pedagogical factors, etc., can be considered as influential factors in foreign language teaching and may distinguish successful and unsuccessful EFL learners. These characteristics can be an important factor in increasing the motivation and attitude of learners towards learning a foreign language (Chen, 2012; Liando, 2010). In the present study, the personal characteristics of the teacher are divided into 11 subcategories (for more information, see Table 8 below).

Findings of the present study are consistent with Li's (2001) and Chen's (2012) studies in which six major constraints and two major themes are caused by the teachers respectively. Furthermore, they include more general and new factors as barriers affecting EFL which had not been mentioned in previous studies. Sometimes teachers have enough knowledge of EFL teaching but they lack a strong will to teach or speak English. This study has also raised a number of learning problems that are specific to the learning/teaching at the universities; for example, inadequate teaching and failure to follow rubrics in the universities or a mismatch of ESP books with different trends in a discipline. Findings of the present research study are also in line with Afshar and Asakereh (2016) and Sadeghi and Richards (2015). They regarded the proficiency level of teachers as a key factor affecting EFL learning in Iran.

Table 5. Taxonomy for Language Teachers

Li (2001)	Chen (2012)	Present Study
deficiency in spoken English	• personal trait- related characteristics	poor or inappropriate teaching methods
deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence in English	– emotions	use of force
lack of training in CLT	– kindness	inadequate knowledge or lack of a strong will to teach or speak English
few opportunities for retraining in CLT	– fairness	lack of enough understanding of learners
misconceptions about CLT	– lenience	learner's confusions due to teachers' different pronunciations

Li (2001)	Chen (2012)	Present Study
little time and expertise for developing communicative materials	– responsibility	inadequate teaching and failure to follow rubrics in university
	• classroom teaching related characteristics	mismatch of ESP books with different trends in a discipline
	– lesson delivery	teachers' lack of creativity
	– language used in teaching	emphasis on learners' local errors instead of global errors
	– classroom activity organization	use of traditional methods in both teaching and testing
	– classroom atmosphere creation	absence of supplementary materials along with main course book

Environmental/Social Factors

Environmental/social factors is the label given to the third theme which emerged from the research data. As Table 6 below illustrates, the findings of the present research are consistent with those of previous studies, especially with Kovács (2011). However, it is more detailed and includes more various factors as barriers affecting EFL. The focus is more on real life environment rather than private environments. However, findings in this study are less consistent than those of Fathman (1976). 'Grade in school' which refers to age of learners is a variable labeled as environmental by Fathman (1976). The present study regards this factor as one of the major elements associated with LPP. That is, the onset of second or foreign language learning is more a decision-making concern for language planners and policymakers. Also, the findings of the present study are in line with other studies, especially with Niu, Lu, and You (2018). They did an exploratory research project to examine EFL learners' oral language learning experiences from a socio-cultural perspective. The collected data through interviews and written journals revealed 13 socio-cultural resources which fell into the four categories of artifacts, rules, community, and roles. Among the mentioned resources, 'school' was the most frequent factor followed by 'internet', 'examination', and 'contests.' The findings of the present study also confirm that which was concluded by Butler and Le (2017). They reported that parental income and their educational level are positively related to students' English performance. Findings of the present study are also in line with some studies conducted in the Iranian context (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016; Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017; Farhady, et al., 2010; Sadeghi & Richards, 2015).

Table 6. Taxonomy for Environmental/Social Factors

Fathman (1976)	Kovács (2011)	Present Study
– Grade in school	• micro-environment	– lack of enough equipment and teaching aids
– Hours spent in ESL class	– family	– failure of national media to broadcast English programs
– Number of foreign students speaking same native language in school attended	– friends	– inability of national media to produce English programs to fit the local culture
– Number of foreign students in school attended	• exo-environment	– inappropriate perspective of English language
– Size of ESL class	– workplace	– absence of standard and reputable language institutions in all cities and if there are any, they are still problematic
– Teaching emphasis of ESL Class	– language teacher	– non-standardized English language tests with improper goals
– Type of instruction in class	– language school	– lack of tourists and the tourism industry
– Schools		– lack of people familiar with the English language around them
		– lack of enough employment for English graduates
		– un-affordability of people to travel abroad
		– confidence of EFL learners in successfully and easily passing higher level English courses in future
		– lack of a supportive system for both teaching and managing EFL learning programs
		– lack of proper educational environment especially in language institutes

Learners' Individual Characteristics

'Individual learner differences' is another influential theme affecting foreign language learning. Different scholars provided various classifications for individual learner differences. As Table 7 below illustrates, research findings considered individuals' lack of interest and motivation, individuals' lack of English aptitude, lack of sufficient time to learn EFL, individuals' absence of 'need' to learn EFL, and individuals' shyness when speaking English as five subcategories for individual learner differences. The research findings seem to be inconsistent with those of Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford (2003) and Dornyei and Skehan (2003). The last three out of five mentioned variables are some newly-included personal factors which were overlooked by the other two studies. Also, findings of the present study are in line with De Burgh-Hirabe (2019), who conducted a qualitative study to find the motivation types and learning experience of Japanese as EFL learners in New Zealand. His study supports the idea that various target languages and different reasons for learning can be considered as key motivational reasons (Duff, 2017). Findings of the present study also support the idea reported by Jin and Dewaele (2018). They concluded that foreign language anxiety is related not only to the learners' positive self-concept but also to their positive attitudes toward other people.

Table 7. Taxonomy for Individual Learner Differences

Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford (2003)	Dornyei & Skehan(2003)	Present Study
• learning styles ✓ *Sensory differences* ✓ *Personality types* ✓ *Desired degree of generality* ✓ *Biological differences) (Oxford, 1990)*	– Foreign language aptitude	– Individuals' lack of interest and motivation
• learning strategies ✓ *Cognitive strategies* ✓ *Metacognitive strategies* ✓ *Socio-affective strategies* ✓ *(Oxford, 1990)*	– Learning style	– Individuals' lack of English aptitude
• affective variables ✓ *Motivation* ✓ *Self-efficacy* ✓ *Tolerance of ambiguity* ✓ *Anxiety*	– Learning strategies	– Individuals' lack of sufficient time to learn EFL
	– Motivation	– Individuals' absence of 'need' to learn EFL
		– Individuals' shyness when speaking English

Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to carry out a qualitative content analysis to explore factors affecting EFL learning, especially EFL speaking from the perspectives of EFL teachers and students in Iran. The saturation point was reached when the researcher ended conducting interviews with 10 EFL teachers and 12 university students. Data analysis revealed 640 open codes out of 950 primary codes which were finally condensed into 46 categories. The reduction continued as far as the researcher reached four main categories and finally one abstracted main theme. Table 8 below shows that the participants considered *environmental*, *teacher characteristics*, *LPP*, and *individual learner differences* as factors affecting EFL learning.

Table 8. Subcategories, Central Categories and Main Theme

Main Theme	Categories	Subcategories
INFLAMED EFL LEARNING	Language Planning and Policy	1.1 Aging or maturational factors 1.2 Inappropriate content of books 1.3 Insufficient number of teaching hours 1.4 Lack of supervision or monitoring of the teaching and learning process by the relevant authorities 1.5 Mere use of Persian texts in other courses and ignoring the use of English books 1.6 Ineffective or lack of training courses for EFL teachers 1.7 Ignoring listening and speaking skills in acquisition order 1.8 Gap between EFL learning resources/ equipment and current needs of learners 1.9 overlooked priorities: The vagueness of 'what should be learned' and 'how should it be organized for teaching'
	2. Teacher Himself (herself)	2.1 Poor or inappropriate teaching methods 2.2 Use of force 2.3 Inadequate knowledge or lack of strong will to teach or speak English 2.4 Lack of enough understanding of learners 2.5 Learners' confusions due to teachers' different what? 2.6 Inadequate teaching and failure to follow rubrics in university 2.7 Mismatch of ESP books with different trends in a discipline 2.8 Teachers' lack of creativity 2.9 Emphasis on learners' local errors instead of global errors 2.10 Use of traditional methods in both teaching and testing 2.11 Absence of supplementary materials along with main course book 2.12 Learners' bad memories for EFL learning

Main Theme	Categories	Subcategories
INFLAMED EFL LEARNING	**3. Environmental/Social Element**	3.1 Lack of enough equipment and teaching aids 3.2 Failure of national media to broadcast English programs 3.3 Inability of national media to produce English programs to fit the local culture 3.4 Inappropriate perspective of English language 3.5 Absence of standard and reputable language institutions in all cities and if there are any, they are still problematic 3.6 Non-standardized English language tests with improper goals 3.7 Lack of tourists and the tourism industry 3.8 Lack of familiarity with English language around them 3.9 Lack of enough employment for English graduates 3.10 Un-affordability of people to travel abroad and prepare necessary facilities 3.11 Confidence of EFL learners in successfully and easily passing higher level English courses in future 3.12 Lack of a supportive system for both teaching and managing EFL learning programs 3.13 Lack of a proper educational environment especially in language institutes 3.14 Overcrowded EFL classes 3.15 Induction of the common view that English is an alien language that is difficult to learn 3.16 Available guidebooks make learners lazy
	4. Learners' Individual Characteristics	4.1 Individuals' lack of interest and motivation 4.2 Individuals' lack of English aptitude 4.3 Individuals' lack of sufficient time to learn EFL 4.4 Individuals' absence of 'need' to learn EFL 4.5 Individuals' shyness when speaking English

The absence of the four mentioned factors leads to 'inflamed EFL learning'. The interviewees viewed environmental factors as the most influential factor and individual learner differences as the least important element. Teachers' characteristics and LPP were considered as the second and third important factor.

Pedagogical Implications

Decisions related to the present qualitative study will affect language planners and policymakers (LPP) and EFL teachers as well.

Pedagogical Implications for Language Planners and Policymakers

In order to develop a native-like accent, language planners and policymakers should be reminded that EFL learning should begin during a certain period of life, before puberty

or even earlier (primary school); it will be more fruitful to start EFL learning from primary school.

Some conditions (maturational factors, inappropriate content of books, and insufficient number of teaching hours…) should be provided for relevant authorities to supervise and monitor both teaching and learning processes. Also, it is recommended that teaching two hours a week is not enough and will not lead to full mastery and proficiency. This necessitates increasing the number of teaching hours per week.

Since EFL teachers have different attitudes, methods, and techniques toward EFL teaching, some effective training courses should be provided to create a harmony among all of them. One of the most common questions in EFL pedagogy has been whether there is a ready and complete EFL method for all learners in all parts of the world. It can be answered with confidence that such a ready and complete method is not available. Of course, based on the experiences of different scholars and reviewing literature in this field, it can be claimed that one of the best methods is communicative language teaching. Kumaravadivelu's (2006) post-method, due to its needs analysis of learners and due to its three significant features of 'alternative to method', 'teacher autonomy', and 'principled pragmatism,' can also provide the possibility of teaching EFL practically and for a particular group of learners.

Social environment plays a major part in an individual's progress. Policymakers should be reminded that decisions related to factors such as EFL context, socio/economical supports, and teaching equipment are aspects that neither teachers nor students have control over and are within the authority of language planners and policymakers.

Pedagogical Implications for EFL Teachers

Factors associated with EFL teachers are another key aspect affecting EFL learning. In order to have successful EFL learning and teaching, teachers should be more innovative, creative, democratic, knowledgeable, and energetic.

EFL teachers must adopt an approach that makes learners more interested and aware of their need to learn English. However, as some participants in this study have mentioned, individual factors may be influenced by environmental factors, that is, the stress on environmental factors and their enrichment can also lead to the strengthening of individual factors. They should employ a democratic approach and refrain from an authoritative classroom management. EFL teachers should have a high teaching commitment to teach according to the syllabus or rubric in the universities.

In short, in order to have effective teaching, foreign language teachers must consider all factors affecting EFL teaching, especially teaching the speaking skill. They should emphasize all four important factors affecting EFL teaching as those related to 'language planning and

policy', 'teacher characteristics', 'environmental/social factors', and 'learners' individual factors', which are classified as the four main themes of this study. It is also recommended that all subcategories of the four main themes be considered in their teaching. Finally, among the four main themes of the study, teachers should pay special attention to environmental / social factors as one of the most important factors affecting EFL learning.

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Effect of Backward Summary Technique on Reading Comprehension Enhancement among Non-English Majors

Efecto de la Técnica de Resumen Hacia Atrás en la Mejora de la Comprensión Lectora entre Estudiantes que no Hablan Inglés

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Abstract

This study aimed to probe whether using the backward summary technique led to reading comprehension enhancement among non-English major university students at the Islamic Azad University of Babol, located in Babol city, in the North of Iran. 120 B.S. level nursing and microbiology students were randomly selected from a population of non-English majors enrolled for the General English course, divided into four groups of 30, and were randomly assigned to two experimental and two control groups. A pre-test of reading comprehension was administered to all groups, and then, they were taught passages to read for eight sessions but with different methods. A one-way ANCOVA was run to investigate the impact of the intervention, while controlling for the pre-test. The results indicated statistically significant effects for the experimental groups on the post-test, regarding comprehension, retention, and organization of the key concepts.

Keywords: academic reading comprehension, backward summary, reading strategies, schema theory, summarization

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Resumen

El objetivo del estudio fue probar si el uso de la técnica de resumen hacia atrás conduce a una mejora de la comprensión lectora entre estudiantes universitarios que no hablan inglés en la ciudad de Babol en el norte de Irán. Los 120 estudiantes de enfermería y microbiología de licenciatura en ciencias se seleccionaron aleatoriamente de una población de estudiantes de especialización no inglesa inscritos en el curso de inglés general, divididos en cuatro grupos de 30 estudiantes cada uno y asignados aleatoriamente a dos grupos experimentales y dos de control. Se administró un pre-test de comprensión lectora a todos los grupos, luego se les entregó unos pasajes para leer durante ocho sesiones pero con diferentes métodos. Se ejecutó un ANCOVA unidireccional para investigar el impacto de la intervención, mientras se controlaba la prueba previa. Los resultados indicaron efectos estadísticamente significativos para los grupos experimentales en el pos-test, en cuanto a comprensión, retención y organización de los conceptos clave.

Palabras clave: comprensión lectora académica, resumen al revés, estrategias de lectura, teoría de esquemas, resumen

Introduction

Reading comprehension skill plays a key role in learning a foreign language. Nevertheless, it is a great challenge to gain competence in foreign language (FL) reading due to readers' proficiency level, text type and difficulty, and task demands (Alderson, 2000). Unfortunately, many university students, especially in non-English majors, have problems with comprehending what they read in English as a foreign language because they get to higher education level unprepared for the demanding reading tasks expected from them.

Since English is learned as a foreign language in Iran, many Iranian university students rarely speak it in their daily lives. Nevertheless, a good command of reading comprehension skill is essential for them to gain academic achievements. That is why the ability to comprehend academic English texts has an overriding importance to Iranian university students, especially non-English majors (Tarshaei & Karbalaei, 2015; Zahedi & Tabatabaei, 2015). In recent years, the need for good reading comprehension has steadily incremented, and the demands on university students to read effectively is higher since they have to read complicated technical texts related to their fields of study mostly in English. Hence, the need for focusing on comprehension fostering strategies and techniques is urgent. Most of these students struggle in learning to read and understanding what is read. The ultimate goal of academic reading courses should be assisting students to read fluently and independently with good comprehension, which is the base of all meaningful learning.

Despite the large body of research on summarization, few studies have investigated the effects of summery strategy instruction on Iranian university students' reading comprehension enhancement. Although Baleghizadeh and Babapur (2011) and Shokrpour, Sadeghi, and Seddigh (2013) conducted their studies with Iranian university students and had positive

findings, as Chiu (2015) indicated, "neither study explained in detail how summarization was taught, nor were the differences between the treatments for the experimental and control groups made clear. Lack of such information makes the interpretation of the results less clear" (p. 81). Merging reading and writing instructionally is a complicated process, specifically in an EFL context (Hirvela, 2016). Consequently, there is an urgent need for designing experiments that show how to do that most productively. The current study was an attempt to fill these gaps in the existing literature.

Inspired by Wormeli's (2005) views on diversity and flexibility of summarization techniques, backward summary refers to combination of pre-reading questions and mapping activity at the pre-reading stage with the aim of activating students' background knowledge, asking their personal opinions about the topic, and encouraging them to guess and form hypotheses based on the text clues, such as the title and key words. In fact, the term backward suggests that a brief summary in the form of a visual outline is completed before reading the passage. In other words, the term refers to the reverse order of forming a visual outline before reading the whole passage in detail.

Based on the already-mentioned points, the current study probed the effectiveness of backward summary technique on reading comprehension enhancement among Iranian university students. The following research questions were proposed:

- Q_1: Does backward summary technique boost English reading comprehension among Iranian microbiology candidates at B.S. Level?
- Q_2: Does backward summary technique boost English reading comprehension among Iranian nursing candidates at B.S. Level?

Literature Review

Reading comprehension is a demanding dynamic and cognitive process. Even being proficient readers and users of comprehension strategies like guessing the meaning of complicated, technical, or unfamiliar words from the context, summarizing the read material for assisting retention and forming mental maps for organizing main ideas in L1 does not guarantee that students can successfully apply all the necessary strategies while reading in an FL context. Consequently, strategy instruction should be at the heart of any successful and mindful pedagogical enterprise, especially in the academia, regarding the length and nature of reading tasks in these contexts.

Mikulecky (2008) believes that reading strategy instruction enables the learners to communicate with the text, figure out the intended meaning of the author, and comprehend the key concepts of the text. In Wilhelm and Li's words, "for most language learners who

are already literate in a previous language, reading comprehension is primarily a matter of developing appropriate and efficient comprehension strategies" (2008, p. 291).

Pressley (2006) assumes that strategic reading should be taught through explicit instruction to enhance learners' autonomy and self-awareness of the meaning constructing process, prepare students for academic reading performances, and motivate them to play an active role in their learning. Learners' previous information and cultural backgrounds should also be taken into consideration (Lin & Chern, 2014).

Furthermore, reading is purposeful and requires an active involvement of the readers, as they have specific goals to achieve, when reading a text (Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Koda, 2005). Grabe (2009) assumes that "teaching students effective strategies while trying to build main-idea comprehension of text and joining these two goals through scaffolded discussions around a text is… comprehension instruction" (p. 207).

Reading comprehension as a dynamic process requires active and meaningful communication between the author and the reader (Hellman, Blair, & Ruply, 1998). However, it is the latter who is most likely to spoil the mutual enterprise by misunderstanding, not paying attention, or giving up reading. Consequently, readers have the key role in comprehending the read materials (Grabe, 2009).

Teachers should bear in mind that "reading occurs in a context, and the meaning of a text is derived from the previous knowledge stored in the reader's mind and the processes through which the reader tackles it" (Cook, 2008, p. 121). Schema theory relates to the interrelated and interdependent relationship between text comprehension and the readers' prior or background knowledge (Bernhardt, 2011; Pardo, 2004; Smith, 2004). It regards reading as an active event in which readers" prior knowledge is relevant to what is read to frame an ongoing transaction with the text, which leads to a unique understanding and interpretation of the read passage (Smith, 2004).

Research findings indicate that "deciphering information implies approaching a text from different perspectives" (Bogoya, 2011, p. 48). Graphical organizers (GOs) are "visual displays that teachers use to organize information to make [it] easier to understand and learn" (Meyen et al., 1996, p. 132). GOs not only help students generate mental images but also build graphic representations of the information they have read (Gallavan & Kottler, 2007; Rumiris, 2014). GOs can be considered as an instructional tool to assist students to organize and categorize information at different phases of reading. For example, they can be used to build background knowledge, make predictions and form hypotheses or educated guesses during the pre-reading stage. They can also assist the students to explore the text purposefully to see if these guesses and predictions come true or need modification during while-reading stage, and boost information retention

and recall at the post-reading stage in the form of mental maps or visual outlines including the key concepts.

GOs also enable the students to handle misunderstandings, self-monitor their comprehension, and foster discovery learning, which can contribute to comprehension enhancement (Bogoya, 2011; Meyen et al., 1996). Teachers should take into consideration the age, needs, interests, and FL proficiency levels of the learners and the diversity and flexibility of using GOs in empowering reading comprehension at all stages of reading. They can be viewed as powerful instructional tools for developing the skills of identifying main and supporting ideas by illustrating the relationship between key concepts and supporting details, familiarizing students with text structures and patterns, and organizing ideas for a better retention and recall of the read material in the form of charts, input tables, visual outlines, and concept maps.

Chiu (2015) refers to writing activities such as note-taking, answering post-reading questions, and summarizing, which mostly accompany reading for academic purposes. It can be said that if students can summarize well, they improve their reading ability (Lin & Chern, 2014). According to Wormeli (2005), "summarization not only helps readers focus on the essential information in a text but it also promotes learning that lasts because students spend time reflecting and processing what they have read while summarizing the texts" (p. 6). Summarizing is beneficial to both the teachers and students. For the former, it provides evidence of the students' ability to select the gist of a text. Thus, it plays a role as "an informal indicator of comprehension" and reveals the students' "ability to prioritize and sequence the read texts" as well (Westby et al., 2010, p. 276). For the latter, it gives a good chance for communicating important points, checking understanding, and providing an opportunity "to practice decision making and sequencing" (Westby et al., 2010, p. 276).

Students should be trained and encouraged to use a bunch of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading a text. It is assumed that they comprehend when they can predict what comes next, ask questions about what has been read, remember experiences related to the text, make mental representations of the passage, or link it to what is already known (Lin & Chern, 2014; Khaki, 2014; Pressley, 2006). Bogoya (2011) assumes that "students' training in strategies such as organizing information, understanding a paragraph, or summarizing key information is required if their reading is to be successful" (p. 48). Teaching students how to recognize meaningful information increases their motivations and interests in FL reading as well (Wormeli, 2005). Since source-based writings are frequently used in academia, emphasizing on instruction and the use of summarization techniques can enhance the interrelated reading-writing bond, which is an indispensable feature of academic competence, especially in the globalization era.

Method

Design and Participants

A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test with equivalent control-group design was used in this study. Table 1 shows the research design of the current study.

Table 1. Research Design

Group	Pretest- Treatment		Post-Test
Experimental	O_1	X	O_2
Control	O_1	-	O_2

O_1 = Pre-test, O_2 = Post-test, x = Treatment, - = No treatment

As indicated in the above table, the current research had a quasi-experimental design with pre-test, pedagogical treatment, and post-test stages. It was part of a Ph.D. project, including two researchers and 120 participants. The researchers were both academic staff members of the Islamic Azad University. For the sake of the internal validity of the research, all the classes were taught by one of the researchers (the Ph.D. candidate) under the supervision of the other researcher (her thesis advisor).

A pool of 120 freshmen, including 60 nursing and 60 microbiology major undergraduate students, of the Islamic Azad University of Babol, participated in the current study in the North of Iran. They were all native Persian speakers of both genders, and their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years. They were selected for the study randomly from the population of non-English major students who enrolled in the compulsory General English course at the time of the experiment. They were from four intact classes and were randomly assigned to two experimental and two control groups; each class contained 30 students. Due to administrative and time restrictions, using intact classes was the only choice for the researchers. All of the participants were high school graduates, having the experience of studying English for at least four years, and were pursuing a B.S. degree in nursing and microbiology.

Materials and Instruments

The reading materials were selected from the second edition of Reading for General English (2010), a course book for university students developed by SAMT, the organization for researching and composing university textbooks in the humanities in Iran. The textbook was designed to teach General English to non-English major students at the university level by a group of experienced university professors. The compulsory General English course

prepares non-English majors for reading longer field-related expository texts in English for Specific Purpose courses.

The first eight lessons, consisting of short expository texts, were used for the study. Each passage was composed of five paragraphs. It included a list of pre-reading questions to familiarize the students with the topic before reading the passage and activating their previous related knowledge. There was a mapping activity in the form of an input table, asking the students to extract the relevant information for each key concept with the aim of providing the students with a visual outline of the text before careful and detailed reading of the whole passage.

For example, one of the texts was about circus animals and their trainers. For the pre-reading activity, the students were asked to name some circus animals and comment on the advantage or disadvantages of animal trainers' jobs. For the mapping activity, they were given key concepts like big cats and techniques for taming wild animals, and were asked to select and extract the relevant information and complete the input table before a detailed and careful reading of the entire passage. The first eight lessons of the book were as follows:

- Lesson 1: The Age of the Dinosaur
- Lesson 2: A World below Trees
- Lesson 3: Showtime
- Lesson 4: Life in the Sea
- Lesson 5: Rainbows
- Lesson 6: How Does Your Skin Grow?
- Lesson 7: From Tadpole to Frogs
- Lesson 8: Treasures from the Deep

A researcher-made multiple-choice test measured English reading comprehension to check whether the students could differentiate the main idea from supporting details, or irrelevant information, figure out the authors' purposes, and infer from the text-based information. The validity of the test was specified based on specialist opinions and its reliability was measured by piloting it on 40 students with identical characteristics to the target samples. A reliability analysis was run on the reading comprehension test. Cronbach's alpha showed the test to reach acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.86$, which was considered acceptable according to the criterion of 0.70 (Robson, 1993).

The test consisted of four passages from the textbook. Five multiple-choice questions followed each passage. In order to determine the entry behavior of all the participants, a reading comprehension test was administered as the pre-test. After the pedagogical

treatment, the same test was given as the post-test to identify the students' gain regarding the implemented treatment.

Procedure

Before starting the experiment, the teacher held a meeting with each class, and told them about the research purpose, that is boosting reading comprehension. They were all assured that their identities and scores would be kept confidential, and the test scores would only be used for evaluating the probable effectiveness of the pedagogical intervention, not for judging them. The students were willing to improve their reading skills, so they eagerly agreed to participate in the study and were very cooperative.

Each unit started with the pre-reading questions for encouraging the students to activate their background knowledge, form expectations, and make informed guesses about the text they were going to read. They were supposed to read the questions and give their answers or opinions. They were also asked to guess about the topic of the passage and the main ideas related to that topic. They could give their answers in Farsi in case of not knowing the exact English words that they needed to express their opinions. The aim of answering pre-reading questions was to concentrate on what they already know or expect to read about the topic. Since it was a common course for all university students, the topics were not completely new or only related to a specific field of study; therefore, all the students could talk about their background knowledge and share what they already know.

The students were encouraged to share their opinions, expectations, or previous knowledge regarding the topic with the class- without the fear of not knowing the proper English words or making grammatical mistakes in sentence composition. They were assured that they would not face these problems after reading the text. Moreover, sharing opinions with the class could benefit the students who did not participate in this activity, due to shyness or fear of making mistakes in composing sentences, to activate their prior knowledge by getting some information from their peers about the text they were going to read.

After this brief introduction, all the students were asked to write down their expectations or predictions regarding the text based on the title, pre-reading discussions, and their previous knowledge about the topic. Around fifteen minutes were spent for the discussions based on the pre-reading activities, and ten minutes were given to the students to make a list of their expectations, guesses, and predictions about the text that they were about to read in class.

The next phase of the pre-reading stage included the mapping activity task. The students were asked to extract the related information from the passage and complete the table. It was similar to a puzzle completion task; all the pieces were put together to shape the big picture. Therefore, the complete table could serve as the visual outline of the whole text. The aim

of completing this task ahead of reading the passage was to see if this reverse order, that is, first forming a brief summary and then moving towards reading the whole passage, could lead to a better understanding of the concepts and reading comprehension enhancement. In fact, the term backward summary was used for emphasizing this reverse order. The students could choose to work either alone or in pairs. They were also allowed to use the English to English dictionary or ask the teacher for explanations if they faced any problems. The time allotted to finish this task was fifteen minutes. After completing the outline and getting a picture of the gist of the text, it was time to read the passage itself.

Each paragraph was read by a volunteer. While listening to each paragraph, the students were told to focus on the topic sentence, identify the main and supporting ideas, and ignore redundant information. They were also asked to check their lists of predictions and expectations to see whether they were confirmed by the text information or needed modifications according to the passage. This way, the text was read paragraph by paragraph by the volunteers, and the other students followed by checking whether their predictions came true or needed modifications. They were also asked to write down the main idea and supporting details for each paragraph to form a concept map. The teacher helped the students with confusing words, phrases, or sentences.

After reading the whole passage, they read comprehension questions and shared the answers with the class. Finally, they were given fifteen minutes to write a brief summary of what they read. This follow-up writing activity served as the final episode of the reading comprehension. The procedure can be illustrated as follows:

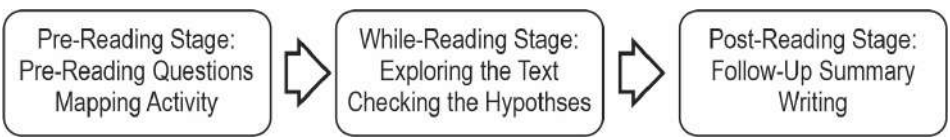

Figure 1. Summary of the Reading Comprehension Phases

In short, the students were first given a set of pre-reading questions to activate their background knowledge and make predictions about the text, followed by an input table to complete to get the gist of what they were about to read in the form of a visual outline. They were told to focus on the gist before going to more details. Then during the while-reading stage, they checked whether their expectations came true or needed modifications, which made the reading activity more interesting and purposeful, in the form of discovery learning. After reading the whole passage, they were told to write a brief summary about it. For summarizing the text, the students were told to review the visual outline, reread the original

passage, focus on the main ideas, ignore unimportant or redundant parts, and avoid copying the exact words or sentences used in the original text. Thus, the follow-up summary writing activity could indicate the students' comprehension output from what they had already read. The time allotted to write the summaries was fifteen minutes. The teacher walked around and acted as a facilitator, helping the students who had any problems with wording or sentence formation.

The summaries were collected and read by the teacher. The papers were given to the students the following session together with the teacher's written comments and feedback. Fifteen minutes were allotted to read some of them in class. In order to avoid the risk of the students' discouragement and losing interest and motivation by getting low marks, the teacher gave her comments or suggestions on their written summaries, instead of directly correcting their mistakes and giving scores. General suggestions regarding selection, deletion, cohesion, and restatement were given to improve the form and content of the written summaries. In fact, the teacher's comments were an ongoing conversation with the students to foster their reading comprehension and composing skills.

Since the focus of the study was on reading comprehension enhancement, and the students practiced source-based writing tasks, all writing instruction was limited to how to write a brief summary of what had been read with putting emphasis on writing good topic sentences, paraphrasing, focusing on key concepts, and ignoring redundant information. Detailed writing instructions such as using conjunctive adverbs to form complex sentences and essay writing techniques were not discussed.

For the homework, the students were told to keep an English diary and jot down what they learned each session. They were encouraged to write freely without the fear of making grammatical mistakes or being judged by others. They were also told to go through the text that was read in class and make a list of all the new words that they learned in the passage. They were asked to make a list of all the new words they learned in each lesson. The pedagogical intervention went on for eight sessions, and each time the students gained more responsibility for doing the required tasks.

Finally, for the control groups, the familiar traditional method of reading a passage and doing comprehension check exercises like true or false and copying the exact words from the passage for answering the questions were used. For both the experimental and control groups, the instructional materials and learning content were the same except that the control groups were not exposed to summarization instruction. They were taught by the traditional teacher-centered reading approach in which the teacher directed the instruction and activities, initiated the questions, and students responded by copying the answers from the texts. The emphasis was on vocabulary teaching, analysis of grammatical structures of the texts and translation of the English text.

Data Analysis

As the treatment was part of the regular compulsory General English course, the participants cooperated willingly, and all were present for the pre-test and post-test sections; therefore, no missing data were included. They were told to answer all items, so no question was left unanswered.

Furthermore, the threat that pre-test scores might influence the post-test scores was marginal because precautions were taken to avoid the practice effect. First, the correct answers were not revealed to the participants. Second, they were not allowed to take notes while taking the pre-test, and the exam papers were returned to the researcher immediately after the pre-test. Finally, the eight-week period was long enough for minimal recall of the pre-test content. The data collected from the pre-test and post-test were submitted for quantitative analyses.

The obtained data were analyzed via calculating a one-way ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) to investigate the impact of the pedagogical treatment while controlling for the pre-test, using SPSS 20. Preliminary checks were completed to be sure that all the assumptions of ANCOVA, including the normality of data, correlation between the covariate and dependent variable and homogeneity of the groups were met before running the ANCOVA.

Results

A one-way ANCOVA was run to examine whether reading comprehension scores differed between the microbiology major experimental and control groups, while controlling for post-test. Table 2 illustrates the results of ANCOVA for the two microbiology groups.

Table 2. ANCOVA Results for Microbiology Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	83.360a	2	41.429	30.469	.000	.517
Intercept	98.119	1	98.119	71.726	.000	.557
pre	56.693	1	56.693	41.443	.000	.421
group	22.967	1	22.967	16.789	.000	.228
Error	77.974	57	1.368			
Total	5768.000	60				
Corrected Total	161.333	59				

a. R Squared = .517 (Adjusted R Squared = .500

After controlling for pre-test, there was a significant difference between the two groups' performance F (1, 29) = 16. 78, p < .05. The experimental group outperformed on the post-test, compared to the control one (see Table 1 above).

Implementing the pedagogical intervention, that is backward summary technique, led to improved performance on the post-test. The experimental group members were able to infer the authors' meaning, find the main idea, and understand paraphrased sentences on the reading comprehension test. Furthermore, all of them finished the test before the allotted time was over; this was not the case with the control group members.

The covariate, in the pre-test, was significantly related to the participants' reading comprehension F (1, 29) = 41.44, p < .05. Consequently, it should have been considered as the covariate; otherwise, it would have a negative effect on the effectiveness of the pedagogical intervention.

Finally, the partial effect size, which gives an indication of the magnitude of the effect in the population at large, is .228, which is moderate. Therefore, it can be claimed that backward summary technique can be an effective way to enhance the reading comprehension skills of students in non-English majors.

To sum up, it can be concluded that the pedagogical intervention, that is backward summary, has a statistically significant effect on reading comprehension enhancement of microbiology majors, while controlling for the effect of the pre-test.

The same procedures were followed with the two nursing experimental and control groups. Table 3 illustrates the results for nursing majors.

Table 3. ANCOVA Results for Nursing Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	172.857a	2	86.429	41.349	.000	.592
Intercept	280.600	1	280.600	134.244	.000	.702
pre	19.257	1	19.257	9.213	.004	.139
group	155.345	1	155.345	74.320	.000	.566
Error	119.143	57	2.090			
Total	8932.000	60				
Corrected Total	292.000	59				

a. R Squared = .592 (Adjusted R Squared = .578)

As Table 3 indicates $F(1, 29) = 74.32$, $p < .05$. , so the two nursing groups are different regarding their post-test scores.

As far as the covariate is concerned $F(1, 29) = 9.213$, $p < .05$, indicating a significant effect for nursing majors. The partial effect size is .566, which is a moderate effect. Consequently, the pedagogical treatment, that is backward summary, seemed to improve the reading comprehension skills of the nursing majors as well.

The experimental group outperformed the control one on their reading post-test. They performed better in detecting main ideas, distinguishing them from details, and inferring the writers' intended meaning compared to the control group. Similar to the students of microbiology majors, the nursing experimental group finished the test before the allotted exam time was over.

Based on the observed results from both microbiology and nursing experimental groups, it can be claimed that backward summary can foster reading comprehension of Iranian non-English majors.

Discussion

The current study was intended to investigate whether implementing backward summary technique had a positive effect on fostering reading comprehension skills of non-English major university students at the Islamic Azad University of Babol, in the North of Iran.

The first finding of the study was the effectiveness of the pedagogical intervention. Based on the ANCOVA results, both nursing and microbiology experimental groups outperformed their equivalent control groups on the post-test. This is in line with the previous studies which reported positive effects of strategy training on reading comprehension enhancement (Alsamadani, 2011; Fan, 2010; Lin & Chern, 2014; Khaki, 2014; Mikulecky, 2008; Neufeld, 2005). It was also revealed that using visual outlines can help students organize and categorize ideas, identify main ideas and distinguish them from supporting details, which can lead to improved comprehension and retention of the reading material. This finding is also in parallel with the existing research by Bogoya (2011), Gallavan and Kottler (2007), and Rumiris (2014).

Furthermore, the outcomes are in accordance with a number of previous studies that reported positive effects of summarization (Baleghizadeh & Babapur, 2011; Caccamise, 2011; Chiu, 2015; Hemmati & Kashi, 2013; Maybodi & Maibodi, 2017; Mohammad Hoseinpur, 2015; Pakzadian & Eslami Rasekh, 2012), together with source-based writing (Grabe & Zhang, 2013; Hirvela, 2016; Li, 2014; Mokeddem & Houcine, 2016) in boosting reading comprehension, especially in EFL academic contexts.

This study added to the existing positive view of the effectiveness of using input tables to create visual outlines at the pre-reading stage to boost comprehension and retention in an academic EFL context. The visual outline paved the way towards more purposeful reading, discovery learning, self-monitoring of comprehension, and handling misunderstanding without the need to resort to mental translation, better understanding, and recall of the read materials.

Visual representation techniques are flexible; they can be used at different stages of the reading comprehension process and should not be limited only to final comprehension check tasks. The study echoes Wormeli's (2005) view about the flexibility and diversity of summarization forms and techniques who argues, "even though it's a good way to end a lesson, it's not *just* for the end of lessons" (p. 4) and encourages teachers to "use summarization to pre-assess students before teaching them and use students' response to inform and change [their] instruction" (Wormeli, 2005, p. 4).

Before implementing the pedagogical treatment, both nursing and microbiology majors were not eager to read in English because it was demanding, time-consuming, frustrating, and they had problems organizing their ideas, and recalling and restating the gist of what had been read in English. As a result, they resorted to mental translation to ease the mental burden and had no idea how to differentiate the key concepts from details or redundant points. However, using visual outlines changed the whole situation in an amazing way. It helped them to represent the relationship between the main and supporting ideas, displaying instead of expressing in words, and the hierarchical structure of expository texts was revealed to them. Furthermore, they learned how to use the technique to break sentences into meaningful chunks and focus on key concepts. This led to a better command of both reading and writing skills, which are central to academic competency.

It is impossible to survive in academia without having mastery over reading comprehension and source-based writing skills. Visual outlines are effective tools to organize thoughts and merge reading and writing. Finding effective ways to strengthen the bond between these interrelated skills should be a lifetime quest for mindful instruction, which can lead to critical thinking and meaningful learning, two essential life skills for twenty-first-century global citizens.

Teachers should bear in mind that for gaining utmost results, reading comprehension strategies must be instructed explicitly and step by step with the aim of turning struggling readers into enthusiastic, strategic, and independent ones. They should play the role of an educator by creating a supportive, stress-free atmosphere, and by encouraging struggling students to share their views without the fear of making mistakes and being judged or criticized for having difficulty in expressing themselves in English.

Scaffolding is the best way to increase learners' self-confidence and mastery in reading comprehension and retention. Teachers can also perform as an educator by using the thinking aloud technique and giving live examples of strategy use by modeling the whole process. As a result, their role can be faded gradually, and internalizing the use of the learnt technique can lead to forming a new empowering habit to change stressful and struggling learners into confident, strategic, and self-sufficient ones, willing to read for attaining knowledge and pleasure.

To sum up, students should be told about when and how to use the techniques and why to use them. Finally, teachers should accompany their struggling students through the journey to become strategic, self-regulated, and fully competent learners with patience, understanding, constant encouragement, and support.

Conclusion and Implications

The current study was an attempt to probe the effect of the backward summary technique in fostering reading comprehension among Iranian nursing and microbiology majors at the Islamic Azad University of Babol in the North of Iran. The students got familiar with the structure of the expository text with the help of visual presentation. They were also able to distinguish main ideas from supporting details or irrelevant information and organize their thoughts by forming mental maps and visual outlines. Expressing the gist in the form of a written summary helped them to recall and restate what they had read without resorting to mental translation. Using pre-reading questions, input tables as visual outlines, and forming while-reading mental maps and writing brief summaries as a follow-up task led to a better understanding and recall of the read materials.

In the globalization era, with an increasing understanding of the importance of becoming competent readers in English, especially in academia, in McDougald and Alvarez-Ayure's (2020) words, "educational programs have to prepare society for jobs, careers, and skill sets that do not exist yet but which lead to shifts in society that are shaped by both the economy and fast-increasing technology at hand throughout the world" (p. 156). Thus, new horizons are ahead for those who can understand and communicate in English, the global language in today's world. Consequently, comprehension strategy training is an essential and inseparable part of any twenty-first century successful and insightful teaching, which advocates discovery learning, self-regulation, lifelong learning, and strategic, autonomous learners.

Pedagogically speaking, strategic teaching can be beneficial for both EFL teachers and struggling learners dealing with the demanding academic reading and source-based writing tasks. Moreover, a greater emphasis on the reciprocal relation between reading and writing may hopefully provoke the substitution of the traditional way of teaching reading and

writing as separate language skills with more integrated methods at all levels, specifically in EFL academic contexts.

Finally, certain limitations appeared in conducting the current study, due to lack of time and facilities, which should be addressed by further investigation. Firstly, the only available option for the researchers was using intact classes. Therefore, the participants were selected based on their convenience and availability and their inclusion was not randomized. Secondly, only two non-major English groups, including nursing and microbiology freshmen, were chosen to participate in the study. The participants were also limited only to the students who enrolled in the compulsory General English course during the first semester of 2017 at a university. Therefore, the findings may not be applicable to all the non-English major students, elsewhere.

Furthermore, immediately after the end of the treatment, the participants in the present study were tested on their reading comprehension to determine the effects of backward summary technique, used as the instructional intervention. Since final exams were held soon after, and summer term classes were not compulsory, the participants were not available, so the researchers did not have the opportunity to have a delayed post-test. Future research should therefore use a delayed post-test to investigate the long-term effects of the pedagogical treatment and retention of what they have learned from a text by using the technique.

Due to the already-mentioned limitations, the findings of the current study should be seen with caution for making generalizations about effects of backward summary technique on boosting reading comprehension of non-English major university students. Further research with diverse learner groups and levels is undoubtedly required to get to a wider scope on the issue.

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The Use of Social Networks in L2 Instruction: Discussing its Opportunities and Obstacles

El Uso de las Redes Sociales en la Enseñanza de un Segundo Idioma: Discutiendo las Oportunidades y Obstáculos

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Abstract

This article presents a discussion and analysis on the implementation of social networks to support the learning of a second language (L2) in the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL); an area that has regained especial significance in the post pandemic era. Through a cumulative case study report that compares and contrasts several research studies carried out at different times, this article first brings to discussion the strengths that social networks offer for their implementation in L2 instruction. To continue the discussion, the issues of teachers' CALL training and access are presented as weaknesses for a successful implementation of social networks in the L2 instruction. It is argued that social networks cannot work as effective tools for this purpose without the guidance of a properly trained instructor. Nevertheless, attaining such an ideal condition is challenging considering the problems that might emerge during its implementation. Although it is common that language teachers to some extent include this resource for their L2 classes, more research needs to be done to produce literature that sheds light on the aspects that need to be worked on to take real advantage of this type of technology.

Keywords: CALL, feedback, L2 attitudes, language learning, motivation, social networks

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Resumen

Este artículo presenta una discusión y análisis sobre la implementación de redes sociales para apoyar el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua (L2) en el campo del Aprendizaje de Idiomas Asistido por Computadora (AIAC); un área que ha ganado un significado especial en la etapa posterior a la pandemia. Por medio de un informe de estudio de caso acumulativo que compara y contrasta varias investigaciones llevadas a cabo en diferentes tiempos, este artículo primero trae a discusión las fortalezas que ofrecen las redes sociales para su implementación en la instrucción L2. Para continuar con la discusión, los temas de la capacitación de los docentes y acceso al AIAC se presentan como debilidades para una implementación exitosa de las redes sociales en la instrucción L2. Se sostiene que las redes sociales no pueden funcionar como herramientas efectivas para este propósito sin la guía de un instructor debidamente capacitado. Sin embargo, lograr una condición tan ideal es un desafío considerando los problemas que podrían surgir durante su implementación. Si bien es común que los profesores de idiomas incluyan en alguna medida este recurso en sus clases de L2, es necesario realizar más investigaciones para producir literatura que arroje luz sobre los aspectos en los que es necesario trabajar para aprovechar realmente este tipo de tecnología.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje de idiomas asistido por computadora, redes sociales, aprendizaje de idiomas, motivación, actitudes hacia el segundo idioma, retroalimentación

Introduction

In the context of the 2020 post-pandemic era and the upsurge implementation of distance learning due to the lockdown of schools, computer assisted language learning (CALL) offers a range of possibilities for supporting the learning of an additional language. Since this field needs further exploration, there are counter positions about what types of technologies could be the most appropriate to promote the acquisition of an additional language. Several authors have proposed the use of social networks as an effective alternative to learn a second language (Dehghan et al., 2017; Laghos & Nisiforou, 2018; Mellati et al. 2018; Umarqulova, 2020; among others). Nevertheless, several controversial standpoints can also be found in the literature of this field. This article presents a cumulative case study report with the aim of evaluating the different perspectives regarding the implementation of social networks as means for learning a second language. According to Hayes et al. (2015), cumulative case studies obtain data from a number of topic-related and previously conducted case studies, that even when they correspond to different sites and times, are all tied together by the same focus of study. For such a reason, this paper looks at studies related to the implementation of social networks in language learning that span from the beginning of the year 2000 to the present in order to compare and contrast the evolution of this field.

In the first part of this article, the advantages for the implementation of social networks in the instruction of a second language are discussed. They include: the contribution to the normalization of CALL, the implications for students' motivation and attitudes, the social

networks' multimedia assets, as well as the opportunities for collaboration and feedback. In the second part, the drawbacks for the implementation of social networks in second language instruction are addressed, and these include access and integration.

What Do We Mean by Social Networks?

To begin the discussion, it is essential to define the key term of this article. In a broader sense, Wasserman and Faust (1994) define 'Social networks' as a set of nodes interconnected through one or several relations. From this definition, it can be understood that every node is represented by a person who is socially related to others, and who can maintain links which may fall into diverse categories such as kinship, friendship, fellowship, and even professional, academic, or business relationships, among others.

Eventually, social networks were extrapolated to the virtual world. In the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the first years of the 21st century were marked by the remarkable appearance of Web 2.0 which had as its main characteristic the allowing of collaboration, participation, and exchange of content and ideas by internet users (Miller, 2005). It was such a significant change in the history of the World Wide Web since the information sharing stopped being one-sided to become mostly interactive. In fact, internet users went from passive receptors and information processors to active contributors and content creators: social networks had been born.

It is now convenient to provide a definition of the term belonging to the ITCs milieu. Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networks as the

> Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system." (p. 211)

Based on this definition, examples of social networking online platforms currently used are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Tumblr, YouTube, etc. These platforms allow users to establish social relations with other people providing a space for interactions based on the publication of multimedia content to express their opinions, experiences, interests, ideas, common knowledge, activities, achievements, etc.

Early Research on Social Networks and Language Learning

One of the first attempts to set a precedent in this field was made by Lomicka and Lord (2009), who carried out a qualitative case study focused on computer-supported collaborative learning of foreign language graduate students from three universities in the U.S. They

used a wiki, which fits with the characteristics of a social networking site. Using the Curtis and Lawson framework (2001), they conducted an analysis of the learners' collaborative behaviors. Their findings showed that the students' level of involvement was not equal, which affected the quality of collaboration. This aspect might set an important factor for the analysis herein described, since even contributions and interactions must be performed by students in order to successfully carry out a learning task. This issue might also be related to the lack of a well-established pedagogical objective that includes the teacher's systematic supervision and feedback. The authors also concluded that qualified research in this field lacked both from theoretical and empirical perspectives. Even though in recent years studies on the use of social networks applied in language learning has considerably increased, it still requires further exploration.

Additionally, González Arroyo (2011) highlighted the collaborative advantage that social networks offer for language teachers due to their constant exchange amongst users. She also remarked on the usefulness of social networks for decreasing anxiety, increasing motivation, and fostering autonomy. Accordingly, in their study, Akbari et al. (2016) analyzed the relationship between the use of social networks for educational purposes on/as regards learners' engagement, motivation, and learning. The methodology consisted of comparing two controlled groups: one using face-to-face education and the other using Facebook. Their findings showed that the Facebook group showed higher outcomes on the TOEFL. Additionally, the Facebook group showed higher levels of engagement and motivation by the end of the course. As this study showed, the socio-emotional factor is presumably one of the greatest advantages of promoting the use of social networks in the field of language learning since it is an activity with which people continually interact in their daily lives.

Lin, Warschauer, and Blake (2016) conducted a survey of 4,174 participants, as well as 20 individual case studies involving Chinese speakers who were English language learners. The study evaluated learners' attitudes, usage, and progress in their L2. They identified as a drawback that most learners dropped out or showed only limited advancement. Their most significant finding was that learners need support, guidance, and well-structured activities to ensure successful participation and linguistic interaction. The next section presents recent literature on this matter, which seems to confirm and expand upon this latter idea.

Recent Literature in the Area

Recently, the production of literature in the field of CALL and social networks in language learning has increased. Derakhshan and Hasanabbasi (2015) present a review of several previous studies which have analyzed Facebook and E-mail as tools to promote language learning. After analyzing these studies, they report that Facebook presented the most significant effect on language learning; both Facebook and E-mail are mainly perceived

as advantageous for improving the writing skill. Additionally, they emphasize incidental learning as an important feature of social networks, which represent a source of stimulation/motivation to learn the second language. Certainly, social networks provide motivation for L2 learners, although not only for writing but also in other areas as they stimulate the listening, reading, and speaking skills due to the multimedia information that is shared on them.

Similarly, Deghan et al. (2017) set up a study to compare the progress that learners would have via using WhatsApp to teach all the L2 vocabulary from the corresponding textbook with the traditional face-to-face methods used in a classroom (e.g., vocabulary lists, drills repetition, flashcards, etc.). With this aim, two groups of EFL learners were evaluated using a pre-test and a post-test vocabulary assessment. The results showed that there was not a significant difference between the performance from one group and the other. In their discussion, the authors' interpretation for that result includes the learners' negative attitudes towards the use of social networks, as well as the lack of guidance, rules, and feedback from the teacher, as well as a solid establishment of a pedagogical purpose. They also sustain social networks should not be prescinded from classroom instructions. This study suggests that the advantages of using social networks in L2 learning might become idle/diminished when there is no a clear guidance and objective established by the language teacher.

Another study analyzing WhatsApp as a tool to teach vocabulary was carried out by Mellati et al. (2018). The objective of this research was to investigate the impact of creative interaction in social networks on learner's vocabulary. Having this purpose, they integrated 90 L2 learners to participate in the study and analyze their WhatsApp interactions. The researchers created a pre-test and post-test to measure their advancement in their vocabulary repertoire, as well as a semi-structured interview to gauge/measure the learners' own perceptions on their progress. Their findings remarked on the opportunities for effective interaction that technology presents, and the challenges that it implies for learners living in developing countries. Among the shortcomings of using social networks for language learners, these researchers mention the excess of freedom and the many distractors/distractions that learners face when interacting; as well as the need of having an adequate internet infrastructure and literacy to be able to successfully manage these tools. Once again, the issue of having a focus and pedagogical objective arises as a determinant factor to successfully implement social networks as a language learning tool.

McManus (2019) analyzed the social networks (Facebook and Skype) interactions of 29 British university French learners who were participating in an academic exchange for a nine-month stay in France, with the aim of tracking the learners' L2 complexity development. The data collection technique was a social network questionnaire to collect data in the beginning, middle, and end of their stay. The study concludes that the more French speaking contacts the learners had, the more complex their use of language would become in their online exchanges. In the same manner, constant communication with contacts in their home

country would slow down their language development. In this study, the interactions were completely free, in a context unrelated to any classroom assignment. The objective was only to examine the learners' behavior in their interactions; thus, the results confirm that both the guidance of the teacher and the pedagogical purpose are essential to take advantage of social networks as tools to learn and practice an L2.

In this section, some of the previously done research related to the use of social networks in L2 learning have been presented. In the following sections, the discussion pinpoints a number of the obstacles and opportunities of implementing social networks within the L2 context to take advantage of them as tools to promote the use of the target language.

Social Networks as an Alternative to the Normalization of CALL

Firstly, as an argument in favor of the use of social networks, the potential contribution that they might offer to the normalization of CALL is brought to discussion. According to Bax (2003), a central issue regarding CALL is to achieve its normalization. It consists of attaining a status in which technology is so embedded or integrated into the language classroom that teachers and students can make use of it naturally, in an almost unnoticed way. Chambers and Bax (2006) consider that although the elements to make the normalization of CALL possible may differ from context to context, they may be mainly based on improvements in the size, design, and location of the technology. In my opinion, social networks might offer an important contribution to the normalization of CALL. The main reason for arguing this is the level of familiarity that social networks have reached worldwide in the last years. That is, people from all ages, nationalities, and social backgrounds do have access to this type of technology on a daily basis.

In October 2018, the website *Statista* reported that the most famous social network sites worldwide ranked by number of active users are Facebook with 2234, YouTube with 1900, WhatsApp with 1500, Instagram with 1000, Weibo with 431, and Twitter with 335 million users. Those numbers serve to understand the fact that social networks have become part of people's everyday life; thus, the benefits that they may offer should be exploited. Even in the immediate context, one can noticed that people from different ages use social networks to communicate. They have revolutionized the ways in which people communicate. Today social networks are the medium for people to express their feelings, get informed, look for a job, make friends, fall in love, etc.

Due to their easy accessibility, social networks seem to comply with the three elements proposed by Chamber and Bax (2006). First, location; social networks can be potentially everywhere with an available internet connection. Second, size; social networks can be accessed

through a smart phone, tablet, or computer allowing mobility and portability for users. Third, design; social networks have a user-friendly and attractive design that allows people from different parts of the world to get access to them in an easy manner. Furthermore, they are an effective manner with which to access to the globalized world since people from around the world are users of different social networks, as has been mentioned before. Therefore, their potential for being used in the learning of different languages is evident.

In the local context, Izquierdo et al. (2017) carried out a study to explore the situation of teacher's use of technologies of information and communication in southern Mexican public schools, and the level of normalization that these technologies have among teachers. They collected data through the application of Likert-scale questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The results showed that apart from having limited access to the computer equipment, there was also a lack of training, technical support, and time availability. Concerning this same issue, in their study in the Iranian context, Hedayeti and Marandi (2014) interviewed twelve teachers with similar educational backgrounds, but with different experiences in using technologies in the classroom (four with experience, four with no experience, four who had just finished the CALL course). They found that the obstacles to achieve the normalization of CALL can be classified in three categories: teacher, facility, and learner constraints. The study was carried out with a relatively small number of participants; thus, its reliability might not be strong enough, and it may cause other factors to be left aside. Nevertheless, it stills provides insights into the issues that affect the normalization of CALL.

In the first category regarding teachers' constraints, the study found as the more recurrent problems the lack of CALL training, lack of digital literacy, teachers' attitudes and resistance, and lack of support from other stakeholders, among others. Within the second category, which is the facilities, the study indicated that the limited availability or lack of digital technologies at schools and deficient internet connection were the main obstacles for normalization. Finally, in the category of learners' constraints, the study found that the main issues were related to the level of proficiency, autonomy, age, insufficient computer literacy, and technology access problems. Although the previously mentioned studies belong to two different contexts (Mexico and Iran), their results go hand in hand in regard to the general constraints that L2 teachers might face for the normalization of CALL.

Nevertheless, social networks seem to have the capacity to overpass many of these constraints. For instance, since social networks were designed aiming to be user friendly, the level of digital literacy, age, and autonomy needed might not be factors that impede their use. In the same manner, as previously mentioned, social networks are already part of our daily lives so that the resistance that teachers and students might have been already tackled by social networks; the only pending issue, which becomes relevant, is to create activities with a pedagogical purpose (Lin, Warschauer, & Blake, 2016).

As previously highlighted, in spite of the user-friendly characteristics of social networks, the main challenge is the teachers' ability to create well-directed activities headed to comply with a pedagogical purpose. This statement is supported by Hsu (2016), who claims that the effectiveness of the integration of technology into the language classroom depends on teachers' technological, pedagogical, and CALL knowledge. He reached this conclusion after conducting a quantitative study on 158 surveys of Taiwanese EFL teachers to learn whether teachers' perceptions were related to their technological and pedagogical knowledge. One of the findings of the study was that although teachers possessed technological knowledge, they lacked the pedagogical knowledge needed for creating effective learning activities. This latter seems to be a significant shortcoming for the advantages that so far has been pinpointed as being in favor of the use of social networks in language learning instruction. A deficient pedagogical knowledge to take advantage of social networks draws back the advantage of having the accessible technologies. The latter implies that teachers become aware of the importance of implementing tasks and activities that not only involve the use of social networks, but also activities with a pedagogical purpose. Those activities should aim to put into practice a specific language feature. In the same manner, those tasks should allow students to have collaboration among themselves, so that they can share and build their knowledge with each other. Furthermore, the teacher should be able to evaluate effectively the students' progress and provide feedback.

This section has described the way the implementation of social networks might serve as an alternative to promote the normalization of CALL. As Mellati et al. (2018) assert, stakeholders and government need to work hand in hand to support financially the normalization of technologies and train teachers in digital literacy. The following section presents another advantage that social networks might offer in L2 learning, which consists of boosting students' motivation to continue with their progress in the target language.

The Effect of Social Networks on Students' Motivation and Attitudes When Learning an Additional Language

At first appearance, it may be argued that the use of social networks in language learning is an excellent tool to enhance motivation and positive attitudes of learners. Nevertheless, examining this hypothesis from different perspectives is necessary. In this regard, Ayres (2002) conducted a study to learn about students' attitudes towards the use of CALL. A total of 157 L2 undergraduate students, enrolled in a 16-week foreign language course, were interviewed. The methodology of the course was mainly based on the intensive use of a diversity of language software. The results showed that although the participants reported to have a low level of computer skills, they had in general a positive attitude towards the use of CALL. Similarly, they considered CALL as a tool to enhance classroom-based teaching.

However, the fact that the students reported their own level of digital literacy without being evaluated in that aspect needs to be pondered, since their perceived level of digital literacy might not be backed up with their actual skills. Although the study does not address social networks per se, its findings can be cautiously taken as analogous. Knowing that there is evidence of students having a certain degree of acceptance towards CALL and thus social networks can be well accepted, the next point to discuss is exactly what students may find in social networks to increase their motivation.

In addition to authentic social networks, there are also others created with a pedagogical purpose. Examples of the social networks to learn languages that can be found on the World Wide Web, these are Livemocha, Busuu, Lingualia, Babel, Speaky, UniLang, HiNative, Languing, among others. The use of these social networking platforms results in a practical strategy to improve students' motivation and positive attitudes towards the L2 learning.

To illustrate this point, Felix (2004) carried out a study on 36 university students enrolled in an L2 web-based course. The data collection techniques included journals and surveys to obtain feedback about their perceptions using web-based language learning. The study found specific aspects that students perceive as advantages and disadvantages on learning a language through this type of resources. Among the advantages: time flexibility, wealth of information, reinforcement of learning, privacy, ability to repeat exercises, gaining computer literacy, and absence of teacher. These advantages can be noted in social networks: users can access at any time, they can receive plenty of input in the L2 from the content that other users publish, they also might get feedback in the L2 from the people they interact with, or they may have private interactions which decrease the anxiety to commit mistakes; while using the social networks they improve their technology skills, and finally, they can use them in an autonomous manner.

Regarding the disadvantages: lack of speaking practice, distraction, no interaction with peers, inadequate feedback, absence of teacher, and technical support. Given that the study was made in 2004, and being now situated in the year 2021, several of the stated disadvantages have been removed: most social networks now allow videoconferencing, which can be used to practice speaking and interact with other users, as well as to receive feedback. The multimedia content can be used to catch students' attention instead of being a factor of distraction. These same platforms are user friendly enough for not requiring technical support, and the teacher's support can be only necessary to assign a task.

It should be mentioned that the cited study has some methodological flaws, such as being too broad on its objectives and the correlation between the intended studied variables. Even so, the results in this specific aspect seem to be consistent with what a student finds motivating from using a web-based social network platform to learn an additional language. For instance, having access to a wealth of information results/constitutes a benefit for

students who seek to be challenged in their level of proficiency. It is what Vygotsky calls the *zone of proximal development*, i.e., students need to be in contact with language that is right above their current level in order to advance further and continue learning. Students may have plenty of opportunities to interact with a more advanced written or spoken language while interacting in social networks, even having visuals as support for comprehension such as images, video, etc. Indeed, this is a way of motivation. In addition, the social network platform offers a certain degree of freedom to users, since they have the opportunity to interact with its different features as the language included in the images, texts, videos, option menus, etc. Experimenting by themselves with no restriction of time and attempts, etc., results a motivating experience for students.

A more recent study carried out by Mellati et al. (2018) obtained similar findings. In their study, which had as an objective to determine the effect of creative interactions in social networks on learners' vocabulary knowledge, they applied pre and posttests to evaluate the learners' vocabulary level, as well as semi-structured interviews of 90 language learners. Among the positive effects, L2 learners reported that social networks are authentic, effective, and suitable for learning outside the classroom environment. Moreover, the limitations that they perceived included the lack of digital literacy, economic resources, differences in the L2 level and the challenges that the implementation involves for developing countries.

Another similar study was conducted by Alqahtani (2018). Her study had as a main concern to explore the usefulness of social networks sites to support English language students. Data collection was carried out through questionnaires applied to 45 female participants, who were also social network users, in a Saudi University. The researched confirmed that social networks serve as meaningful and motivating means to improve the learners' L2. They manifested to have positive attitudes towards the use of social networks since they are already part of their daily lives. Additionally, they offer opportunities for collaboration and socialization beyond the school context; therefore, social networks also strengthen social ties which become a great element for increasing motivation.

Another source of motivation that social networks might offer when being used in second language instruction is that they provide a certain level of anonymity. This issue was addressed by Melchor-Couto (2016) in her research studying oral interactions in a virtual world second life. In spite of the number of participants being small, her findings suggest that the fact of enjoying a certain level of anonymity endowed participants with a sort of shield that gave them confidence to speak in the second language. Even though social networks do not function with "avatars", they also provide users with a certain degree of anonymity; users of social networks do not interact face to face, and their real identity does not necessarily need to be exposed. Although most of the information in social networks will promote reading, writing, and listening, it is also possible for users to practice speaking when broadcasting a video, through video calls or voice calls (depending on each social

network). In any case, learners can enjoy anonymity and the benefit of reducing anxiety to communicate in another language.

This section has presented several studies conducted over a time span of 20 years, which have shed light on the relation between the use of social networks in language learning and the learners' motivation to progress in the L2. Nevertheless, the results have been consistent throughout time, confirming that these tools are effective to support language learning and boost learners' motivation. In the following section, the multimedia features that social networks have are discussed.

Social Networks and Their Multimedia Assets

One of the greatest advantages of the implementation of social networks in language learning instruction has to do with their multimedia feature. Since social networks allow sharing information through texts, audios, videos, and images, the potential possibilities to create learning activities are countless. Nonetheless, considering the specific standards in order to judge the adequacy of the social networks interface becomes a relevant issue. Concerning this aspect, Ferney and Waller (2001) mention that regarding text, the font size needs to allow enough readability, as well as to avoid overcrowding the screen with large amounts of text. Similarly, they mention that in order to have an efficient interface, other aspects that need to be observed are screen semiotics (to guide the reader through the website), ergonomics (relating to the size of the text, for instance), and an interesting third element which is a virtual relationship. The authors define this third element as a dialogue between teacher and learner through the mediation of a computer. They discuss that when this virtual relationship intends to be cross-cultural, the website might become depersonalized and cultural bias might be induced. Even though every social network is different, most of them comply with the elements described by Ferney and Waller (2001). Regarding the issue about the virtual relationship, social networks have a great advantage. First, their interface is a general one for people around the world who normally do not include/exhibit/possess any type of cultural inclination. At the same time, users can personalize their accounts by means of the content they post. In this way, every account is the reflection of the user's personality and interests; an aspect that results in being a strength for social networks.

The aim of this article is to discuss the possibilities of integration of social networks in the instruction of an additional language. Izquierdo (2014) maintains that people construct their own knowledge during their interaction with different types of media. Nevertheless, for learning to occur, those different types of media must be combined in a way that allows learners to process meaning in the L2. This is why instructors must create meaning-oriented tasks that will allow students to get exposed to rich sources of input from different sources (media) from which they will decode information in the second language. Although it is

not explicitly mentioned, a third implicit element emerges in this process: the teacher as a mediator between the student and the CALL component. Hence, one cannot ponder a given social network as effective for learning languages without first looking at the instructor as a central partaker in this process.

Also related to this topic is Ranalli's (2008) study on computer simulation games. Aspects of this study can be comparable with the present discussion on the availability of incorporating social networks to second language instruction. For instance, a similarity of simulation games and social networks is that both provide rich opportunities for linguistic exposure and communitive practice due to their multimedia content within meaningful contexts. This study offers a specific example of how a technology-based resource can be adapted to be used for pedagogical purposes. In this case, the researcher added instructions to complete a task, vocabulary lists, notes explaining cultural content, access to an online dictionary, and allowed collaboration with other learners. The study found that the participants considered this adaptation to have potential for language learning, but as an addition to the course-based instruction. In sum, when comparing social networks, they can be seen as an excellent medium for facilitating the instruction of an additional language, as long as the process is mediated by a language teacher who is properly trained to use this type of technologies.

The Possibility of Collaboration and Feedback: A Social Network Strength

A solid argument to implement social networks in second language instruction is the possibility/opportunity for collaboration and feedback that they offer. Users can post and edit messages, chat with other people, comment on videos and images, and receive feedback on their own contributions. Since social networks allow for connection with people from all around the world, users can interact with native speakers, so that in addition to the language rich input to practice the four skills, they can also get enriched culture-wise.

Previous studies have shown that this type of online resources can be used to promote collaborative learning skills (Alqahtani, 2018; Laghos & Nisiforou, 2018; Umarqulova, 2020). In the same way Zou, Wang, and Xing (2006) conducted a study on the use of wikis (which have similar but more basic features than social networks) integrated in the language classroom. Their aim was to explore the effect of collaborative tasks in error correction for learning Chinese and English for learners in the U.K. and China, respectively. For ten weeks, the learners developed several tasks in a collaborative writing project, in which they also had the opportunity to give feedback to their counterparts under the instructors' monitoring. The participants in the study were even trained on using Wiki including editing and correcting mistakes so that they could prepare students at the same time to perform corrective feedback

effectively. The methodology of this study was a big strength since the students required to be guided during the process and not being left aside. The results were encouraging since the learners provided positive comments on using Wikis for collaborative learning to practice their language skills and give feedback through the activities designed for this purpose. Moreover, the results suggest that the students improved their writing skills.

Another study conducted by Hung and Higgings (2016) compared the interaction through text-messages and video calls among students. The participants were six Chinese-speaking learners of English and six English-speaking learners of Chinese arranged in dyads. Their aim was to identify the communication strategies that they used, since cultural differences would be mediating the interactions. One pitfall of this methodology is that the learners were given topics and questions to develop the dialogues with their interlocutors which could have affected interactions at the level of accuracy, authenticity, interest/motivation, and pressure. Their findings suggested that video exchanges promote fluency while texts messages are more appropriate to improve accuracy in writing. The cultural differences played an important role since the students explained certain aspects to their peers abroad to enable and facilitate communication. Despite its methodological limitations, this is another example of how to create activities using the social networks as a medium to obtain benefit from their useful resources.

Can Teachers Handle the Integration of Social Networks in Second Language Instruction?

So far most of the discussed points have to do with the aspects in favor of the use of social networks in second language instruction. However, there are also arguments against its implementation. One of these arguments is the actual possibilities for teachers to create activities that allow students to take advantage of the benefits that social networks entail/offer, but without losing sight of the pedagogical purpose that they must have.

In Hedayeti and Marandi's (2014) study, whose methodology has been previously described, they found that two of the most significant obstacles for expanding the use of CALL are the lack of teacher training, and their negative attitudes towards its implementation. Other studies have already focused on examining this topic, such as the case of Kuure et al. (2016) who conducted a study on pre-service teachers in order to support them in the process of changing their paradigm from the role of traditional language teachers to technology-based task designers. Their findings suggested that rather than designing activities that represented innovative ways to integrate technology into the classroom, teachers replicated the traditional classroom activities using a computer. Their conclusion established that the central issue in this failure to successfully integrate social networks in the L2 classroom is that these teachers do not view themselves as designers of technology-based activities; thus, they

do not assume this role. As a solution, the researchers propose that teachers get involved in experimenting with technology and reflecting at the same time on these practices.

In effect, teachers tend to replicate the same strategies with which they were taught, an effect known as *apprenticeship of observation (*Lortie, 1975), perpetuating in this way the same pedagogical practices generation after generation. An example of this situation can be given when teachers use a Facebook group only to post grammar charts for their students to study. It is natural then that such teachers become reluctant to accept a drastic change as it implies to implement technology-based activities, which challenges their already established teaching-styles and strategies.

Therefore, although using social networks to promote the learning of an additional language seems an appealing idea, the problem of their teacher-mediated adaptation for the language classroom is what makes it difficult to put into practice. This is a serious problem since one of the main characteristics of social networks is precisely this possibility of interacting and connecting with people from different parts of the world. However, Kuure et al.'s (2016) study found that teachers do not promote collaboration among students, but only individual traditional work. Several authors have also addressed the constraints that language teachers face in order to successfully integrate social networks as tools to support the language learning (Izquierdo et al., 2017; Jafarkhani et al., 2017; Mellati et al., 2018; Umarqulova, 2020). They all coincide on the fact that language teachers require a systematic support from all the involved stakeholders (teachers, government, curriculum designers, administrative staff, etc.) in order to provide adequate training to develop enough digital literacy so as to be able to take advantage of these resources. In this sense, I consider that teachers should be trained in fostering collaboration among students, and this is the main feature of social networks. They allow exchanges among users, and teachers have the possibility of guiding the process of input-output and feedback by taking advantage of various resources that social networks offer.

There are also cases in which teachers perceive the implementation of technology in their classes in a positive way. In their study, Karsenti et al. (2020) examined the attitudes that Slovenian student-teachers had towards the use of digital technology in education and their self-perception about their proficiency when using them. They collected data from 261 student-teachers, using Likert-scale questionnaires to evaluate four categories: teaching and learning, assessment and critical thinking, empowering learners, and facilitating learners' digital competence. The obtained results indicated that the student-teachers hold positive attitudes towards the use of digital technology in the language classroom; however, they perceived themselves as having a low level of digital literacy. I can conclude that teachers need to be supported to overcome the lack of digital literacy, which requires the implementation of training programs.

The previously regarded collaboration feature of social networks was further studied by Fuchs (2016). She examined tele-collaboration among a group of English language teachers in the U.S. and another one in Turkey. They were asked to develop technology-based English language learning tasks, so that they had to negotiate their design, implementation, and evaluation. The participants had the opportunity to share their opinions, classroom contexts, and learning experiences with the aim of evaluating the pedagogical, technological, and collaborative factors. An important element of this methodology was the use of weekly tele-collaborative logs which served as a medium to record their observations, reflections, and articulations about the designed tasks with their teammates, at the same time that they built connections with each other. The implementation of these activities can be easily replicated using social networks, whose attractive features may increase the participants' interest in collaborating. In this aspect, Fuchs' (2016) study put into practice the elements that Kuure et al. (2016) proposed, which were the experimentation with technology and reflection on the process. Only one of the teams reached a high level of collaboration, negotiating their decisions with an efficient management of task-orientation. Once again, I argue that social networks might boost this level of participation and interest. The most relevant aspect of Fuchs's (2016) findings is that through collaboration, reflection, and negotiation, teachers can overcome the initial resistance and take charge of the implementation of technology-based activities. Through a process of efficient peer-work, teachers may create successful activities with strong pedagogical objectives using social networks

Consistent with the latter, Lord and Lomicka (2011) sustain that what is needed to support language teachers in providing the next step to embrace technology (to implement social networks for the purposes of this discussion) is adequate training. They report that training courses for teachers in CALL are scarce, and those who have the possibility to receive one do not feel satisfied with the content they are given. The authors also mention a number of factors that generate that scarcity in the available CALL training courses such as: lack of time in the programs to promote CALL or the vision of technology in language learning as secondary or not considering it important. In their article, the authors sustain that such teachers already have a genuine interest in incorporating technologies in the language classroom but that their main interest is in knowing how to do it.

As Wilson-Armour (2020) sustains, the role of the instructor demands a more invested and active role when implementing technology in the classroom and the need of training and mentoring during the design and implementation process in order to successfully learn to implement technologies in the language classroom. Only then will the implementation of social networks to enhance language learning instruction be possible. At present, several authors are already working on finding strategies to support language teachers in planning and integrating technologies in the classroom. An example of this is Chen's (2019) claim that such an integration should include a constructivist approach based on engaging and real-life

purpose projects that will allow teachers to capitalize on the online existent resources, such as social networks. The author suggests that projects involve problem-solving, task completion, evaluation, and student reflections. Similarly, Lubkov et al. (2020) propose an implementation of technology from a humanitarian perspective. It means that certain values should be promoted when using digital technologies such as responsibility, communication, freedom, and security. All these values can ensure a more natural transition to the normalization of digital technologies in the language learning class.

In this section I presented various constraints that teachers face to integrate social networks in language learning. The following section discusses the problem of accessibility as a shortcoming to carry out its implementation.

Are Social Networks Accessible Enough?

I have already referred to the easy manner in which social networks can be accessed. As mentioned before, everyone with a smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer with an internet connection can obtain an account in one of the many available social networks. Nevertheless, the issue of the digital divide looks at the fact that whereas some people have access to different technological resources, there are others who, due to their personal context or location, cannot access to those technologies; a problem that has alarmingly emerged more during this 2020-2021 pandemic lockdown of schools. If CALL was to be included in a curriculum, that would require for education policymakers to review first whether students are in social and economic conditions of equality so that the issue of access is solved beforehand.

Nevertheless, one must consider the variety of contexts in which students can be located. Most countries around the world are developing ones, and even inside a particular country, as is the case of Mexico, students can belong to different social strata, and schools themselves may not possess/provide the necessary equipment or internet connection as to be able to ask every student to work on a given technology-based task. That situation is exemplified in Izquierdo et al.'s (2017) study. The researchers, as an objective, had to determine which technologies of information and communication had become normalized in public schools in the south of Mexico. They carried out a study combining both quantitative and qualitative data using a Likert-scale questionnaire, interviews for teachers and principals, and longitudinal classroom observations. The researchers found that the main limitations to the normalization of these technologies were the lack of access to the equipment, and the teachers' lack of training / competence to adequately optimize the already limited available technologies. Nevertheless, when considering the setting of a private institution in the center of Mexico, the situation about the access of technology can be considered as the opposite. In

this manner, the implementation of social networks for language learning should be subdued to the previous acknowledgment of students' equal access conditions to the internet.

Other authors sustain that the issue of scarce technology can be overthrown. That is the case of Egbert and Yang (2004). They argue that optimal language learning activities can be supported by the use of limited technologies. The authors maintain that despite the available technological resources, teachers can make a good use or poor use of them. In this aspect they add that regardless of the many multimedia features that the World Wide Web applications offer (as in the case of social networks), students might feel overwhelmed by these technologies, frustrated or unmotivated due to poor use. In order to demonstrate their point, they present a framework for developing language learning tasks in limited technology contexts. This framework consists of eight conditions: providing learners with possibilities of interaction and negotiation of meaning, interaction with the target language, use of authentic tasks, freedom to use language creatively, going at their own pace and obtaining feedback, guided attention, low levels of anxiety, and allowing autonomy. Once again, this aspect seems to relate to instructors' lack of expertise in becoming designers of technology-mediated tasks. Egbert and Yang's (2004) framework guides teachers on the necessary aspects to design appropriate activities.

In the Mexican context, Izquierdo et al. (2017) conducted a mixed-method study with the aim of examining the ICTs that English teachers used in the daily instructional practices with young learners in public schools. One of their findings was that the teachers did not use institutional technology equipment; but preferred to bring to class their own equipment. One reason for this behavior was that the administrative regulations are complicated, so they preferred to make the process easier. This is an example of the struggles that teachers face even when the school provides them with technology equipment. Going back to the implementation of social networks in the second language classroom, one can observe that social networks are designed to be used in an individualized manner. In this way, in order to use them in the language classroom each student requires access to a computer or mobile device with internet connection, either in the classroom or at home. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ensure that every student has the access and technology needed to participate in a given task; situation that is restrained only to certain contexts.

Conclusion

In this article, I have analyzed different positions in favor and against the implementation of social networks in second language instruction. The studies discussed here provide evidence that suggests that social networks possess a great potential due to their features that allow sharing multimedia information, getting feedback through collaboration, being exposed

to rich sources of input in the second language, negotiating in meaningful interactions, motivating students with relevant topics, and improving attitudes toward the L2, etc.

Nevertheless, in each of the arguments that I have presented, a common element emerges: in order to benefit students with the advantages that social networks offer, language teachers need to design adequate activities and tasks which lead students to a successful interaction with technology and progress in their L2 learning. This point supposes a great challenge since, as I have discussed, there is a scarcity in the available CALL training programs for teachers; thus, their resistance to integrate technology in the language classroom persists. All the involved stakeholders (government, curriculum designers, administrative staff, language teachers, etc.) should work together to overcome this issue as well as to achieve the objective of taking advantage of the many benefits that social networks have and the potential to contribute to the area of language learning. Supporting teachers to develop a digital literacy might have as a consequence the shift towards building more positive attitudes on working with technology; an element that has become essential in the post-pandemic era.

Another factor that I discussed as blocking the implementation of social networks is the issue of access, although it could be seen as a minor aspect, since it is more linked to each school and student's particular context, and there may be cases in which students and teachers find themselves in a privileged position that allows them to easily access technology. The digital divide is a problem that most developing countries face; nonetheless, it is possible to advance step by step towards the expansion of new horizons of possibilities that teachers can offer to language learners. This will surely allow one to take advantage of the technology that already forms part of people's everyday life as in the case of social networks.

In sum, this article has discussed two conditions for a successful incorporation of social networks in language learning: First, having adequate task-design and guidance by the instructor, and second, having the possibility of access to technology. With these two elements, I consider that social networks can have by themselves all that is needed for learners to become benefited and to enhance their language learning process.

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Knowledge-Base in ELT Education: A Narrative-Driven Discussion

Conocimiento Base en la Formación en Lengua Extranjera: Una Discusión Basada en Narrativas

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Abstract

Knowledge and experience, mediated by reflection, are essential components in teacher education and development programs. This paper discusses core elements that have guided ELT education in the last years and analyzes the case of five English language teacher educators who –in the Colombian context—reflect on their own pedagogical practices through narrative. I guide the discussion by four probing questions that generate a reflective overview of English language teachers' knowledge-base, identity construction, and decision-making when it comes to localizing knowledge. This reflection uncovers teacher educators' gains and challenges as it becomes input for those others who are at different stages of their teaching career.

Keywords: knowledge-base, narrative, reflection, teacher education

Resumen

El conocimiento y la experiencia, mediados por la reflexión, son componentes esenciales en los programas de formación y desarrollo docente. Este artículo discute elementos centrales que han guiado la educación en lengua extranjera en los últimos años y analiza los casos de cuatro formadores de docentes de inglés que -en el contexto colombiano- reflexionan sobre su propia práctica pedagógica por medio de narrativas. La discusión se guio por cuatro preguntas generadoras que dan una visión general reflexiva de los conocimientos base de los profesores de inglés, la construcción de identidad y la toma

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de decisiones cuando se trata de localizar el conocimiento. Esta reflexión pone al descubierto logros y desafíos de formadores de docentes y se convierte en un insumo para aquellos que se encuentran en diferentes etapas de su carrera docente.

Palabras clave: conocimiento base, narrativas, reflexión, formación docente

Introduction

Teachers' inquiry and reflection are at the root of teacher education and professional development. No matter how novice or expert teachers seem to be, there is always a need for reflecting on our teaching practices. Having a strong theoretical basis, although essential, is never enough for teaching that is inclusive and "context-bound" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001); teaching that comes from the needs of learners and that is informed by teachers' understanding of local realities. Language teaching, mediated by reflection, provides pedagogical resources for teachers' empowerment and enactment that will help improve their practices.

In this sense, I strongly believe in the "transformative power of narrative" (Johnson & Golombek, 2011) as a means to refine and be more engaged with the teaching profession. The need for inquiry and the richness of telling teachers' stories are a possibility that could be granted to them through study groups and teacher development programs, which take place over long periods with the purpose of acknowledging their roles and recognizing their contexts. Johnson and Golombek (2011) identify the role of narrative in reflective teaching, teacher inquiry, and the enhancement of teacher professional development, "not by the products of narrative activity, but by the cognitive processes that are ignited as a result of engagement in narrative" (p. 488). They introduce narrative as a possibility for externalizing, verbalizing, and examining teacher cognition. As further support for this premise, the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie (2009) argues that stories matter; they depend on how they are told and who tells them. That is to say, that if stories are told by their authors, based on their own experiences, their reality is more likely to be perceived the way they want it to be, and those stories may, subsequently, have a healing, reflective, or empowering effect. In the same line, Durán, Lastra, and Morales (2013) value the role of retelling personal stories as a possibility for pre-service English teachers to share knowledge and gain experience.

The goal of this paper is to discuss core elements that have guided ELT education in the last years, including terms such as English as a Lingua Franca, English as an International Language, World Englishes (Canagarajah, 2005; Kubanyiova, 2018; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; McKay, 2018; Sifakis, 2007) and the implications for teacher decision-making on global and local issues that influence their practices. I also analyze the case of five Colombian English language teacher educators who reflect on their own pedagogical practices through narratives. They are: Marcela, Carmen, Paul, Ariadna, and Elijah. This reflection is guided by the following four probing questions:

- When and how did you become an English teacher?
- How did you develop your teaching identity?
- What knowledge has made you become the kind of teacher you are?
- What are some sociocultural and global issues behind teaching English?

Discussion

When and How Do We Become English Teachers?

As a teacher educator, I analyze the possibility of helping prospective teachers become reflective practitioners. In doing so, I recall Freeman (2016), who invites us teacher educators to reflect upon the processes we live ever since we plan to be teachers. He introduces the terms *social practice theory* and *situated learning theory* to refer to the ways we approach learning. The first one is closer to the Vygotskian sociocultural theory, which I mostly adhere to, given I find learning to be situated in a specific context. Freeman (2016) introduces the born/made dichotomy, which may place educators on one edge, either born to be teachers or made through education and experience. As teacher educators, we could wonder if it is possible to have building components of each, supported on Dewey's (1916) thoughts that the born/made dichotomy blurs how people learn.

Another point of discussion is the background knowledge that we, teacher educators, bring to teaching, gained from our experience as students or from common everyday practices. Background knowledge is an ongoing debate in language teaching when referring to the language skills of teachers, and raises the concern of the value of the native speakers (NS), the definition of who is a legitimate one, and how much they are appreciated in this profession. This is aligned with the born/made dichotomy, which supports the demands that teachers have to fulfill because of their nonnative speaker (NNS) condition, while some others are exonerated because of their NS nature.

As such, many of us NNS teachers of English claim that we should not be measured based on nativelike abilities, but on how prepared we are to teach the language (Arboleda & Castro, 2012; De Mejía, 2006; Espinosa-Vargas, 2019; Viáfara, 2016). For instance, Espinosa-Vargas (2019) addresses the NS/NNS dichotomy and questions the favoring of the first in the Colombian context. Conversely, Viáfara (2016) explores pre-service teachers' own perceived strengths and limitations based on their NS/NNS conditions for teaching the English language. Not surprisingly, while learning the language, we commonly try to mirror NSs' pronunciation in the attempt to reach a level of proficiency with a target in mind. When that is the case, whom are we imitating? Prospective teachers will rely on teacher educators, while the latter will make decisions based on their own education process and on

the current waves that they have affiliated with after years of experience. Therefore, we need to get academically prepared to face the challenges of education, which imply localizing and contextualizing our teaching practices to make informed decisions that will help level up the NS/NNS conditions, so that other quintessential elements in teacher education programs are similarly valued.

I continue the discussion from the voices of five teacher educators who enrich this reflection through their narratives nurtured by their over 20 years of teaching experience. The five teachers whose cases I present here work for language teacher education programs in Colombia and acknowledge this one as an opportunity to reflect upon and rethink their practices. Following are some excerpts from their stories.

When and how did you become an English teacher?	
Marcela	I became an English teacher after my international sojourn in 1998. Once I arrived to my city, I applied for teaching positions at two Universities and I got both jobs.
Carmen	As a matter of fact, I started teaching English when I was in sixth semester, in 1988. I remember that I taught a group of professionals enrolled to extension courses at my university, which was a challenging and enriching experience. Later, in 1991, I graduated from the Modern Languages Program and had the opportunity to work as an English teacher in the same program, which contributed a lot to my professional growth. I think that I didn't become an English teacher once I graduated, but before that, since, for me, this profession derives from the learning experiences and the chances you have to share them with other learners.
Paul	I think I became an English teacher when I started working at a school after graduating from college. There, I had the entire responsibility of teaching classes and dealing with the matters of a full-time teacher. It was back in 1988.
Ariadna	I become a teacher 21 years ago when I was a university student because in that moment [,] I had the opportunity to get into a classroom. It was in a primary school and this experience was very important because I realized that teaching was my life decision.
Elijah	I think I became an English teacher some time before finishing college. At that time, undergraduate students were able to do their teaching practice in some English courses at the university where I studied. So, I decided to take the opportunity and that is how I became an English teacher. Right after I graduated from college, I applied for a job at the same University and fortunately I got it. Since then, I have been teaching at the University for more than 20 years.

Marcela and Paul assert that becoming English language teachers came to be once they got teaching jobs. Marcela, for instance, felt that her international sojourn helped her better her language skills, an aspect that recruiters appreciate. Carmen, instead, acknowledges that all

the learning experiences she lived during her undergraduate program were part of becoming an English teacher, which means teaching is an ontological constituent of her persona.

Ariadna, like Carmen, had the chance to teach while being an undergraduate student, which was essential for both of them to reassure their career choice. Ariadna affirms that she became a teacher once she entered a classroom, while Carmen also includes her undergraduate education as part of her teaching experience. Elijah is sure that she became an English language teacher during her undergraduate studies and includes her teaching practicum as a relevant part of her education.

In effect, teachers' learning and development, and the context of teachers' learning, are key components in teachers' careers, which is why teachers cannot be detached from our sociocultural realities because no theory is enough to fill that gap (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). The path they have walked to become English language teachers has been mediated by their academic and professional experiences and started before graduation; this is a piece of evidence of the important role that teacher educators have and of the relevance of content knowledge and pedagogical practice to shape their teaching careers.

How Do We Develop Our Teaching Identity?

My education as a teacher, the opportunities for professional development, and my teaching practice along the years have helped me develop a teaching identity that illustrates all the experiences lived, and which differs from those of colleagues I have come across. Developing a teacher identity is thus the result of what happens before, during, and after a teacher education program. Nieto (2003) supports this idea as she affirms, "teachers do not leave their values at the door when they enter the classrooms… They bring their entire autobiographies with them: their experiences, identities, values, beliefs, attitudes, hang-ups, biases, wishes, dreams, hopes" (p. 24).

Notwithstanding, Farrell (2015) introduces the terms *a reality check* and *a reality shock* to exemplify how little prepared novice teachers are when they enter the profession and start to build their identity (see also Bonilla & Cruz, 2014; Cruz, 2018). In my view, such identity is related to the nurtured development of teaching that is built at college, which could be positive or negative depending on their experience, the accompaniment they have from colleagues and supervisors, and the rapport they get to build with students. Now, this experience, if positive, can reaffirm their identity and make them more reflective and committed teachers; however, if negative, it might result in teacher attrition, which is a common event along the first five years of teaching.

Accordingly, Faez and Valeo (2012) establish that the decisions that teacher education programs make about what to teach are pivotal in the preparedness that English language teachers gain, and, thus, in the perception they have about their skills to teach, which will influence their identity construction. Faez and Valeo (2012) state that "teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their teaching skills have a strong impact on their teaching effectiveness" (p. 452). Hence, teaching practices that result in successful experiences help teachers gain confidence and develop their identity.

Farrell (2015) highlights the importance of the novice years of teaching that can be smoothed through "novice-service language teacher education" (p. 12). He proposes programs in which novice teachers have this accompaniment and more preparation in terms of "knowledge, skills, awareness" (p. 6) that better prepare them to successfully face the school setting. Although helpful, it is little likely for universities to develop programs like these, unless they are part of an ongoing research project that allows them to be in contact with alumni. If this was possible, teacher educators could provide opportunities for reflection based on novice teachers' specific experiences, but not necessarily prepare them for pre-established situations, given the contextual discrepancies that exist. There are no magic recipes, therefore, teachers need to be creative and work with what they have at hand, always aware of their teaching context; that is, "particularity, practicality, and possibility" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538).

Accordingly, Kubanyiova (2018) calls for teacher education that makes meaning and thus makes sense. This is a call for reflection in education that prioritizes social work and adaptation to context-specific education, which will indeed be an alternative to help develop teacher identity as it advocates for teachers' voice and action, for the validation of local and contextual knowledge, and for social transformation through teaching. Kubanyiova declares that teachers have traditionally focused on "language structures and culturally responsive language pedagogies", and proposes "a view of language as a meaning making practice situated in specific social encounters, place and times (a sociocultural approach)" (2018, p. 2).

Terms such as reflective practice, critical inquiry, and creativity are part of Kubanyiova's (2018) discourse, as she poses the need of educating language teachers in the age of ambiguity; teachers who experience, first hand, what it is like to live in other languages, "in contexts in which multilingualism might be perceived as a stigma, a sign of privilege, or a genuine opportunity to enter into an open and creative relationship with the Other" (p. 8). That otherness is approached by Kumaravadivelu (2012) while he illustrates the most salient characteristics of modernism and postmodernism in the construction of identity, in which the first one presents identity as bounded and imposed by family and societal rules, while in the latter identity is constructed, fluid, amorphous, and fragmented. Kumaravadivelu (2012) also affirms that globalism is a crucial factor in identity formation because of the shrinking of the world, thanks to communication flow. Colombian scholars have also studied this

topic (for instance, Cruz, 2018; Durán, Lastra, & Morales, 2017). Cruz (2018) explores how teachers' knowledge coming from local experiences in rural Colombian contexts has helped built their identity and value the resources they have at hand.

All of that said, what teacher educators can do as concerns pre-service teachers' identity development is to awaken the need for reflection on their teaching knowledge and action, through the construction of narratives that unveil those experiences. In the following, teachers' voices about teaching identity development are presented.

How did you develop your teaching identity?	
Marcela	When I enrolled in modern languages, the curriculum was new and my classmates and I were the first to register in that undergraduate program. Unfortunately, the new program did not have a strong pedagogical component, which made me have a hard time once I started teaching. I always felt that I needed to learn a lot more to do my job well. The little knowledge I have so far has been learned from practice, from studying different English methodology books, from other colleagues' experience, from training courses and from teaching.
Carmen	I believe I was predestined to be a teacher. I've had many experiences during my life and for sure, I've forgotten many of them. However, I must say there is something I haven't been able to forget doing: teaching my first lesson, not an English one, though, when I was five years old. I can still remember teaching some small girls of my age, how to read in Spanish. I had learned to do it from my mom who wasn't a teacher but had a "how to help someone learn vocation." Also [,] when I happened to explain a topic to my classmates at school or university, I really liked doing it. Being a teacher is something I enjoy a lot no matter how many times I can't achieve my expectations.
Paul	It all started when I was in my first teaching practicum in a high school that was full of conflicts and violence and although young, I had to assume my identity as a teacher and convince my students that literature was something important for their lives. Then, little by little, I started adding some elements and developing my professional identity. The places I have taught and the students I have had, had made me the kind of teacher I am.
Ariadna	I consider that it happens every single time when interacting with my students, in groups or individually. The way I like to share my learning experiences and to respect their voices, cultural backgrounds and likes, allow me to integrate them into my teaching plan.
Elijah	I believe I have developed my teaching identity throughout my life working experience. As time has passed, I have changed my teaching style, I mean every time I have had the opportunity to teach, I have learned a lot of things that have molded my identity. Right now, I can say I have really felt the passion for teaching English. Every time I enter a classroom, I learn something new from students and the class itself. These things have made think about what teaching really means.

Marcela started to develop her teaching identity once she began teaching, while Paul feels that it started while he was in his teaching practicum because of the roles he had to assume as a teacher to help students change their attitudes. Carmen, predestined to be a teacher, has a born (Freeman, 2016) identity that has been nurtured during her whole life through education and experience. Ariadna's interaction with her students has contributed to her cultural understanding of difference; while Elijah reassures her identity through the passion, she feels that she enters the classroom every day.

In fact, these teachers' identity construction has been an ongoing journey that has included moments of teacher education, development, and practice. For instance, they express the need for inquiry and reflection to adapt their teaching practices. This 'adaptive expertise' in terms of Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, and Bransford (2005) "provides an appropriate gold standard for becoming a professional" (p. 360). Accordingly, Faez and Valeo (2012) advise on the need to build a critical frame that prepares us to face reality.

Hence, remembering that the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes surpasses pre-service education programs, teachers come to value the benefits of experience in teaching by proposing innovation even in situations in which frameworks and policies suggest the opposite. As such, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) state, "over time, teachers progress from learning the basic elements of the task to be performed and accumulating knowledge about learning, teaching, and students to making conscious decisions about what they are going to do" (p. 380). That is, teachers construct their identity "actively on an on-going basis" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 10).

What Knowledge Makes Us Become the Kind of Teachers We Are?

The changing times and the advance of technology, which have resulted in the shrinking of the world in terms of communication and access to information, have surely affected how teachers gain knowledge and how they put it into practice. English language teachers have opportunities to learn the language outside the classroom, even if they do not go to an English- speaking country. Although there are no pre-established curricula, there are certain minimums that English language teachers are to know in order to succeed. Several authors have suggested those minimum requirements in the last three decades, as Álvarez Valencia (2009), Fandiño (2013), Freeman (2018), and Shulman (1987). To mention some, Shulman (1987), who pioneered in the area, argues that content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge are essential elements that teachers need to know. More recently, Freeman (2018) proposes the need to go from work-driven to field-driven knowledge, and to analyze content, teachers, learners, pedagogy, and teacher education. Furthermore, Johnson and Golombek (2018) emphasize what teacher educators do and say, and the reasoning behind that, as key elements in teacher

education. After analyzing several proposals of what teachers should know, Fandiño (2013) suggests that "efforts should be made to conceptualize what Colombian language teachers need to know about teaching and learning, and how their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes inform their practices" (p. 84).

Common to the proposals presented above is the establishment of linguistic, content, and pedagogical knowledge at the core of teacher education programs. More recently the inclusion of technology, context-based teaching, and agency have been included, which reflect the dynamics of changing times where globalization breaks boundaries, but the need to value local realities remains essential.

Accordingly, Farrell (2015) contends that novice teachers face a very different world once they graduate. Notwithstanding, in my context, the teaching practicum is an opportunity for pre-service teachers to start facing that reality, not to mention that many students have gotten teaching jobs by the time they have reached the fourth year of their undergraduate program. This means that the knowledge that teachers need is not contested once they graduate, but way before. We as teacher educators can therefore start reflecting with last year pre-service teachers on those realities that they are facing regarding knowledge and preparedness in all the domains that the profession requires.

Shulman's (1987) proposal is a good counterpart for Freeman's (2018), and Johnson and Golombek's (2018) proposal because while the last two present a current view of English language teaching that contrasts with the past decades, Shulman's reflects on how knowledge-based teaching was conceived before, with a projection to the future. The first call that I take from Shulman is the reflection he engages in on not ignoring teaching in the past, which is a counterargument to Freeman's (2018) proposition of unlearning previous knowledge to gain new knowledge. Indeed, it is essential to take the past as the basis to build on the future.

Standardization and complying with policies are at the root of educational reforms, and this is a fact upon which Shulman (1987) remarks. Shulman does not question educational reform, but attempts at proposing an analysis of knowledge and the sources of that knowledge that teachers need to have to meet the standards that such reform requires, including basic skills that teachers need to develop, such as content knowledge, pedagogical skills, curriculum knowledge, and knowledge of goals, learners, and educational contexts.

Shulman (1987) highlights the importance of *pedagogical content knowledge*, which is a phrase he has been famous for because it gives teachers the ability to put knowledge at the level of the student, since, as he introduces it, "the teacher can transform understanding, performance skills, or desired attitudes or values into pedagogical representations and actions… Teaching necessarily begins with a teacher's understanding of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught" (p. 7). He acknowledges, however, that individual differences and achievements that teachers gain can neither be taught nor measured.

Shulman's (1987) research, compared to more current studies, also includes basic elements such as reflective practice that are essential for teachers to develop. Furthermore, he presents a "model for pedagogical reasoning and action" (p. 15), which fosters new comprehensions and creativity. Shulman's pedagogical knowledge process proves how once teachers are able to understand, analyze, and adapt their teaching, they can innovate and evaluate their practices. Although he favors reforms for the professionalization of the teaching profession, he also asserts, "we have an obligation to raise standards in the interests of improvement and reform, but we must avoid the creation of rigid orthodoxies. We must achieve standards without standardization" (p. 20). Additionally, Johnson and Golombek (2018) present a solid proposal to transform language teacher education (LTE) pedagogy, after reflecting on the where, why, how, and what of teachers. They provide a state of the art on knowledge-base of LTE and attempt to mediate among the various contexts and sociocultural backgrounds of teachers from a Vygotskian perspective.

Due to the fact that most research focusing on teachers has not explored the pivotal role of teacher educators, Johnson and Golombek now study "what teacher educators do and say" (2018, p. 2). They assert that "today, LTE programs are in a vast array of sociocultural, educational, economic, and political contexts and these contexts matter" (p. 2). This means that as teacher educators, we cannot detach ourselves from the sociocultural contexts that surround pre-service teachers, nor from the potential realities that they will face once do they join the work force. On the other hand, I identify with their view of engaging in a self-inquiry dimension through teacher narrative because reflecting and narrating what teachers are experiencing in the classroom might bring alternative and creative solutions to everyday issues.

On the other hand, Freeman's (2018) ideas of knowledge-base in language teacher education conceive how different terms in language teaching have changed in the last decades, thanks to the development English teaching has undergone and on the focus from learners to contents. The revisiting of terms is the result of the expansion of the inner circles (Freeman, 2018) that have mandated what is to be taught and how. Favoring centralism, eurocentrism, native-speakerism, and whiteness has decayed in the last years, as the English teaching community worldwide has expanded its views thanks to advocates coming from more peripheral (Canagarajah, 2005, Kumaravadivelu, 2012, 2016) origins. This has expanded teachers' knowledge and views of content to welcome sociocultural language teaching. In this way, peripheral users of the language have, little by little, gained space in the language-teaching field, promoted the development of policies, and designed curriculum that is inclusive of local practices.

Concerning local knowledge, Freeman (2018) mentions the tension between globalization and local practices. He asserts, "questions about what it means to teach 'well' are often caught in tensions between global definitions of ELT professionalism and the day-to-day practices of ELT which are profoundly local" (p. 6). I ponder that those tensions should be

negotiated among the stakeholders to have a balance between what is needed for students to become global citizens and the inclusion of local knowledge to reinforce identity; that is, the relation between new learning with their own cultural practices.

It is remarkable how Freeman (2018) presents the two-folded relationship of central and peripheral teachers because the first learn from diversity in their classrooms while preparing NNS teachers, and the latter provide innovative teaching practices where the local is present through translanguaging and developing intercultural understandings. This is a good way of acknowledging what NS and NNS teachers do for developing the profession. Perceptions about who teaches have changed, giving way to more NNS teachers who have been able to position themselves in the field. The above discussion is well evident in publications produced by Colombian scholars (as in Álvarez Valencia, 2009; Arboleda & Castro, 2012; Fandiño, 2013; Viáfara, 2016) who, with a global view, have explored local English teaching practices, teachers' perceptions about what to teach and how to teach it, as well as their concerns when dealing with their language skills and pedagogical knowledge. As an example, Álvarez Valencia (2009) explores Colombian teachers' knowledge base and perceptions, which, as he posits, goes beyond formal knowledge to permeate context and experiences. Similarly, Arboleda and Castro (2012) exhibit teachers' and students' ideas behind a nativelike accent. The discussion that follows, based on participants' perceptions, better exemplifies this issue.

What knowledge has made you become the kind of teacher you are?	
Marcela	I could not speak of a specific type of knowledge; I would say that there are many things at stake: Experience (trial and error), some aspects we internalize from different training courses, sharing experiences with other colleagues around a cup coffee or in more formal places like university. In addition, other aspects that I consider are part of this process are the attitudes and qualities that one has as a teacher: having an open attitude to be in constant learning and implement new strategies, discipline, responsibility, and commitment to work. Develop emotional intelligence that I think is an essential aspect of our teaching work. In short, knowledge is not easy to measure or describe and even less when it is related to the future of a teacher.
Carmen	First of all, my own language learning and my understanding of how students learn more effectively and meaningfully. I believe that effective teaching is built upon learning; that is, how students learn determines teaching. Second, knowing the power I have to influence my students to be better people and to realize that languages like English can help us broaden our horizon and our vision of a better society. Finally, taking pride of being an English teacher makes me feel at ease and motivated to go ahead helping students learn.

Paul	The knowledge about linguistics, discourse analysis, and language teaching that I got in graduate school. The knowledge of the context where I teach allows me to understand the nature of the institution and the environment where I work.
Ariadna	Every day I try to improve as a person, as a teacher, etc., I know that knowledge isn´t a static process so I have to study every single day and try to be closer to this century students.
Elijah	I could say the knowledge I learned when I studied in college and from my postgraduate studies have contributed to my professional growth. Besides, I have been fond of technology, so I have taken advantage of ICT to update myself.

Marcela cannot describe specific knowledge, but she asserts that becoming a teacher is made up of several experiences that help construct that knowledge along the years. Paul is clear in affirming the relevance that specific content knowledge and context have in language teaching. Carmen affirms that the knowledge of the language, the know-how of teaching and the passion for this profession are key elements that make teachers the kind of educators they are. Ariadna learns every day from her students and her practice, always acknowledging the shifting sands that she is to encounter in the classroom. Elijah values the knowledge gained during her academic career and the use of technology for language learning, which have helped her grow professionally.

The way we as teachers conceive and use knowledge highly depends on the moment we are living in our profession. In this line of thought, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, and Bransford (2005) introduce "knowledge for practice, in practice, and of practice" (p. 382), which is to be taken as a continuum because one practice cannot end where the next one starts. As novice, advanced, or expert teachers (if we ever get to be), we are always acquiring knowledge that we put into practice straightaway, and as we gain knowledge of practice, we understand the need to gain more knowledge to experience a better practice. Therefore, as long as we are reflective practitioners this learning-development process never stops.

What Are Some Sociocultural and Global Issues Behind Teaching English?

Kumaravadivelu (2012), as an advocate for language teachers from the outer and expanding circles, and of decolonial practices in language teaching, introduces enlightening ideas towards language learner's identity construction as regards globalization. His notion of agency and the breaking with Eurocentric traditions to embrace context-based language teaching that is rooted in the particularities of its beneficiaries is at the base of its discussion. He presents language classes as a space of complex identity formation and advises of the need to "break dependency from Western-oriented, centered-based knowledge systems that

carry an indelible colonial coloration" (p. 14). He, citing Foucault, proposes an epistemic break, "a postmodern concept of self-identity; a reorganization of knowledge systems" (p. 14).

That epistemic break in English as an International Language is the breaking with the idolatry of the "NS and the NS competence" (p. 15). He then asserts "a meaningful break from this epistemic dependency if we are serious about sanitizing our discipline from its corrosive effect and sensitizing the field to the demands of globalism and its impact on identity formation" (p. 15). To this, I would add that this is an extreme assertion because, although as peripheral English teachers, or as explained by Canagarajah (2005), we, those teachers from the outer circles, need to develop agency; we cannot deny the value of those who use the language on a daily basis for real-life purposes. Scholars in the Colombian context are also aware of the need to propose English language teaching practices that are grounded in local awareness, and have thus explored possibilities for developing sociocultural consciousness, critical interculturality, and cultural agency (see Bautista Pérez, 2017; Bonilla & Cruz, 2014; Calle Díaz, 2017; Granados Beltrán, 2016; Ramos Holguín et al., 2012; Viáfara & Ariza, 2015). In this line, Ramos Holguín et al. (2012) encourage students' intercultural understanding in a rural school by including their context in the lessons to acknowledge the differences that exist between rural and urban education. These authors altogether promote spaces where language learning involves the acknowledging of multiple forms of communication and the inclusion of learners' experiences and sociocultural backgrounds.

McKay (2018) also addresses topics of current concern for language educators. She points out at the difference among World Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and English as an International Language (EIL), which although all may seem alike, have differences as to how they are conceived and their implications for users and teachers. She points out the tension that exists among the varieties of English used nowadays, who uses them, and how they are used, under what pragmatic, and sociocultural experiences. Linguistically speaking, Kachru (1983, as cited in McKay, 2018) argues, "Englishes cannot be judged by the norms of English in Inner Circle countries. Rather, the form and function of new Englishes must be considered according to the context of situation which is appropriate to the variety, its uses, and users" (p. 4). However, one must bear in mind that there are minimum requirements necessary for Englishes to be mutually intelligible, otherwise, communication will be hindered by the bridge opened through form variation.

Sifakis (2007), drawing on Mezirow's framework for adult education, proposes some steps for the education of teachers of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). His main concern is to acknowledge the relevance that ELF has gained and to prepare teachers that have the necessary knowledge and strategies to position it in the language classroom. The author provides a literature review and endorsement as to why English should be studied as a Lingua Franca, and gives examples of authors and studies aiming this way; however, considering

the fact that the kind of interaction that is encouraged is only among NNSs, this is an unrealistic aim, in an urge to delete any trace of the NS who has been favored for decades. This proposal goes to the other end and falls into the same ideas of one position considered to be the best. What is more, Sifakis recognizes the pitfalls of the proposal in the discourse that NNSs will hold among themselves, which might be lexico-grammatical issues. In the following, practitioners voice their take on this issue:

What are some sociocultural and global issues behind teaching English?	
Marcela	As we live in a globalized and technology-mediated world, there are many cultural and global aspects behind. For example, the ways of behaving in certain situations, the expressions and mode of speaking in different contexts (register). As for gastronomy, depending where you are, there is a whole protocol that must be followed. Despite globalization, countries continue to maintain their culture and idiosyncrasies. The use of social networks makes certain type of behavior typical: Phrases that are only used when communicating online: use of abbreviations, foreign words, symbols, in short, a whole new communication system.
Carmen	Based on my experience as an English teacher, sociocultural and global issues are related to the social representations of what being a teacher means and implies. In a country like Colombia, for instance, since English is a foreign language, in many cases, students don't find it necessary to learn this language so teachers may feel frustrated. All the policies established by the Ministry of Education, which are underpinned by standards taken from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, seem to not apply to our real contexts and both teachers and learners remotely visualize their expectations. However, despite being a challenge, teaching English can help broaden our horizon and our vision of the world considering all the contributions we can make for its transformation.
Paul	There are issues going on in regards to decoloniality, native-speakerism, intercultural competence, multiliteracies, and the like. Language teachers commonly have opportunities to work abroad and gain experience, which help us understand the importance of context in teaching. For example, I agree with the idea that native speakers are not always the best but, in the US, I was a beneficiary of my condition as a native speaker of Spanish to work in a college. I have to position myself as a globally-minded teacher who knows about the local and global matters and can link them in my classes.
Ariadna	It is important to recognize the attitudes, cross cultural differences, cultural deprivation, identity, culture change, discrimination, ethnic and many factors behind the language.

Elijah	Concerning socio cultural issues, I consider students' academic background remarkably influences their performance in class. I think this is one of the main issues I have had to face when teaching. Another important issue, in my particular case, is the fact my students are not interested in learning English meaningfully since they think they have to learn it as a requirement to graduate from college.

Marcela argues that teachers have to be aware of specific knowledge and attitudes we need to gain to be part of this globalized world; although social networks have standardized certain language and behavior, there are specific cultural practices that countries adhere to and which language learners need to know. Opening our horizon, transforming ourselves and the language we teach are part of the sociocultural and global issues that Carmen encounters as an English teacher. Aligned with these ideas, Paul mentions decoloniality as a relevant sociocultural and global issue that favors the development of a global mind that goes beyond native-speakerism. Elijah finds a barrier in the reasons her students have for learning, while Ariadna acknowledges the intercultural issues, we face and need to be prepared for while learning, teaching, and living the English language.

Accordingly, Kumaravadivelu (2018) maintains that inherent to globalization "people are simultaneously coming together and pulling apart… The interconnectedness between cultural globalization, identity formation, and English language education has started getting the attention it truly deserves from educators" (pp. 11-12). In fact, English language teachers are now more aware of their social responsibility to nurture sociocultural practices that are inclusive of globalism and that start with the acknowledgement of local realities. In this regard, the Colombian context has witnessed the raising of teaching practices that explore local sociocultural realities (Cruz, 2018), are concerned with teachers' knowledge (Álvarez Valencia, 2009) and belief in the importance of telling our stories (Durán, Lastra, & Morales, 2013). These studies are inclusive of global sociocultural knowledge to nurture more localized language teaching and learning.

Conclusions

The discussion raised in this paper was triggered by the big responsibility that we face as teacher educators, and by the need to research and reflect on what is at stake in language teaching. Narratives unveil realities and discussions about real-life issues present in the language classroom and provide opportunities for making informed decisions about the essential elements for pre-service teachers to be educated with a global mind that starts with and goes back to local knowledge.

As such, the topic under discussion included current terms that have shaped English language teaching and helped guide our classroom practices. It also revolved around four questions that provoked narratives from teacher educators, in which it was commonplace to read that we become English teachers during a teacher education program or before, through the many opportunities we have to teach and from people around us.

Additionally, a teaching identity is influenced by the plethora of opportunities we have for becoming the kind of teachers we are, which is marked by our teacher education and experience. Moreover, knowledge in our profession comes from books, teachers and ultimately, but most importantly, from classroom practice, where we learn about the many possibilities and the astonishing diversity that we are never taught. Along these lines, becoming aware that knowledge is beyond textbooks and university lectures, we start to open ourselves to a sociocultural language teaching that is global and local at the same time.

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An Overview of Dominant Approaches for Teacher Learning in Second Language Teaching

Una Mirada General de los Enfoques Dominantes para el Aprendizaje Docente en la Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas

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Abstract

The current review offers an analysis of the prevailing literature on teacher learning in language teaching from an international perspective. We initially revisit several contributions from a general education perspective. Then, we focus on three dominant approaches, identified through the literature, to understand teacher learning from a language teaching perspective. Finally, we provide implications for teacher educators to consider in the preparation of prospective language teachers. These include acknowledging future teachers' prior cognitions and learning experiences, highlighting the benefits of collaborative work and communities of practice, and adapting and innovating within the social constraints of their teaching context.

Keywords: language teacher education, learning to teach, second language teaching, teacher cognition, teacher learning

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Resumen

La presente revisión ofrece un análisis de la literatura predominante sobre el aprendizaje docente en la enseñanza de lenguas desde una perspectiva internacional. Inicialmente, revisamos varias contribuciones desde una perspectiva de la educación en general. Luego, nos centramos en tres enfoques dominantes, identificados a través de la literatura, para entender el aprendizaje docente desde la perspectiva de la formación de los profesores de lenguas. Finalmente, ofrecemos algunas implicaciones para ser tenidas en cuenta por formadores de docentes en la preparación de futuros profesores de lenguas. Estas incluyen el reconocimiento de las experiencias previas de aprendizaje de los futuros docentes, el beneficio del trabajo colaborativo y las comunidades de práctica, y la adaptación e innovación dentro de las limitaciones sociales de su contexto de enseñanza.

Palabras clave: aprender a enseñar, aprendizaje docente, conocimiento docente, enseñanza de segundas lenguas, formación de docentes de lenguas

Introduction

Research on teacher learning from a general education perspective is rather extensive. We —the authors— revisit here a number of key constructs in an attempt to make possible connections with the field of second language[3] teacher education. One initial consideration relates to the role played by teachers as learners, as they move through the different stages of general and specialized education. Lortie (1975) captures this in the concept of "apprenticeship of observation" as "the phenomenon whereby student teachers arrive for their training courses [after] having spent thousands of hours as schoolchildren observing and evaluating professionals in action" (Borg, 2004, p. 274). It follows that teachers' personal past experiences as students are likely to influence how teachers learn to teach. Teachers are largely "self-made" and they "emerge from their induction experiences with a strongly biographical orientation to pedagogical decision-making" (Lortie, 1975, p. 81).

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle is equally relevant. It consists of four modes: *concrete experience* involves intuitive or 'gut' feeling; *reflective observation*, that is, perception and comprehension of what happened; *abstract conceptualization,* which requires the teacher to think and formulate a concept in relation to what happened whereas *active experimentation* involves the teacher trying and applying what he learned from a teaching event in a subsequent lesson. Eventually, this active experimentation will require further concrete experience and so the cycle goes on. Joyce and Showers (2002, as cited in Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, &

[3] We thought of 'second language' as the field often seems to be referred to as 'second language teacher education' across many international settings and sources. Our choice of 'second language' is also related to Graddol (2006), who claims that the term English as a 'foreign Language' "tends to highlight the importance of learning about the culture and society of native speakers; it stresses the centrality of methodology in discussions of effective learning; and emphasizes the importance of emulating native speaker language behaviour" (p. 82). The previous argument goes against the perspective from which this review has been constructed.

Bransford, 2005) similarly state that teachers go through an iterative process of learning, experimenting, and reflecting as they develop new skills for use in their classrooms.

Hammerness et al. (2005) describe the concept of teachers' adaptive expertise as something that supports lifelong learning and may involve giving up old routines and transforming prior beliefs and practices. This adaptive expertise appears to be a response to the fact that knowledge, skills, and attitudes for effective teaching cannot be fully developed in pre-service teacher education programs. Hammerness et al. (2005) conclude that teachers learn to teach within a community that enables them to develop the following aspects: A *vision* for what they want to do in their practice; a set of *understandings* about teaching, learning, and children; *dispositions* or habits of thinking about how to use that knowledge; *practices* that facilitate the implementation of various instructional activities for student learning; and *tools* that support their efforts. These tools can be of a conceptual nature (e.g., learning theories, frameworks, ideas about teaching and learning) or a practical nature (e.g., instructional approaches and strategies, resources, textbooks, etc.).

Feiman-Nemser (2008) conceptualizes learning to teach in terms of four broad themes: learning to *think* like a teacher, learning to *know* like a teacher, learning to *feel* like a teacher and learning to *act* like a teacher. Learning to *think* like a teacher involves "a critical examination of one's existing beliefs, a transition to pedagogical thinking, and the development of metacognitive awareness" (p. 698). Learning to *know* like a teacher emphasizes the various kinds of knowledge that are inherent to good teaching. Feiman-Nemser (2008) adds that teachers need deep knowledge of subject matter and how to teach it, knowledge of how children grow and learn, of the influence of culture and language on learning, knowledge about "curriculum, pedagogy, classroom organization and assessment…and the broad purposes of schooling and how those purposes affect their work" (p. 699).

Learning to *feel* like a teacher refers to the emotional, personal, identity-related side of teaching while learning to *act* like a teacher involves a kind of instinct or personal judgement to know what to do when and next, that is, to figure out how to act or react to the multitude of circumstances that characterize teaching. Feiman-Nemser (2008) finally considers that teachers have to learn to combine the various ways of thinking, knowing, feeling, and acting into a principled and responsive teaching practice. This can be achieved inside the classroom by means of engaging in "a wide range of activities— explaining, listening, questioning, managing, demonstrating, assessing, inspiring" and outside the classroom where teachers can "plan for teaching, collaborate with colleagues, and work with parents and administrators" (p. 699).

In short, the literature in general education shows that learning to teach is an a priori process and goes way beyond the boundaries of formal teacher preparation. It is certainly not a passive process of merely receiving new information. Feiman-Nemser (2008) points out that just like all learners,

> Teachers interpret new knowledge and experience through their existing beliefs and modify and reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know and believe. What teachers learn is also influenced by the social and cultural contexts where knowledge is acquired and used, including the particulars of subject matter and students. (p. 700)

The above description captures what seems to be a common view of learning to teach from a general education perspective. In this regard, Barnes and Smagorinsky (2016) conclude that teacher education programs constitute only one (not necessarily the primary) source of learning for beginning teachers. They claim that there are factors such as the apprenticeship of observation, the politics of the school environment, the community, their individual and personal lives, among others, that are often overlooked or taken for granted, but that can be equally accountable for teachers' conceptions of effective teaching. These authors also stress that teacher candidates make sense of those influential factors in different ways.

Several authors (for instance, Freeman, 1989, 1996b; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Johnson, 2009b, Wright, 2010) have claimed that despite an interest in what second language teachers need to know and the influence of areas such as applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and teaching methodologies, how teachers learn to teach is an area in need of further research and discussion. As Freeman and Johnson (1998) note, the task of understanding the complex nature of how teachers learn to teach should be an area of common interest for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, policy makers, teacher educators, and the community at large. Currently, teacher learning in second language teacher education is becoming a relevant field of study as it takes more complex and exciting directions.

It is our goal in this paper to review the literature on how second language teachers learn to teach across international contexts[4]. We similarly aim to consolidate teacher learning as a relevant issue in the preparation of language teachers and to raise awareness among practicing teacher educators in second language teacher education to better respond to the many challenges derived from the activity of learning to teach. We will start with an overview of the most dominant approaches for teacher learning in the field of international second language teacher education followed by a more detailed perspective of current trends in learning to teach in the same field. Then, we will provide conclusions and implications for language teacher educators in diverse international contexts.

[4] It is not our goal to limit this review to a particular context. This manuscript gathers what we read and observed across a number of conceptual and empirical sources that (explicitly or implicitly) address the phenomenon of teacher learning in language teacher education from a general perspective for the most part. Interestingly, many of those sources appear to be implicitly referring to the field of language teacher education as a worldwide phenomenon. Put differently, we aim to provide an overview of what has been happening to teacher learning in language teaching as observed in the sources consulted and cited.

Dominant Approaches to Teacher Learning in Second Language Teacher Education

In examining the literature, we identified three dominant approaches on the subject of teacher learning in second language teacher education from an international perspective. These approaches serve to inform how teachers conceptualize teaching and how various scholars believe teachers learn to teach. We must clarify that there may be inevitable overlapping between these approaches as learning to teach involves a multiplicity of factors and practices which make it a long and complex process that starts even before prospective teachers enroll in teacher preparation programs and continues into their years of professional teaching.

Content Knowledge + Teaching Skills = Effective Teaching

This first approach follows a behavioral orientation, supports the notion of teaching as transmission, and is based on the process-product paradigm in general education which emphasizes the connection between a teacher's actions and students' learning outcomes. Teaching effectiveness within a process-product paradigm is determined "in terms of relationships between measures of teacher classroom behavior (processes) and measures of student learning outcomes (products)" (Doyle, 1977, p. 165). This paradigm clearly implies a causal relationship between what teachers do and what students are able to achieve at the end of an instructional sequence. One of the challenges here is that this relationship may lead to disregarding other variables, different from teacher variables, which may equally affect student learning outcomes. This first approach also relies on the belief that content knowledge and teaching skills would be sufficient for teachers to convey the content to students, that is, second language teachers were supposed to have knowledge of the target language and knowledge of a series of methods and techniques to be able to teach. As Freeman (2016) further argues, the teacher needed to "know the *what* as it was defined through the disciplines" … [and] "to know the *how* of various methodologies and more crucially have a basis on which to choose among these different '*how's*" (p. 166).

According to Freeman (2002), new teachers were considered to enter professional training tabula rasa, "with no prior knowledge of teaching or the teachers' role" (p. 5). Teachers were then seen as doers and implementers of other people's ideas and thoughts in the classroom without much consideration for the physical and social contexts where learning would occur. This also seems to correspond to the craft and applied science models proposed by Wallace (1991) through which beginning teachers learn from observing and imitating the behavior and techniques of more experienced teachers, and applying the theoretical and scientific concepts given by experts. These models promote the transmission of knowledge in a top-down fashion and seek to maintain a separation between the expert or researcher and the teacher. Another concept that may be associated with this first approach

is the 'learn-then-apply' design. Accordingly, teacher candidates "are expected to develop subject-matter knowledge in their first years of university study, and to then refine it as they apply it in practice teaching and school settings in later years" (Freeman, 2016, p. 189).

This first approach seemingly relates to a micro approach to teacher education (Richards, 1987, 1990), which considers teaching in terms of its most visible characteristics. Teachers were prescriptively taught discrete teaching skills (e.g., giving instructions, monitoring students' work, etc.) and their effectiveness relied on mastering a repertoire of those skills and knowledge. Further evidence can be found in Freeman's (1996a) behavioral view of teaching which describes teaching as doing, in terms of teachers' and learners' behaviors in the classroom. In short, emphasis was on training teachers to imitate a series of teaching/teacher behaviors and methodologies that had proved to be successful in other countries.

Teacher education programs worldwide expose future teachers to a great amount of disciplinary knowledge, typically in the form of methods and theories; and provide them with a field experience (teaching practicum) in which they are expected to apply their theoretical knowledge regardless of the context of actual classrooms. Not surprisingly, Atay (2004) contends that current education and training programs "are found to be insufficient due to the fact that they do not provide the participant teachers with opportunities to reflect on their own experiences, nor do they give them support in modifying teaching practice" (p. 143). This perspective of teacher learning has similarly led to reinforce the view of language teacher education as front loading and updating (Freeman, 2016), that is, most of the knowledge and skills teachers need in order to teach can be front loaded or given at the beginning of their teaching career. It then follows that teachers are expected to continue their professional learning particularly by means of professional development activities, also known as 'updating' opportunities which tend to "reinforce the assumption that the core knowledge comes in initial preparation at the start of teaching" (p. 192). This act of front loading in teacher education tends to overlook the contributions of the actual experiences associated with doing the job in the classroom.

Freeman (1989) seemingly criticized the misconception that a transmission of knowledge about applied linguistics and language acquisition, usually based on theoretical readings, university-based lectures, and/or professional development workshops, was enough for an effective pre-service language teacher. It is based on the misconception that Freeman and Johnson (1998) later states as:

> Teacher educators have come to recognize that teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills. They are individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do. (p. 401)

It is precisely this final statement that leads us to the second dominant approach for teacher learning in language teacher education that highlights the mental side, prior beliefs, and learning experiences of language teacher learners.

Teachers' Hidden Pedagogy and Prior Experiences

The second approach to teacher learning in global settings seeks to move from teachers' behaviors and actions to examining their thinking and past experiences. A common assumption here is that what teachers do in the language classroom originates in thoughts or mental acts and that is equally shaped by teachers' experiences; a number of them can play a more noticeable role than others. Duarte (1998) states that "to understand how teachers learn to teach and how they come to conceptualize what they do, we need to focus on the mental lives of teachers" (p. 618). It follows that concepts such as teachers' beliefs, decision making, hidden pedagogy, reflection, apprenticeship of observation, and personal theories of learning play a more prominent role as teachers in diverse contexts are encouraged to turn to their cognitions and reflect on how their past learning experiences interact with their present ways of thinking.

Borg (2006) defines teacher cognition as the "complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs that language teachers draw on in their work" (p. 272). Accordingly, four areas contribute to shape teacher cognition: "*schooling*…which defines early cognitions" to "*professional coursework*… [which] may affect existing cognitions", to "*contextual factors* …[which] influence practice" (p. 272). The previous three areas lead to "classroom practice" which is "defined by the interaction of cognitions and contextual factors" (Borg, 2003, p. 82). Borg (2009) later claims that "we cannot make adequate sense of teachers' experiences of learning to teach without examining the unobservable mental dimension of this learning process" (p. 163). This represents language teachers' inner voices, which are built over time and tested against different circumstances and teaching settings. Reflection therefore plays a crucial role in helping teachers to explore or make better use of their implicit theories of teaching. Thus, Richards (1998) claims that "reflective approaches often seek to engage teachers in articulating and examining the assumptions that underlie their teaching and in developing personal principles of best practice that can support their approach to teaching" (p. 3).

Wallace's (1991) reflective model that encourages teachers to constantly reflect upon, evaluate, and modify their own teaching practice also belongs to this second approach of learning to teach second languages. This reflective model, according to Wallace (1991), includes 'received knowledge' and 'experiential knowledge'. The former refers to the theories, skills, and research findings that usually constitute the intellectual content of the profession whereas experiential knowledge makes reference to the knowledge gained by the practice of

the profession and the chance to constantly reflect on knowledge-in-action[5]. Wallace (1991) also adds that the reflective model highlights what teacher learners bring to the training process and therefore recognizes that they do not come with empty minds hoping to merely receive knowledge from others. Despite the relevance of the reflective model, Buendia & Macías (2019) suggest that language teacher professional development in Colombia is moving "from applied science (Schon, 1987) and reflective-cooperative-process models (Wallace, 1991) towards more critical ones in which basic aspects such as the design criteria for professional development programs, teachers' roles, and teachers' ways of learning, have been redefined" (p. 108).

This approach reflects a macro approach to teacher education (Richards, 1987, 1990) and follows a non-prescriptive orientation through which teachers are offered opportunities to "focus on clarifying and elucidating the concepts and thinking processes that guide effective language teaching" (Richards, 1990, p. 14). Similarly, Freeman's (1996a) cognitive view recognizes teachers as affective and thinking beings. Thus, not only do teachers know the behaviors but they also articulate this knowledge in order to cope with unexpected and complex situations that arise in the actual teaching practice. There is a growing interest not only in what teachers do in the classroom but in what they think about as they do it (Freeman, 1996a). An equally relevant theme here relates to language teachers' decision-making. Woods' (1996) ethno-cognitive model of decision-making highlights three main components: the *planning process* or what happened before the lesson, the *interactive decisions* or what occurred during the lesson, and the *interpretative processes* as the teacher engaged in retrospective examination after the lesson.

A preliminary conclusion in relation to teachers' mental lives, as stated by Freeman (2002), is that while accurate maps of teaching can be observed by studying it from the outside in, what is truly happening will not be grasped until the people who are doing it articulate what they understand about it. This promotes a perspective from inside out, teachers constructing knowledge about how to teach as a result of being mentally engaged with the teaching process. Johnson (2006) similarly emphasizes that:

> Teacher educators should no longer ignore the fact that teachers' prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do (Johnson, 2006, p. 236)

Accordingly, helping beginning teachers to interpret and give meaning to their own experiences might lead them to develop empirical and pedagogical insights which will

[5] In Colombia, this reflective model has been widely cited (Cuesta et al., 2019; Viáfara, 2005; Chaves & Guapacha, 2016) but often in terms of highlighting its benefits or advantages.

simultaneously allow them "to theorize from practice and practice what they theorize" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 27).

This second approach considers then that learning to teach is shaped by teachers' previous learning experiences as students, as language learners, and as learners of language teaching. For instance, Lin (2005) emphasizes that "a teacher's experience as a student before she enters the teacher education program could have an impact on her experience as a teacher learner in such a program as well as on her actual teaching practice" (p. 11). In another study with four ESL student teachers, Gutiérrez (1996) identified the origins of these teachers' pre-training knowledge as connected to formal and informal language learning experiences, the way they were taught during their schooling years, their fellow students and other people they interacted with in different situations.

As admitted by Freeman and Johnson (1998), teachers' hidden pedagogy and past experiences as learners tend to create ways of thinking about teaching that often conflict with the images of teaching advocated in teacher education programs. Thus, these authors argue that teacher educators now have come to realize that prior knowledge is a powerful factor in teacher learning in its own right, one that clearly deserves attention and study so as to strengthen and improve, rather than simply preserve and replicate, educational practice. This is equally supported by Yates and Muchiski (2003) who claim that language teacher educators have experiences as language learners and language teachers and should therefore be aware of how coursework alone becomes insufficient for helping a teacher learner become a competent language teacher.

The Social Context in Learning to Teach

A third approach emphasizes how the role of social and cultural context contributes to shaping teacher learning and thinking. Learning to teach is not merely an individual and isolated task. It is a process embedded in the social, political, economic, and cultural circumstances of the contexts where teachers study, the contexts where they later receive initial preparation and induction to teaching, and the contexts where they eventually teach and integrate professionally with colleagues. As part of a socially-situated view of learning to teach, Johnson and Freeman (2001) propose a framework for the knowledge base of language teacher education based on three interrelated domains which, according to the authors, describe the sociocultural environment where individuals learn to teach and carry out their work as teachers.

The first domain refers to teachers as learners of teaching contrary to their students or themselves as learners of language. The second domain seeks to integrate schools as the physical settings where teaching and learning occur and schooling as "the socio-cultural processes of participation in schools, processes that gain value and meaning for participants

through time" (Johnson & Freeman, 2001, p. 59). The third domain centers on the activity of teaching and learning as experienced by teachers and learners in classrooms. This involves examining…

> How teachers think (or theorize) about their work, how they transform content to make it accessible to … learners, how they understand and function within the institutions in which they teach, how their learning relates to what and how students learn in their classrooms. (Johnson & Freeman, 2001, p. 60)

In short, the authors emphasize that it is only by examining the sociocultural context that language teachers go through as learners of language teaching that the teacher education community can come to understand teacher learning in the North American context.

Freeman (2016) more recently incorporated many of the previous ideas in the concept of learning-in-place or situated learning theory which emphasizes elements such as learning by doing things in contexts, and *knowing in situations* (original italics). One of the greatest challenges of situated learning theory relates to the congruence between language as situated content and teacher education as situated preparation. Other central ideas for teacher education from the perspective of situated learning theory involve, according to Freeman (2016), language teachers as teacher educators, training new teachers through teaching actual language students, and learning collectively from and with one another – in situ.

This third approach for teacher learning also relies on a sociocultural perspective through which learning to teach becomes "a continual, mutually mediating process of appropriation and social action, where practitioners take on the cultural practices that are valued in the social situations of their development… and employ them in turn to shape that social situation" (Ellis, Edwards, & Smagorinsky, 2010, p. 4). This social perspective allows the analysis of elements that are inherent to teacher learning such as the relevance of dialogue and collaboration in the construction of knowledge, the status of the teaching profession, the cultural norms of school and schooling, and the use of action research as a fundamental tool to generate theories of social change.

Going back to the idea of mediation in learning to teach, Johnson (2009a) points out how teacher learning is mediated by social practices and tools (e.g., scientific concepts, everyday concepts, human and social relations) and that these constitute a temporary "other" which "support the transformative process and enable each teacher to move from external social activity to internal control over their cognitive and emotional states" (p. 39). It follows that through these mediators, teachers were able to challenge their ways of thinking about teaching and develop new conceptions of teaching. Johnson (2009b) argues that second language teacher education programs are beginning to see language teaching as "a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge that is situated in and emerges out of participation in particular sociocultural practices and contexts" (p. 21). In short, learning to teach, Johnson

(2009b) adds, is not seen as "the straightforward appropriation of skills from the outside in, but [as] the progressive movement from externally, socially mediated activity to internal control by individual teachers" (p. 2).

As this approach involves a careful examination of the context, Freeman's (1996a) interpretivist view of teaching may have a role to play here as it suggests that action and thinking are now accompanied by the interpretation of the context. Put differently, this view of teaching is a more complex one in which teachers know the behaviors, are cognitively and affectively engaged with what goes on in class and know what to do in complex contexts, thus displaying interpretative knowledge of teaching. Johnson and Freeman (2001) reinforce this idea when they claim that "how teachers actually use their knowledge in classrooms has come to be seen as highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work" (p. 56).

Current Trends in Learning to Teach Second Languages

We came to the conclusion that a current trend in learning to teach in second language teacher education across several international settings seeks to combine features of the second and third approaches previously described. In other words, elements such as teacher cognition, teachers' experiential knowledge and the social conditions of the teaching setting appear to play a more relevant role. Wright (2010) states that an emerging pedagogy in second language teacher education emphasizes aspects such as "student teachers' LEARNING to teach, …becoming a THINKING teacher, …REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY, … student teacher INQUIRY, …and …LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE" (*uppercase in original*) (p. 273). This reflects a particular trend to teacher learning in which teachers are expected to be cognitively, affectively, and socially engaged with respectful regard for the impact of their prior learning experiences. The following studies, compiled with a broad international readership in mind, help to illustrate this current trend as they lead us to understand how second language teachers learn to teach in different contexts around the world.

Barahona (2014a) examined the social origin of teachers' beliefs in the activity of learning to teach with a group of twenty-four EFL teachers in Chile. She found that teachers' beliefs are shaped and reshaped as teachers engaged in the activity of learning to teach English: from their past experiences as language learners, to teacher learners in a university teacher education program, and then to their school-based actual teaching experiences. These teachers' beliefs "emerged in the actions they engaged in learning to teach English and the interplay between theory, personal understandings and practical applications" (p. 120). The author highlights that these pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs kept changing as they engaged in professional teaching and that, consequently, they used their beliefs about learning and teaching to direct their actions.

Kang and Cheng (2014) investigated the relationship between a novice EFL teacher's classroom practices and cognition development as she learned to teach in her everyday work in a middle school in Beijing, China. Results revealed a considerable amount of teacher 'change' while the factors that influenced such change included the teacher's professional learning experience, teaching experience, their reflection on practice, and the teaching context. This study contributes to validate the view that many second language teachers tend to practice what they have experienced as opposed to what they have studied in teacher preparation programs. The study also shows that the development of teacher cognition is the result of a continuous process of interaction between teachers' knowledge and belief systems and their classroom practices under the mediation of teacher reflection.

In examining the current practices of three pre-service English teachers in Hong Kong, Tsang (2004) found that about half of the interactive decisions in these teachers' lessons were guided by explicit maxims; the other half seemed to be connected to contextual factors such as limited class time, students' language level, and classroom management issues. A major implication here is that teachers' actions and decision making must not be understood with exclusive reference to what they think or know; an understanding of their teaching context and work setting is also necessary. Vieira (2006) focused on how the beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge that prospective EFL teachers in Brazil bring to their teacher education program interacted with the practical and theoretical content they were exposed to in such a program. The last phase of the project revealed that participants' teaching practice reflected new perspectives which were constructed during the teacher education program. This supports the importance of reflecting on theories and practices for teachers' knowledge construction. Vieira (2006) highlights that a teacher education program based on a social-constructivist view of teaching that accounts for the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge students bring to such a program, provides elements for the construction of a more coherent classroom practice.

Childs (2011) followed a novice ESL teacher in exploring his experiences in becoming a teacher in the United States. The study was conducted within a sociocultural perspective to analyze this teacher's struggle to conceptualize teaching. Findings show that this teacher's learning to teach process was mediated by several activity systems: his language learning beliefs (language learning as social practice), balancing his roles as a graduate student and a novice teacher, his support systems (coming from supervising professor, the professional development program, other ESL teachers, graduate courses), and his classroom teaching activity. Childs (2011) reports that although this teacher participated in these same activities in both semesters of professional teaching, the context of each activity changed from the first to the second semester. The study also confirms the view of teacher learning as a twisting path shaped and reshaped by different settings and communities of practice (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003) that individually and collectively comprise the first-year teaching experience.

Farrell (2003) similarly reports on the role that support plays as a beginning EFL teacher experienced his first year of teaching in a school in Singapore. The author focused on the teacher's specific context, the school, and how he interpreted his own process of becoming a teacher during that first year. Findings relate to three major aspects: the reality of this teacher's first year characterized by an increase in his workload and in having to cope with lower proficiency students; the role of support from colleagues and administrators which led him to experience a culture of individualism with limited opportunities of sharing and communicating with colleagues; and a series of phases this teacher went through during the year where he moved from an initial shock regarding the reality of the classroom to paying more attention to the quality of his students' learning.

Studies by Johnson (2007) and Johnson and Golombek (2011a) serve to illustrate the use of narratives as representations of a socially-mediated view of human experience. Johnson (2007), for example, analyzed an ESL teacher's narrative with an emphasis on what it revealed about the internal activity of teacher learning, and the cultural artifacts this teacher relied on to mediate her learning. Findings showed that teacher-authored narratives allowed this teacher to "integrate theoretical and experiential knowledge as she articulated a rationale for reconceptualizing her instruction" (p. 185). The teacher in the study similarly relied on cultural artifacts to mediate her learning. These artifacts took various forms: interaction with a co-teacher with whom she was able to externalize her thoughts; theoretical constructs which she appropriated and reconfigured; the enactment of new instructional practices; and the narrative inquiry itself, in which, according to Johnson (2007), this teacher documented "the struggles she experienced as she regained self-regulation and resolved her sense of emotional dissonance" (p. 185) she had initially revealed.

Johnson and Golombek (2011a) later state that the use of narrative as a mediational tool involved three interrelated functions: narrative as externalization, narrative as verbalization, and narrative as systematic examination. Narrative as externalization leads teachers to disclose their current and tacit understandings and feelings so that these could be exposed to social influence and restructuring. Narrative as verbalization involves the use of concepts (every day and scientific) as tools for understanding or facilitating the internalization process. Johnson and Golombek (2011b) claim that "scientific concepts are presented to teachers in order to restructure and transform their everyday concepts so that they are no longer constrained" by Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation. Narrative as systematic examination seeks to engage teachers in systematic examinations of themselves, their teaching practices, and their social, historical, cultural, and political contexts that constituted their professional worlds in particular ways. Together these functions contribute to fostering teacher learning within what Johnson and Golombek (2011a) called the transformative power of narrative.

Other studies (Poehner, 2009; Kiely & Davis, 2010) have also identified how learning to teach in second language education takes place through collaborative work and reflective

practice. Poehner (2009) studied how a Vygotskian theoretical framework contributed to understanding teacher learning in the context of a critical friends' group in a small university town in the United States. He found that as a result of interacting with the critical friends' group, the participating teacher was able to build on her own history and the professional expertise provided by the group to reconceptualize the dilemma she had presented to the group and so was able to transform her instructional activities in ways that enhance student learning.

In working with more experienced English language teachers in a continuing professional development program in the United Kingdom, Kiely and Davis (2010) found that reflective practice was less successful, even though the analysis of Critical Learning Episodes of teachers' own lessons reaffirmed the value of collaborative work in learning to teach while reading research literature in the field of English language teaching to facilitate the analysis of episodes. A reflective approach to teacher learning that allows the inclusion of previous experiences and teachers' beliefs and personal theories of teaching can also be found elsewhere (Vélez-Rendón, 2002; Richards & Farrell, 2011).

Teacher learning along with other related constructs (e.g., teacher identity, teaching methods, reflection), has also been of interest to local researchers in the Colombian context. For instance, the work of Fajardo (2014) reasserts the view that although learning to teach is individually constructed and experienced, it is socially negotiated, that is, it occurs as teachers negotiate ways of participation in a teacher community. The same author adds that learning to teach "is characterized by continuous interaction, communication, and social participation within the school community, local education authority, and broader contexts of professional connection" (p. 56). In contrast, Diaz (2013) examined the process of identity formation of a group of student teachers through a reflection cycle. He concluded that "identity is a social process that evolves in the settings where people learn and interact simultaneously" (p. 47), whereas reflection allows student teachers to think of new possibilities to act within the teaching context while shaping their self-images as teachers.

In conducting a study with thirty-two modern language graduates from a Colombian university, Mosquera (2021) reveals that "the most used methods and approaches that graduates prefer are the Communicative Language Approach and the Eclectic Method" (p. 112) and highlights the teaching and learning context, and resources as fundamental criteria for adopting such methods. This finding appears to reinforce the view that the circumstances of the contexts where teachers study and later teach, shape and restructure their teaching methods and approaches through a reflective-creative action and not merely an imposition of contextualities.

Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernández (2018) reported on a pedagogical experience with pre-service English teachers in the Colombian teacher education context. Interestingly,

the authors mentioned the necessity, stressed by participants, of reflecting on their teaching, to think about all that happens in their classes including the impact they have on students' lives. Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernández (2018) also emphasize "the importance of having mentoring, not as a one-way process, but as a multiple-way process in which pre-service teachers are able to feel they can express themselves and their peers and mentor are going to listen" (p. 164). This study contributes to the discussion on learning to teach second languages from a local – to us – perspective, and points at taking into consideration the reflections of those "directly involved in the [teaching] process" (p. 169), mainly as an opportunity to explore our habituation to traditional – and maybe *incongruous* – methodologies.

Conclusions

Teacher learning in second language teacher education across international settings has experienced various moves in its relatively short history. It has moved from a process-product paradigm with an emphasis on teachers' behaviors and students' outcomes, to a consideration of teachers' cognitions and prior learning experiences, and more recently to be embedded in the social and institutional context of teaching. It is clear that the process-product paradigm has become insufficient to fully understand teachers' hidden pedagogy and the complexity of classrooms, schools and communities where learning to teach occurs. In contrast, there seems to be a movement towards an ecological perspective with a focus on teachers' own experiences as insiders and a closer examination of the variables that influence the learning environment. Ecological studies hold the idea that classrooms are environmental settings and rely on the assumption that "one needs to take into account the affordances and constraints created by teachers, peers, and other human actors, not just the settings' physical characteristics" (Brophy, 2006, p. 27).

Despite the relevance of the various approaches and designs in second language teacher education worldwide, Freeman (2016) argues that designs such as learn-then-apply continue to be predominant in teacher preparation despite the fact that disciplinary knowledge seems to play a less central role in the knowledge base of language teaching in the last few decades. Nonetheless, other conceptual changes "have had little influence on the learn-then-apply framework … [and] on how teaching knowledge is treated throughout a teacher's career" (p. 192). This review has led us, the authors, to believe that the learning to teach process in second language teacher education should be based on the interactions among social, cultural, and historical contexts. Additionally, we argue that the same process should rely on the interplay between teachers' hidden pedagogy and the individual and collective reconstruction of their experiential knowledge. As claimed by Barahona (2014b), "learning to teach is not a solo activity but a confluence of the pre-service teachers' personal histories (for example, no English, poor schools), the culture of the university (diverse and socially

committed), and the nature of the pre-service teacher education program (critical, and change agents)" (p. 63). Thus, we can now more confidently reaffirm the view that language teachers do not learn to teach as a result of just mastering the language and pedagogical skills, or by exploring their own prior experiences, mental lives, or the social characteristics of their teaching context. Instead, it is the sum of these and many other aspects that eventually illuminates the developmental path of learning to teach for language teachers.

Implications for Language Teacher Educators

Language teacher educators in teacher preparation programs around the world should put themselves in a position to consider aspects of several approaches framed within the local needs and conditions of those involved in learning to teach. For example, several researchers (for example, Loughran, 2012; Borg, 2009; Johnson, 2006, 2009b) have claimed that teacher educators must work on acknowledging, helping make explicit, and challenging prospective teachers' prior cognitions and learning experiences as an important precondition within a transformational view of learning to teach.

Teacher educators in diverse second language teacher education programs should consider the benefits of collaborative work and communities of practice in teacher learning. This should lead to the establishment and maintenance of school-university partnerships, as well as other forms of collaborative inquiry (e.g., critical friends groups, team teaching, action research, online discussion groups, etc.) to help reduce the existing gap between the skills and knowledge typically gained in teacher education programs and the practical reality of the workplace. Teacher educators should also promote the development of adaptive expertise (Hammerness et al., 2005) so that teachers can adapt in appropriate ways and innovate within the constraints while they gain awareness of the larger social contexts within which they operate.

Finally, language teacher educators should help prospective teachers to understand that their views of teaching will develop over time. This, according to Childs (2011), can remove the pressure teachers might feel to "get it" immediately and also may remind teacher educators "to have realistic expectations of their students' growth and development" (p. 84).

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