

THE LEARNING AND TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN EL ORIENTE ANTIOQUEÑO: SOME INITIAL REFLECTIONS

Avelino Ledesma García
Jacqueline Marín Gómez
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PREFACE

Learning a language encompasses various elements which go beyond learning grammar, syntax, morphology and pronunciation. This process also envisions language learning as an opportunity to understand other people's ways of being in the world, in terms of their cultural practices, interactions and expressions.

In this regard, the Foreign Language Teaching program at *Universidad Católica de Oriente*, which emerged in 2011, the FLT* program at UCO* aims to depict those observations/remarks that teachers, alumni, students, and its entire (academic) community have made through research exercises to be described within this text.

Since the beginning, the program has worked under the main goal of becoming one of the best Teaching Training English Language Programs of the region; working mostly on the language level, pedagogical training, and foreign language teaching methodologies that respond to the needs of our contexts in Colombia and the world. This is what we can call the period "from birth to maturity". After a renewal of the program and in light of previous experiences, emerging practices, and some requirements from the Ministry of Education, a new period starts, in which the teachers and administrators committed to a self-reflection on the research done until today. Therefore, this book is dedicated only to the English language program where we condensed works

presented by students in collaboration with teachers, showing the commitment students and teachers have to the region, to their personal and professional development, as well as to objects of interest in the field of foreign languages.

The following book presents seven chapters which deepen several issues on teaching English as a Foreign Language and divide them into three main contexts. The first four chapters reflect upon investigations that have contributed to the English teacher-training program. Chapters five and six focus on the investigations undertaken in schools by newly graduated teachers, together with teachers from the BA program. Chapter seven reports a research approaching the contribution of the program to the training of *in-service teachers* in active in the region.

The initial chapter reports a study on the importance of English pronunciation for teachers, learners and researchers in the field of ELT, focusing on their beliefs about teaching and learning pronunciation. This study collected data from two universities with a BA program in foreign languages: a state one and a private one. As a criterion, the 41 students participating of the study must have completed an English Language Phonetics course in advance. Data was collected through anonymous surveys and two focus groups. The findings showed the importance of pronunciation and the motivations learners have when learning the language. The interviewees showed that intelligibility is very important for them since it could help them interact more easily with native and nonnative English speakers. They also considered that features of L1 are present when speaking the L2, and as a sign of their identity; though for some of them, it was important to sound like native speakers. Another relevant finding was the importance of being exposed to different English varieties.

In chapter two, the authors describe the implications of implementing Mobile - Assisted - Language - Learning (MALL). It was developed with participants of 5th semester of a bachelor degree in foreign language teaching, under a mixed-method case study. The authors presented the context of MALL by giving some theoretical elements, previous studies, and the experience they lived during the research, as well as some implications for future studies. Results evidenced that the use of MALL showed to be a friendly and flexible strategy for students to interact orally in English outside the classroom. There was a high level of satisfaction from students to use MALL to practice English orally in a Community of practice (CoP). In conclusion, this is an opportunity to value the extra-curricular activities that MALL and Community of Practice can offer to the language learning and teaching outside the classroom, by maximizing the opportunity to learn the language during the free time.

Chapter three explains the factors that affect preservice teachers' oral production in an English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at a university. The authors describe the role and importance of oral production in the general language proficiency, considering English as a valued language in present society. EFL teachers must be conscious of the factors that might affect students' participation in speaking activities. This Case Study had 17 students from the 5th semester of a foreign language teaching program. It aims to find those attitudes, behaviors and actions from teachers and students that influence oral performance. In conclusion, three main factors are described: attitudes of classmates, student's language proficiency, and teacher's characteristics. Other factors that emerged are gender differences, student's feelings and commitment to activities suggested by their teachers.

Chapter four deals with practicum components in teacher education programs, giving a description of practicum from general theory, including the role of cooperating teachers, advisors and teacher educators. This chapter focuses on making the pre-service teachers' practicum experiences visible through a methodology of experience systematization, by listening to the voices of 20 pre-service teachers, as well as their cooperating teachers, between the years 2016 and 2018, at different schools in 8 municipalities from Eastern Antioquia, and with the cooperation of research assistants. Questionnaires, *Fichas de Recuperación de Aprendizaje*, Interviews and Focus Groups were implemented to collect data. Conclusions show that the practicum process implies being not only language teachers but also being responsible for a variety of issues such students' well-being, institutional requirements, student-teachers' awareness of contexts realities and school dynamics among others. Furthermore, the cooperating teachers and advisors' roles were highlighted as key elements for pre-service teachers in the success of their practicum process. Finally, the authors considered these studies as opportunities to listen and know future teachers' lived experiences from introspective and retrospective reflections is really significant, as perspectives and perceptions.

In chapter five, the authors show the importance of Cooperative Learning (CL). This emerged from the relevance CL has in language teaching and in learning methodologies. Cooperative Learning Strategies (CLS) show that a language is best learnt when students interact to accomplish a common objective and involve their previous knowledge on both language and social interaction. The chapter describes a qualitative action research study done with 11th-grade public school students, that involves the cooperating teacher of

the researchers- practitioners. The researchers overcame the difficulties they had to face during the implementation of the research, reaching some important conclusions in relation to the relevance of CLS in such contexts. According to the authors, the results evidenced that CLS allows the support of skillful students to the ones who need extra help to achieve learning objectives. One of the conclusions highlighted that these CLS promote and enhance students' interaction in the classroom. For instance, it considered the contexts and choices of the students to gain better results.

The author of chapter six reports the findings of an action research study in relation to the feedback on written production that a group of elementary school students received from their English teachers. The study was carried out in an all-girls elementary school with 20 participants. Before reporting the findings and conclusions, the researcher accounts the main concepts of the study such as Second Language Acquisition (SLA), L2 composition. Moreover, they implemented direct, indirect, metalinguistic and checklist feedback. The responses of the students, after they received feedback, demonstrated that direct and metalinguistic feedback proved to be most effective among the styles mentioned. The findings showed as well that, in general, the systematic feedback helped students to reduce mistakes in their production.

The authors of the final chapter reflected on a professional development course (PDC) given to some teachers of a municipality of Eastern Antioquia, as part of an agreement between the Education Office of the municipality and the Catholic University of Eastern Antioquia (in Spanish, UCO that stands for Universidad Católica de Oriente). This reflection emerged in the context of a *research incubator*, Teaching English in Rural Contexts (TERC). The study on

the systematization of experiences focused on the teachers of the rural contexts of the town. The researchers considered the experience and perceptions of the teachers, the homeroom teacher of the course, and the researchers. The research took into account the gaps in rural education, particularly, in the teaching of a second language. The aim of this course was to train teachers in English language and English teaching strategies. The chapter reports the data collection methodologies as well as the most relevant conclusions the researchers achieved. The conclusions evidenced the need to adapt contents to teachers' voice, and to use reality as part of an effective PDC efficacy. In addition, the importance to follow teachers' pace to learn and study, due to work overload and to the distances they have to cover every day in order to commute to the rural schools where they work, as well as the personal issues that may limit the available time to study.

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Exploring pre-service English teachers' beliefs about pronunciation at two BA in foreign language programs

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Introduction

English pronunciation instruction has become an important issue for teachers, learners and researchers in the field of English language teaching globally (see Waniek-Klimczak & Pawlak, 2015; Derwing & Munro, 2015). National and local studies about this issue have focused on

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enhancing speaking skills (see Parra & Fonseca, 2010; Gómez, 2016; Sanchez & Chavarro, 2017; Sisquiarco, Sanchez & Abad, 2017; Ramirez & Artunduaga, 2017), segmentals (see Vera, 2014; Pérez & Orduz, 2018), suprasegmentals (see Arboleda & Castro, 2012; Peñuela, 2018), and pronunciation materials (see Rengifo, 2009; Mancera, 2014). Surprisingly, no research was found concerning future language teachers' beliefs and preferences about pronunciation learning despite the importance those views will have in shaping their future classroom practices.

For authors like Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996), Underhill (2013), Derwing & Munro (2015), pronunciation has been marginalized in ELT classrooms since teachers have received little or no training to teach it. Nevertheless, many teacher training programs in Colombia have foreseen the situation and offered a variety of English classes and separate courses that deal with phonetics and phonology. This important step towards pre-service teachers addressing pronunciation instruction must also be informed about what those learners believe, in order to set possible priorities for language training programs that assure a place for pronunciation in future ELT classrooms.

The present paper reports the findings of a study which aimed to offer insights into pre-service teachers' beliefs about diverse aspects of the teaching and learning of English pronunciation. The participants were 41 intermediate and advanced students enrolled in two BA in foreign language programs at a private (21 students) and a public university (20 students) in Eastern Antioquia, Colombia. The main criterion to select these participants was for students to have completed the phonetics course or courses offered by their academic programs, usually after the third year; at that point, they were expected to have enough background in terms

of their English learning process and had built an opinion about its pronunciation. All participants volunteered to take part in the research through consent forms ensuring ethical considerations like keeping their identities and other sensitive information private.

The data were gathered by means of an anonymous survey and two focus groups. The cross-sectional online survey comprised 17 items following a Likert-scale format (Creswell, 2012) that asked for the participants' level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements in order to grade their beliefs on various aspects of pronunciation on a scale from 1 to 5 (1- strongly disagree and 5- strongly agree). This survey was based on an instrument designed and used in a previous study by Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Bielak in 2015. As for the focus groups, a set of semi-structured open-ended questions were asked to participants in order to expand their perspectives concerning learning and teaching pronunciation. Hence, a combination of qualitative and quantitative analytical procedures was used to analyze the gathered data. The survey items were tabulated and computed, and the focus groups recordings were transcribed and coded (Coffey & Atkinson, 2003) according to the pre-established categories from the survey.

Research Findings

In this section, results on students' beliefs in different aspects of English pronunciation are presented. Six categories were established: *pronunciation instruction, intelligibility and accuracy, connected speech, Spanish and English pronunciation, native speakers of English, and materials*. Information from each category is presented in tables with respect to each university: U1 for the private university and U2 for the public university.

Pronunciation Instruction

One of the biggest questions teachers face when teaching pronunciation is the type of pronunciation they must teach. In the Colombian context the answer usually leads to the two most well-known variations, American or British English. In this respect, authors like Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996) and Sewell (2016) claim that helping students become intelligible is a more realistic pedagogical goal, rather than trying to make them sound like native speakers of the target language. This does not mean they must not be in contact with the aforementioned variations since language teachers are responsible for providing a wider range of *Englishes* into the classroom. Kelly (2000) claims that “Teachers need to be aware of variations and differences, and the more knowledge one has with regard to different accents and varieties of English, the more informed ones’ teaching is likely to be” (p. 15).

As illustrated in Table 1, U1 participants think that pronunciation instruction is necessary to improve their English pronunciation (96,4%), and that they are better English speakers thanks to the Phonetics course (75,7%). These thoughts are confirmed by David when he explains:

A mí sí me cambió mucho la perspectiva, porque yo antes de tomar este curso pensaba que tenía una pronunciación bastante buena, bastante decente. Pero cuando ya vos entrás entonces en eso, te das cuenta que hay cosas que nunca has pronunciado bien. Entonces por eso es que es importante y cambia mucho la perspectiva.¹

¹ “My perspective did change a lot, because before taking this course I thought that I had a really good pronunciation, very decent, but when you are in the course you realize that there are things that you have never pronounced well. So, that is why it is important, and the perspective changes a lot.”

However, in the case of U2, just 37,5% of participants think that pronunciation instruction is necessary, although 62,5% of students noticed an improvement in their pronunciation since they took the Phonetics course. Despite this result, during the focus group, participants stated that it was helpful. David corroborated it when he expressed: *Considero que sí, porque durante el curso me di cuenta que había muchos sonidos que no utilizaba y que en serio afectan la inteligibilidad de lo que quería decir, entonces considero que sí he aprendido mucho y me ha ayudado a mejorar fonéticamente.*²

Statement	U	1 (%)	2(%)	3(%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
I think that direct pronunciation instruction in my program is necessary to improve my English.	U1	0,00	0,00	3,40	27,5	68,9
	U2	12,5	0,00	50,0	12,5	25,0
I am a better English speaker since I took the phonetics course.	U1	0,00	3,40	20,6	41,3	34,4
	U2	12,5	12,5	12,5	25,0	37,5

Table 1. Survey answers concerning pronunciation instruction

Pronunciation instruction, specifically in the phonetics course, was a relevant matter in both universities as participants agreed on the improvements they felt in their pronunciation after taking this class and gaining self-awareness on their English pronunciation and on how it could affect their intelligibility. Supporting this finding, Carlet & Kivistö - de Souza (2018) argue that “Teaching learners how to increase awareness about L2 phonology does not only positively reflect on their L2 pronunciation, but also enables them to take control of their pronunciation learning by developing self-monitoring abilities” (p. 104).

² “I consider that it does, because during the course I realized that there were many sounds that I didn’t use and that really affect the intelligibility of what I wanted to say; therefore, I consider that, indeed I have learned much and it has helped me improve phonetically.”

Intelligibility and Accuracy

Being intelligible means to be understood by the interlocutors, or as proposed by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin (1996), when our pronunciation does not detract from our ability to communicate. Intelligibility becomes essential in times when English is increasingly being used as *Lingua Franca* (ELF), which means that it is used as a medium of communication between speakers who do not share it as first language (Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010). Therefore, the idea of having an accurate pronunciation corresponding to a specific English variation is no longer a priority.

As presented in Table 2, when it comes to intelligibility, 96,4% of participants in U1 agree with the fact that knowing pronunciation helps communication in English. On the other hand, in U2, 50% of participants consider that it does, 37.5% show a neutral position and the remaining 12,5% think that it does not. Also, both universities consider it is more important to be intelligible than to sound like a native speaker (U1=62,5%; U2=100%). As stated by Eliana from U1: *“el hecho de uno pronunciar como un nativo ya eso es como un adorno que uno le quiere dar al estilo que uno tenga para hablar.”*³ and by Gabriel from U2: *“el hecho de poder ser inteligibles a la hora de hablar en inglés es un aspecto muy importante. Ya sonar como un nativo es, pensaría yo, en mi percepción que es como una decisión de la persona que va a aprender o cuáles son los propósitos que tiene.”*⁴ Nevertheless, participants differ with respect to how their pronunciation

³ “The fact of pronouncing as a native speaker is more like a decoration that you want to give to the style that you have to speak.”

⁴ “The fact of being able to be intelligible when speaking English is a very important aspect. Now, sounding like a native speaker is, I would think, in my perception, that is like a decision of the person that is going to learn or which are the purposes that she or he has.”

affects communication: 65,4% of U1 participants recognized it has an effect, while 62,5% U2 consider it does not.

Statement	U	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
Knowing pronunciation helps communication in English as a foreign language.	U1	0,00	0,00	3,44	20,6	75,8
	U2	0,00	12,5	37,5	25,0	25,0
I think that my pronunciation does not affect communication.	U1	48,2	17,2	24,1	10,3	0,00
	U2	12,5	12,5	12,5	37,5	25,0
I think it is more important to sound like a native speaker rather than be intelligible.	U1	20,6	41,3	20,6	10,3	6,8
	U2	75,0	25,0	0,00	0,00	0,00
I think that it is more important to be intelligible rather than sound like a native speaker.	U1	0,00	0,00	17,2	24,1	58,6
	U2	0,00	0,00	0,00	12,5	87,5

Table 2. Survey answers about intelligibility

Concerning accuracy, one statement was proposed to the participants: “I care about my pronunciation in English being fully correct”. This statement might result problematic since, as argued by Walker (2010), what represents an error in EFL settings is not necessarily an error in ELF. Nevertheless, as can be seen from Table 3, U1 students consider important to have a fully correct English pronunciation (89,5%), and they even worry about having a process of monitoring their pronunciation and detecting mistakes. As evidence of that, Flor declared “*pienso que uno puede llegar a un punto en que ya inconscientemente va a hablar uno correctamente, pero eso tiene un tiempo, es algo sistemático, es un proceso paso a paso, y desde que uno haga siempre ese proceso muy consciente con cada sonido, con cada palabra, uno sí puede llegar a un momento en*

*el que ya esas fosilizaciones pasan a segundo plano.*⁵ Whereas 62,5% of U2 students care about having a fully correct pronunciation, and 38% of students do not. In this sense, they focus on being intelligible more than on mastering a fully correct pronunciation, as supported by Gabriel: “*yo no podría decir qué me hace mejor o qué hace mejor a alguien, porque me parece que es una pregunta muy ambigua, pero yo creo que si la persona se da a entender o lleva un mensaje claro de lo que quiere transmitir, es más que suficiente para poder comunicarse.*”⁶

Statement	U	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
I care about my pronunciation in English being fully correct.	U1	0,00	0,00	10,3	48,2	41,3
	U2	12,5	12,5	12,5	50,0	12,5

Table 3. Survey answers concerning accuracy

As evidenced, participants from both universities assured that it is more important to be intelligible than to sound like a native speaker, which aligns with Peñuela (2018) when stating that “because of the considerable number of non-native speakers of English around the world, the standard sounds and patterns of English have changed. Consequently, speakers no longer need to sound native-like to be considered as intelligible” (p. 93). However, there seem to be some contradictions. For instance, while U1 students reassured their position when they said that their pronunciation affects

⁵ I think that one can reach a point in which, unconsciously, is going to speak correctly, but it takes time, it is something systematic, it is a step-by-step process, and since one always makes that process very consciously with each sound, with each word, one indeed can reach that moment in which those fossilizations move to the background.

⁶ I could not say what makes me better or what makes someone better, because I consider that is a very ambiguous question, but I believe that if the person is intelligible, or gives a clear message of what he or she wants to transmit, that is more than enough to be able to communicate.

communication; U2 students contradicted their first position by stating that it does not affect communication. Besides, participants of both universities seem to be concerned about having an accurate pronunciation, which could be explained if students answered from an EFL perspective.

Connected Speech

As presented in the previous category, suprasegmentals are features of speech which have to do with groups of segments or phonemes, such as stress, intonation, rhythm, among others (Kelly, 2000), or those of pronunciation that involve more than an individual sound (Walker, 2010). Underhill (2013) proposes that “attention to connected-up pronunciation (stream of speech supported by word and individual sounds) would be a permanent feature of all language work and class discussion” (p. 5).

As regards to the participants’ beliefs concerning connected speech, the results included in Table 4 show that participants in both universities displayed a holistic view of pronunciation in which both, individual sounds and connected speech are important. U1 participants assured it during the focus group when Camilo noted: “*Yo considero que si se da la separación de esos aspectos, le quitaríamos el lado natural que tiene el idioma, porque como lo han mencionado es un conjunto, entonces hacer lo uno pero sin incluir lo otro no es una producción natural del idioma.*”⁷ Juan, from U2 stated: “*yo creo que al momento de comunicarse sí son más importantes cosas como el estrés, ¿cuáles eran los otros? En términos de comunicación, pero como decía Kelly, o sea, para ser profes, sí es*

⁷ “I consider that if we separate those aspects, we will remove the natural sense that language has because, as others have mentioned, it is a whole. So, doing one thing without including the other is not a natural production of the language.”

*necesario como el conocimiento de las letras, y los sonidos, y la fonética. O sea, como profes y para enseñarlo me parece necesario, pero para la comunicación me parece más importante las cosas como las otras [suprasegmentals].*⁸ Field (2005) manifests this position when he affirms that “research evidence suggests that suprasegmentals play a more important role than segmentals on communication” (p. 402).

As noted above, when it comes to teaching, U2 participants consider that knowing about individual sounds is more crucial, although in the survey they took a more neutral position on the statements. U1 students confirmed that segmental and suprasegmental aspects cannot work separately since language is a system that requires both in order to make sense, and they permit a more natural speech. However, in the survey, the participants presented similar positions when asked if connected speech was more important than individual sounds (41.3% agree, 41,3% neither agree nor disagree).

Statement	U	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
I believe that connected speech is more important than individual sounds.	U1	10,3	6,80	41,3	24,1	17,2
	U2	0,00	12,5	50,0	25,0	12,5
I believe that individual sounds are more important than connected speech.	U1	10,3	31,0	27,5	20,6	10,3
	U2	12,5	25,0	62,5	0,00	0,00

Table 4. Survey answers concerning connected speech

⁸ “I believe that in the moment of communicating, things like stress are more important, which were the others? In terms of communication. But, as K said, I mean, to be teachers it is necessary like the knowledge of letters, sounds, and phonetics. I mean, as teachers and to teach it. I consider it necessary, but for communication I think that the things like the others [suprasegmentals] are more important.”

Spanish(L1) and English(L2) Pronunciation

The sound system of a speakers' native language certainly infuses their L2 either in the productive or receptive oral skills (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992), for advocates of ELF like Jenkins (2000) and Walker (2010) the transfer of certain sounds and patterns does not necessarily mean errors to correct if they are not affecting mutual intelligibility.

In terms of the possible affectations of L1 over L2, Table 5 reveals that 51,6% of students from U1 think their pronunciation contains features characteristic of Spanish pronunciation, 31% of students have a neutral position, and just 3,4% think it does not contain them. In contrast, a big part of U2 participants established that their pronunciation contains those elements (62,5%). Moreover, U1 students have diverse perspectives regarding whether they care or not about their English pronunciation having features characteristic of Spanish pronunciation, as 31% do not take any side, while 37,8% care about it. On the contrary, 62,5% of U2 students stated they do not mind if their pronunciation has such features.

Furthermore, participants show varied positions when asked about their English pronunciation indicating they are from Colombia. 51,6 % of U1 students are inclined towards caring that their pronunciation would show where they are from, while 34,4% took a neutral position. They explained this in their interventions during the focus group, when Gabriel from U1 claimed: *"El tener el acento o no colombiano, pues, a mí tampoco me molesta, además eso es lo que nos hace colombianos, eso es una identidad cultural que debemos poseer."*⁹ U2 students are more indecisive about this item since 62,5%

⁹ "Having the Colombian accent or not, well, it doesn't bother me. Besides, that is what makes us Colombians, this is a cultural identity that we must have."

of them say they neither agree nor disagree. Nonetheless, this group of participants still assured that Colombian pronunciation is a matter of identity and this should not be hidden, as Eliana declared: *“Yo creería que es una cuestión de identidad porque, al tratar de imitar a un nativo, nosotros estamos perdiendo cierta ideología hereditaria o identidad, pues como lo había mencionado, de lo que ya tenemos, de lo que nos es propio. Entonces, para mí el perder mi acento colombiano implica perder mi identidad, mi generación, mi familia, mis costumbres, mis hábitos.”*¹⁰

Statement	U	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
I think that my pronunciation in English does not contain features characteristic of Spanish pronunciation.	U1	24,1	27,5	31,0	13,7	3,40
	U2	37,5	25,0	12,5	0,00	0,00
I care about my English pronunciation not having features characteristic of Spanish pronunciation.	U1	3,40	24,1	31,0	24,1	13,7
	U2	37,5	25,0	12,5	25,0	0,00
I care about my pronunciation in English indicating that I am from Colombia.	U1	6,80	6,80	34,4	27,5	24,1
	U2	0,00	25,0	62,5	12,5	0,00

Table 5. Survey answers concerning L1 and L2

Students' beliefs regarding their preferences on the influence of their L1 on their English pronunciation demonstrated that many of U2 students do not care that their pronunciation may have features characteristic of Spanish pronunciation, and they are conscious that it is possible; while in U1, participants' beliefs fluctuate between

¹⁰ “I believe that it is a matter of identity because, when trying to imitate a native speaker, we are losing certain hereditary ideology or identity. I mean, as I mentioned, what we already have, what we own. Then, for me, losing my Colombian accent implies losing my identity, my generation, my family, my costumes, my habits.”

caring about L2 having L1 features and stating a neutral posture. Additionally, participants seemed to be indecisive about their pronunciation evidencing the country they come from, marking that as a matter of identity, as backed by Cook (2004) in one of his previous studies:

L2 learners should be looked at in their own right, not as deficient native speakers, but as multicompetent speakers standing between two languages and cultures [...] the mother tongue is something that is implicit to the L2 learner and the L2 learning process and is always present in the language learner, no matter how hard we try to leave it behind in the class. (p.2)

English Native Speakers' Influence

Davies (2003) proposes that native speakers should be able to show normal control in fluent connected oral speech and to know strategies of performance and communication. Furthermore, they have the ability to produce oral language fluently and spontaneously, being that they have a large number of lexical units; they can write and speak creatively, going from poetry and literature to jokes, metaphors and novels. On the other hand, Cook (2004) defines non-native speakers as “people who know and use a second language at any level” (p. 163). In this sense, they are likely to have a more advanced level in writing skills (including spelling and grammar) creating connections and relations between their L1 and L2.

Regarding native speakers' influence, as shown in Table 6, almost half of the participants from both universities seem to indicate that they like to imitate native speakers' accent (U1=44,7%, U2=50%); the other half are unsure (U1=27,5%, U2=25%) or dislike imitating accents (U1=27,5%, U2=25%). When asking participants if imitating native speakers' pronunciation makes them better English speakers, responses were completely opposite for both universities, whereas 58,5% of U1 participants think that it makes them better L2 speakers as supported by Camilo: *"Obviamente la imitación va a ser muy buena, porque nos va a acercar a un contexto real de la aplicación del idioma."*¹¹ 62,5% of U2 participants maintained that imitating native speakers does not make them better English speakers.

Statement	U	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
I like to imitate native speakers' accent.	U1	13,7	13,7	20,6	27,5	24,1
	U2	25,0	0,00	25,0	50,0	0,00
I think that imitating native speakers' pronunciation makes me a better English speaker.	U1	13,7	13,7	13,7	13,7	44,8
	U2	37,5	25,0	0,00	37,5	0,00

Table 6. Survey answers about native speakers influence

These results illustrate that even though it is difficult to determine students' preferences accurately, there is an aspiration to conform to English native speaker norms as found by Timmis (2002). A possible explanation to the diverse beliefs in both universities could be the status of

¹¹ Obviously, imitation can be very good, because it approaches us to a real context of the language use.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) where learners are expected to interact primarily with native speakers of the language. Walker (2010) affirms that “What learners aim for in terms of pronunciation will also be strongly influenced by what their teachers offer them” (p. 61) and goes further when proposing that if learners get awareness of English as a Lingua Franca as an informed choice, differently from EFL as the ‘imposed’ one, their inclination for native-speaker accents will diminish.

Materials

According to Avery and Ehrlich (1992) learners of English should be provided with authentic material and practice opportunities that go beyond the segmentals (individual sounds) to the suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.) where they could be exposed to wider contexts in which the sounds and patterns occur.

As can be seen in Table 7, while 96,4% of U1 participants like to listen to authentic material in order to learn pronunciation, 50% of U2 participants show a positive attitude towards the same affirmation, 37,5% of them display a neutral position and 12,5% disagreed. To this respect, Gabriel in the U1 focus group commented: “*Las películas nos dan un contexto real de la aplicación del idioma*”¹², which proves that some students’ preference is to listen to authentic communication so as to approach themselves to the real use of the English language. Similarly, U2 participants stated that materials such as movies, TED videos, TV shows, news and videogames are useful when practicing pronunciation, as confirmed by Flor and Hector in the following statements: “*a través de redes sociales, también sería con series o programas*

¹² Movies give us a context to the real use of the language.

de televisión, y ya la música."¹³; "*Principalmente por los videojuegos, como dijeron Flor y Gabriel, películas, uno que otro material auténtico como noticias, o los videos de TED también.*"¹⁴ As for the predilection for using non-authentic materials to improve pronunciation, the views are varied, 37,9% of U1 participants agreed, 37,9% neither agree nor disagree, and 24,1% disagree. In the same statement, 62,5% of U2 participants demonstrate an impartial position, 25% disagreed and just 12,5% agreed.

A common aspect for both universities is the fact that the majority of students prefer when teachers use diverse resources with different variations of English pronunciation (U1=84,6%; U2=87,5%).

Statement	U	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
I like to listen to authentic communication in order to learn pronunciation.	U1	0,00	0,00	3,44	27,5	68,9
	U2	12,5	0,00	37,5	12,5	37,5
I like to listen to non-authentic material in order to improve my pronunciation.	U1	10,3	13,8	37,9	27,6	10,3
	U2	0,00	25,0	62,5	12,5	0,00
I prefer when the teacher uses diverse materials with different variations of English pronunciation.	U1	0,00	0,00	10,3	10,3	79,3
	U2	0,00	0,00	12,5	37,5	50,0

Table 7. Survey answers concerning materials.

¹³ Through social media, also with series or TV shows and music.

¹⁴ Mainly through video games, as F and G said, movies, some authentic material like news, or TED videos too.

As presented, participants from both universities tend to favor English pronunciation practice through authentic material, as this is a way for them to approach to real communication; this might also be due to the contact they have had with it during their learning process, being that it may be more accessible to them than non-authentic material. Besides, it is plausible that students do not consider this latter as relevant as the authentic one, thanks to its difficulty to find in terms of level, type of content, and other aspects that concern a deeper knowledge about language. Also, students' motivation and interests play a major role when deciding the kind of material they want to practice with. Along with this, their preference for materials that have different variations of the language could be the result of a growing consciousness about the need to be exposed to a wider range of pronunciations of English (Marks & Bowen, 2012) as part of real-life interactions.

Conclusions

Despite the considerable amount of studies about English pronunciation in Colombia concerning segmentals, suprasegmentals, enhancing speaking skills, and materials; little or no research has been carried out with the intention of addressing future language teachers' beliefs in this field aiming at different aspects of pronunciation like its instruction, intelligibility, accuracy, connected speech, L1 and L2, native speakers' influence, and resources. This empirical study means a first step into bringing the issue of pronunciation instruction to discussion and further research in Colombia, exploring important aspects like pronunciation priorities and motivations that learners in this specific context may have.

The results show that even though a great part of participants care about accuracy in their pronunciation, their final goal is to be intelligible, which goes along with the role of ELF, being that English speakers do not only need to communicate with native speakers of the language, but with all the English speakers around the world without distinction of their L1. Participants also felt formal instruction of pronunciation at their universities helped them to become more self-aware of their English pronunciation.

Another important finding is the ambivalent feelings participants show regarding sounding like native speakers of English since for some of them certain features of their L1 are an important manifestation of their identity and culture that must not be masked when uttering their L2. Nevertheless, and since EFL has been dominant in language classrooms in Colombia, some students still seem to desire to conform to English native-speaking norms.

Participants also drew attention to the varieties of English and how crucial it is to include them during their formative process, even more when training themselves to be teachers of English, as they will provide students with the ability to use English in more diverse contexts.

This study has important implications for teachers of English and specifically for professors training future teachers at a university level, due to the fundamental role they play when learners are not only in the process of setting pronunciation goals, but also building an opinion about English pronunciation, which most probably permeate their future choices and classroom practices.

It is important to consider that, even though this paper is only a first and local approach to the main issue, which concerns future teachers' beliefs on pronunciation of English, findings were relevant to the ELT field, the community

where it took place, and the researchers. However, for further research, data collection tools could be improved and broadly validated. Besides, it is suggested to assure the inclusion of a bigger number of participants or the application of more longitudinal research designs.

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Mobile assisted language learning and communities of practice to promote English oral interaction

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Introduction

This paper intends to describe the implications of implementing *mobile-assisted language learning* (hereinafter MALL) in a *Community of practice* (hereinafter CoP) developed in extracurricular activities for promoting oral interaction in English as a foreign language. The participants of this study were eleven students from the fifth semester of a bachelor's degree in foreign language teaching at a private university in Colombia. This research was developed under a

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mixed method case study. Information was gathered through the implementation of a Likert Scale Survey, a focus group and some metadata released by the mobile app used. The data collected was coded, grouped and categorized. The analysis was classified into seven references and then they were grouped into two categories with five subcategories mixing data from the different instruments. This paper presented a number of important implications for the Foreign Language (hereinafter FL) field in terms of innovation and pedagogy, as well as new proposals to democratize the language learning and practice inside the university. Finally, some recommendations for future studies related to the use of MALL into a community of practice are also presented. The translation on this paper were made by the researchers.

Extracurricular activities are flexible spaces for students that strengthen their foreign language learning process outside a regular class time. According to Mello and Worrel (2008), these activities refer to an involvement in organized groups or activities that can take place inside or outside the school. It is to say, that by implementing this kind of activities the possibilities to interact in the target language might increase. Also, the learning process can continue outside the classroom. In this same line, extracurricular activities have the purpose of enhancing students' training with activities related to the curriculum, to extend the schedule, to generate confidence among students and foster new values and attitudes. With this in mind, the importance of implementing extracurricular activities in the language acquisition process of students while other social and cognitive abilities are developed becomes clear.

In line with Extracurricular activities, MALL and CoP present characteristics that contribute to language learning and teaching outside the classroom. First, due to

the portability and connectivity of mobile devices, MALL provides opportunities for the learners to make the most of their free time, no matter the time neither the place. Some of the most well-known mobile apps to interact orally in a foreign language are: Duolingo, Hellotalk, speakingPal, English Tutor and Wespeke. Similarly, CoP provides freedom for participants to select when, what and where to learn, taking into account their interests and previous knowledge.

In addition, MALL allows the exchange and collaboration with other learners through mobile devices with features such as chat, video and voice calls. Equally, CoP considers interaction, not only between the community but also between two or more communities, as an essential factor to promote a constant exchange of knowledge.

Currently, the University where this study was carried out offers extracurricular activities to language learners that promote English oral interaction, with the purpose of complementing the process students start inside the classrooms. Some of the extracurricular activities implemented are focused on, theatre, speaking, reading, writing, and listening English clubs. However, there is a widespread concern about the students' low attendance to these activities that promote oral interaction. At the moment, there are about 300 students enrolled in the bachelor's degree in foreign languages of this University, and approximately 8 % of them attend these clubs, which means a very low population profits from extracurricular activities. In this line, Pérez and Escobar (2016) found, through a diagnostic survey carried out at this university, that students mentioned some of the reasons that explain the phenomenon of not attending: having priorities regarding jobs and other academic responsibilities, fear to publicly making mistakes.

In summary, it has been shown that the understanding of the reasons previously displayed might bring some contributions to pre-service teachers and the program in foreign languages at UCO. Regarding the former, students might have more opportunities to interact orally in English outside the class. In the case of the latter, this might contribute to its educational quality, as it could include more technological strategies and personalized education within its curriculum.

Based on the aforementioned, this research intended to describe the implications of the use of a mobile app to promote oral interaction in the members of a CoP. To achieve this, and by means of the software Nvivo to do the data analysis, findings were grouped into two main category groups, MALL and Oral interaction, and MALL and CoP.

This grouping was done according to the similarities found in some of the categories, which enabled their union to form a more general one. According to this, the first category group, MALL and Oral interaction, involved 30 references of analysis. This category group emerged from the combination of 4 main categories: positive comments of students regarding the use of MALL, recommendations for future use of MALL, and difficulties of MALL that students suggested. The second group, MALL and CoP, released 14 references of analysis. This category group emerged from the combination of 2 preliminary categories: Justification of MALL and the relation between MALL and CoP.

Moreover, along the preliminary analysis of the Likert scale, the codifying process released 6 items with their corresponding answers. After analyzing these data by using the program SPSS statistics, the questions with similar characteristics were classified into two main variables: MALL and Oral interaction, and MALL and CoP (These categories

were considered in both focus group and Likert scale). This was done with the purpose of comparing quantitative and qualitative results regarding those categories and obtaining data that are more accurate. Then, a rating scale from 1 to 5 was assigned to evaluate the average score of each group, considering 1 as very negative, 2 as negative, 3 as positive, 4 as positive and 5 as very positive.

In addition, the neutral option was deleted to reduce the probability of mistake. To analyze the categorical groups, a descriptive statistical analysis was carried out, which helped to know the level of satisfaction of students regarding the use of MALL. From this analysis, all the answers were ranged within the favorable and very favorable scales.

MALL and Oral interaction

Mobile assisted language learning is an approach that uses the mobile phone technology as a way of stressing learner centeredness and autonomy. According to O'Malley et al. (2003), mobile learning includes any kind of learning that takes place when the learner is not in a static space and he/she takes advantage of mobile technology.

MALL benefits from the characteristics that cell phones gained in today's world, and reminds students of the goal they set at the beginning of the process. Besides, it pushes students to keep a minimal amount of time exposed to the language in a single day, in a way that it becomes a language-practice habit, no matter the time nor the place. Geddes (2004) affirms that mobile learning is the kind of learning that takes place at any time, and in any place, which also refers to extending teaching and learning outside the walls of the classroom. Therefore, students are going to feel more responsible for their own learning.

In addition, MALL favors teaching as a complementary tool that reinforces what students studied in class, and may encourage them to ask more questions, reducing the time teachers use to speak in a class, and extending the opportunities to interact in the language. According to MCER (2001), for interaction to occur, at least two people need to exchange information orally or in a written way, with a necessary alternation between expression and comprehension of what it is said. By this same line, Bygate (1987) suggests that “learners need to develop skills in the management of interaction and negotiation of meaning” (p. 76), since “we use language with the immediate purpose of communicating the way we perceive, give meaning, and understand the world” (Ibarra, 2002, p. 44).

For the analysis carried out for this category group, the findings obtained from the focus group indicated that *MALL and Oral interaction* was the category group which included most of the references of analysis. In this same line, the survey with the Likert scale indicated that 77% of students found that the use of MALL to promote oral interaction was very positive and 22% considered it was positive. From the analysis of this main category, students’ positive perceptions regarding MALL were observed, as mentioned by Student 1 who considered MALL truly useful: “*Pues a mí me parece que el MALL es muy útil*”¹⁵ or, Student 5 who affirmed that his perception regarding MALL was good, and that it is a great help for the learning process: “*Mis percepciones sobre el MALL son muy buenas, para mí esto es una gran ayuda.*”¹⁶ Also, Student 6 declared that the use of MALL really hits the target: “*El uso del MALL es muy acertado*”¹⁷.

¹⁵ “I consider that MALL is very useful.”

¹⁶ “My self-perceptions about MALL are good, for me, this is a great help.”

¹⁷ “MALL is quite accurate.”

In this respect, this research found that students defined MALL as a flexible option that increases the opportunities for oral interaction, as Student 2 mentioned: “*Es flexible y entonces digamos que facilita mucho la interacción oral*”¹⁸. Moreover, for its novelty and varied characteristics, MALL can boost young students’ interest concerning learning, as Student 4 said: “*A los adolescentes les gusta mucho la tecnología y eso puede estimular mucho el aprendizaje*”¹⁹, and as the Student 3 added, using MALL is an innovative strategy: “*Es muy innovadora*”²⁰. Hence, according to students, MALL is a suitable, interesting, innovative and useful approach to interact orally in English.

As well, some students highlighted the flexibility of time and space that MALL offers when it comes to practice the oral ability: “*No nos limitamos a que tenemos clase en ciertos horarios y en ciertos espacios*”²¹ (student 1). Another student stated that MALL can be used anywhere and anytime: “*Podemos usarla en cualquier hora y en cualquier lugar*”²² (student 5). These two advantages enable a more constant interaction, as it was mentioned by Student 6: “*Podemos tener una constante interacción con el idioma*”²³. Besides a constant interaction, some students found MALL suitable, since it suggests different ways to interact either virtually or face to face: “*Es muy conveniente porque podemos mantener una interacción constante, sea virtualmente o face-to-face*”²⁴

¹⁸ “It is flexible, so it facilitates oral interaction a lot.”

¹⁹ “Teenagers like technology a lot, so this could stimulate learning.”

²⁰ “It is very innovative.”

²¹ “We are not limited to attending a class in certain schedules or spaces.”

²² “We can use it anytime and anywhere.”

²³ “We can have a constant interaction with the language.”

²⁴ “It is very convenient because we can keep not only a constant virtual interaction but also a face to face one.”

(student 2). In this same line, students consider MALL not only as an option to strengthen academic issues, but also as a chance to learn about other topics of interest: “*El MALL no solo fortalece la parte académica, sino también otros temas*”²⁵ (student 4). Thus, students considered MALL as a flexible approach that enables a constant interaction in the target language.

It was also observed that some students did not have enough time to interact with the mobile app implemented for academic issues, as stated by student 3: “*Por ejemplo, en mi caso, no tuve mucha interacción porque debía estudiar para los parciales.*”²⁶ In this same line, after having checked and analyzed the metadata obtained from the Mobile App used, it was observed that between the second and third week of April (midterm-exam times at University) there was a decrease of interactions in the app implemented, which fits in the opinion given by the student.

In this same line, regarding the mobile app implemented for this study, students made some recommendations for future implementations considering appearance, privacy and operating system coverage as the most relevant: “*La aplicación que se escoja en esta metodología debería tener una política de privacidad*”²⁷ (student 6), and: “*Que esté disponible para celulares iOS*”²⁸ (student 1), and: “*Implementar más objetos visuales*”²⁹ (Student 4).

²⁵ “MALL not only strengthens academic issues but also some others.”

²⁶ “For instance, in my case, I did not have much interaction since I had to study a lot for midterm exams.”

²⁷ “The chosen app for this approach might have a privacy policy.”

²⁸ “This app should be available for iOS phones.”

²⁹ “Implement more visual objects.”

MALL and Communities of practice

According to Wenger and Snyder (2000), communities of practice go beyond the teamwork concept for two main reasons: the first refers to the spontaneous way in which a CoP generates a condition of freedom and democracy, and the second reason refers to the motivation of members to participate and interact with others. By considering these reasons, a CoP presents a feasible option to deal with the low attendance to extracurricular spaces promoted in the university to practice the foreign language, since students may choose when, what and whom to learn. This also means, a switch in students' minds regarding the concept of interaction towards "a process in which people and things have a reciprocal effect the one over the other through its actions: different from transaction, the interpersonal aspects of the communicative event" (Malamah-Thomas, 1987).

In this line, Wenger (1998, p. 55) also presents a similar definition, but this time assigned to the concept of "participation as a fact that brings consequences in what it means to learn and support learning as for individuals that make part of a CoP as for the community itself". In addition, the author says that the goal of a CoP member is to find meaning in their life experience, considering participation and reification as complementary processes to achieve this goal; this way the former is understood as a "social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises" (Wenger, 1998, p. 55).

Following Wenger, Henri (2003) states that participants build an identity due to the membership to a CoP and the fact of sharing a common project and a repertoire of questions and answers regarding the problems discussed into a certain CoP.

The latter process refers to “reification”, which means “giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). This means that students not only have the chance to go through a learning experience but also can visualize learning as something more real, active, useful and less abstract.

The data analysis for this characteristic indicated that MALL and CoP was the second most recurrent category group with 10 references. Moreover, the survey with the Likert scale indicated that 88% percent of students found the use of MALL very positive for oral interaction, and 11% considered it positive. From the analysis of the second main category.

Some students mentioned having trouble attending extra-curricular spaces at the university because of the schedule. However, they considered that MALL might complement and ease the intention of the extracurricular spaces: “*Los grupos conversacionales en la universidad no han tenido mucho éxito porque se cruza mucho con los horarios que tenemos, pero haciendo uso del MALL se puede facilitar eso*”³⁰ (student 2). Another reason they mentioned for not attending extracurricular spaces is the fact that many of them work and study. However, they think that a mobile app could broaden the number of possibilities: “*Lo que pasa con los semilleros en la universidad es que normalmente los estudiantes trabajan o no tienen un horario tan flexible, mientras que con la aplicación se puede facilitar eso*”³¹ (student 6). Moreover, students justify that the use of MALL helps to use language in a wider variety of contexts and in a greater number of topics: “*Nos estamos*

³⁰ “Conversational groups at University have not been very successful because class and extracurricular spaces sometimes overlap, however, using MALL can help with this difficulty.”

³¹ “What happens with the extra-curricular spaces in the university is that normally the students work or do not have such a flexible schedule, so the app used in MALL can facilitate this.”

*contextualizando con diversos temas y estamos usando la lengua con una mayor cantidad de personas*³² (Student 3); another student affirmed: *“Estamos llevando la lengua a un contexto más real”*³³ (Student 4). Each student follows a different learning style, based on this, some students assume MALL as an inclusive strategy to respond to different students’ needs and styles: *“Cuando una persona es muy tímida para hablar en persona, generalmente no lo es para hablar en chat, o en alguna plataforma de interacción”*³⁴ (student 5).

Accordingly, MALL presents a variety of characteristics that help to complement extracurricular activities, learning styles and the diversity of students’ class schedules.

It was also observed that students had a positive experience interacting in the CoP: *“Tuve muy buenas interacciones en la comunidad de práctica”*³⁵ (student 1). Besides, students think that MALL contribute to the generation of groups to interact in the target language: *“El MALL es importante y contribuye por ejemplo a crear grupos en los que todos podamos estar interactuando”*³⁶ (student 4). Some others agree by saying that the use of mobile technology is a way to give student an excuse to congregate and practice English orally: *“La app puede ser un gran puente para conocer a otras personas que quieran practicar el idioma”*³⁷ (Student 3), *“Estimula a los estudiantes de la licenciatura a acercarse más a otras personas y que practiquen”*³⁸

³² “We are getting to know some context about different topics and we are using the language with a bigger number of people.”

³³ “We are taking the language to a more real context.”

³⁴ “When someone is shy to talk face to face, they may not be as shy when using an online chat or any other online platform.”

³⁵ “I had really good interactions with the community of practice.”

³⁶ “MALL is important and contributes to create groups where we can interact.”

³⁷ “The app can be a bridge to meet some other people who want to practice the language.”

³⁸ “It stimulates foreign language students to get closer to others in order to practice.”

(student 6). Besides, during the implementation of MALL, the database of the mobile app showed a significant number of interactions during the last 3 weeks, 196 interactions in total, which means that not only students find the implementation of MALL useful for meeting and interacting orally with other people, but also, they did it by using the mobile app proposed.

Discussion

The main aim of this study was to describe the implications of the members of a CoP regarding the use of MALL for promoting oral interaction. The results of the current study showed that the use of MALL presented a friendly and flexible strategy for students to interact orally in English out of the classroom. These results are in line with the findings of Jordano, Castrillo and Pareja (2015), showing that using mobile apps to learn a language can be as effective as other methods whether in distant, blended learning or face-to-face teaching.

Based on the results obtained after analyzing the Likert Scale survey, it was found that there was a high level of satisfaction from students to use MALL to practice English orally in a CoP. Similarly, Castrillo, Martín-Monje, and Bárcena, (2014) obtained positive results regarding motivation and participation during the use of Whatsapp to learn a FL, except that the present study achieved what Jordano et al (2015) concluded in their study as a shortfall, which basically was that mobile apps existing nowadays are interactive for users towards the screen but not in a more realistic environment (meaning to interact with other people).

From the focus group, students highlighted the importance of mixing virtual reality and face-to-face

interactions to promote the CoPs opportunities to practice the target language, as well as the use of mobile technology to deal with time and space difficulties when it comes to practice English. These results are also in line with Shea's (2010) ideas, when saying that learner's self-efficacy is associated with the environment in which they study, and especially when hybrid courses (face-to-face and virtual) or environments are provided.

Furthermore, after crossing the results obtained from the different instruments, it is clear that the combination of MALL and CoP generate a considerable impact on the promotion of oral interaction by providing a wider range of possibilities for students to interact in the target language, using it in different environments, at their own pace, and achieving more spontaneous and constant learning relationships. These results match with Marín and Correa's (2010) conclusions when saying that a CoP is associated with democratization since it connects us with more horizontal relationships, of free choice, but also of commitment.

In addition, the results in our study showed that it is necessary to pay special attention to extracurricular spaces as they could be more successful and might benefit more students if complemented with technological devices. This is also consistent with what Shea, and Bidjerano, (2010) concluded when suggesting that environments mediated by technology expand the descriptive and explanatory power of a community of practice, fostering an active participation from students.

On that account, MALL presents students a positive and feasible strategy to deal with the variety of positive and negative factors involved when it comes to interacting orally in English, outside the classroom.

Conclusions

The findings of this study revealed that students considered the use of MALL an attractive, flexible, innovative and useful strategy to complement extracurricular spaces; as they deal with their variety of geographical and time conditions when it comes to interact orally in a FL program. Besides, as MALL offers flexible characteristics, learning occurs anytime and anywhere.

In addition, MALL exploits the diversity of topics, learning styles, points of view, interests that emerge in a CoP to promote the oral interaction outside the classroom, besides gaining advantage from the different types of interaction (virtually or face-to-face) among students of the FL program.

Based on the results, two groups were identified: MALL and CoP, and MALL and Oral interaction. It is essential to highlight the impact that the combination of these three concepts can have on a learning process outside the classroom.

In spite of the above mentioned, some limitations emerged from the process. Firstly, the external factors that affected students' participation in MALL, such as the unstable Internet service and lack of time during midterms. Secondly, regarding more technical issues, students considered that the app requires more visual development and coverage in other operating systems such as IOS.

It is recommended to continue replicating this type of research in different scenarios with the purpose of contributing to an improvement in the student's learning process, particularly in the oral practice and exposure to the L2 after leaving the classroom.

Finally, for future research, it would be advisable to spend more time in the implementation of MALL within the selected Community, since it takes time for students to

adjust their academic schedule, to know better the functions of the app used, and the time they want to devote on the mobile app. Moreover, it would be advisable to select a more varied population, which means selecting students from different semesters, in order to gather more data regarding students' perceptions and performance when using MALL.

Moreover, it would be interesting to include the concept of “mediator” or “orienter” in the first stages of the implementation of MALL, as a person that encourages the students to interact into the community, at least as students engage in this approach.

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Speaking in a university EFL classroom: factors that affect preservice teachers' oral production

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Introduction

The ability to perform well in the different skills of the English language has become an issue of paramount importance in this globalized world. Regardless of the type of society, most economies value the performance of these skills. For instance, getting a well-paid job often implies high competence in that language. While speaking, reading, writing, and listening are all highly valued skills in EFL

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contexts, it is through speaking that ideas are more often conveyed. Thus, the ability to speak in English is seen as an indicator of the students' control of the language and as a must for academic success. Bygate (1987) asserts that more attention should be given to speaking since it permeates the students' current lives. Moreover, speaking is such an important skill that when people know a language they are often referred to as speakers of that language (Ur, 1996).

Communication through speech goes beyond the mere act of speaking. Gopinath (1999) suggests that students' voluntary participation in discussions, their sharing of opinions and recommendations, or the questions they ask, constitute forms of oral production. In the context where this inquiry was carried out, the ability to speak in English is essential because students need to participate actively in speaking activities in order to demonstrate their competence and approve their courses. Moreover, the institutional language policy is aligned with the objectives of Colombia Bilingüe, a program of the ministry of education necessary for the university's qualified registry and high-quality accreditation. In effect for graduation, all students of the language teaching program have to obtain a minimum score of B2 according to the common European framework of reference in one of the international exams accepted by the institution, and they will need to get C1 from 2020 onwards.

Faced with such a challenging situation, EFL teachers need to become more aware of the factors that affect participation in speaking activities if they want to help their students to gain and demonstrate command of the language. The speaking skill is sometimes overlooked and more emphasis is given to other aspects of the language such as grammar or the acquisition of vocabulary.

This chapter reports the results of a case study carried out by three students and his advisor to investigate the factors that affect the students' participation in speaking activities in an integrated-skills English course. The participants were 17 students from the fifth semester of the foreign language teaching program because it is the last integrated English course they can take at the university and, at this point, most students have encountered a variety of situations involving their participation in speaking activities; their experience allowed them to provide meaningful insights for this research.

This research emerged from our personal experience in the English courses we had at the university. As students, we noticed several behaviors, actions, and attitudes from students and teachers that we believe might have influenced oral performance in class. For example, some of our partners would choose to remain in silence even though they had the skills and knowledge to perform well and contribute to discussions in speaking activities. Conversely, sometimes students did not participate because they did not feel proficient enough or because they felt intimidated by others.

The study provided an important opportunity to advance the understanding of the factors and their effects on the oral production of EFL university students in a semirural area. Data were collected through class observations, a survey and five interviews with the students and analyzed with a grounded approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). We found that there are three main factors affecting the students' oral participation in this EFL context. Those main factors are the attitudes of classmates, the student's language proficiency, and the characteristics of the teachers and their nationality. Besides, we also found evidence of other factors that affect oral participation such as the gender differences, the students' feelings, the way feedback is provided and the engagement

with the topic and type of activities proposed by the teacher. In the following sections, we will describe the theoretical underpinnings that guided this inquiry and our findings, discussions, and conclusions.

Participation and speaking

Speaking is a complex skill that might be affected by several elements. When we speak, we often ignore the physical, mental, psychological, social, and cultural factors that have to work together (Bailey, 2005). Brown (2007) categorizes spoken language into two types: interactional and transactional. The first involves one person introducing a topic in a conversation and a subsequent comment made by another person. The second involves conveying information, that is to say, a person produces a message with the intention of convincing others. In the classroom, interaction can occur in two ways: involving the teacher and the students (teacher-student) or just among students (learner-learner) (Lynch, 1996). Besides, speaking is considered the most practical and effective form of social interaction and its forms are part of the shared social activity of talking (Luoma, 2004). In the EFL classroom, this interaction implies that students engage in speaking activities, in other words, it is through participation that student's interactions can be observed. Warayet (2011) states that students can participate orally by sharing ideas or joining a discussion. Ur (1997) considers that participation in the EFL classroom can be active or receptive. In the first, students speak or write, while in the second they listen or read.

Issues affecting speaking

One of the most difficult aspects of learning a language is speaking (Brown & Yule, 1983). Aware of this difficulty several scholars have studied the factors that contribute to the students' lack of participation in EFL classes. For example, Nation & Newton (2009) suggest that speaking performance can be affected by performance conditions such as pressure, planning, the standard of performance and the amount of support. Students can also be affected by affective factors such as motivation, confidence, and anxiety (Oxford, 1990; Krashen, 1982). Students' speaking is also affected by their knowledge of the topic (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

In previous studies on speaking in EFL contexts, different factors have been found to be related to the student's performance. Although there is a growing body of literature that explores this issue, the majority of these studies have been carried out in big cities and in different educational contexts, that is, none of the studies we found was performed in a semirural university context with preservice teachers.

Méndez and Bautista (2017) asked students to write a journal in which they had to describe the factors that affected their oral participation. After an in-depth analysis of the data from the journals, the researchers interviewed some of the students with the intention of confirming and clarifying the attitudes and behaviors they expressed in those journals. With a qualitative approach, the researchers focused on the factors that influence oral participation of male and female students in English classes with the purpose of exploring students' perceptions regarding classroom participation.

Findings in this study suggest that some features such as the supportive classroom environment and the peer evaluation can affect their motivation and foster or hinder

future oral interventions. Moreover, this study unveiled some characteristics of male and female ELT students. For instance, male students tended to feel a wide range of negative sensations when they participated in speaking activities. In contrast, female students tended to feel fewer negative sensations than their counterparts. Because male students care so much about being mocked by other students, their participation in speaking activities might be reduced. In turn, female students felt afraid of being criticized and scrutinized by their classmates. Finally, they also reported that another factor affecting students' performance is the way feedback was provided by teachers.

In a similar way, Cañas (2012) looked for the affective factors that influence the oral participation of six beginner-level students in an EFL classroom. Data was collected through class observations and interviews. She found that some students had what she called general avoidance which means that students do not answer questions and argue that they have forgotten the answer. She also found the emergence of physical symptoms, in other words, conditions such as headaches or dizziness which are often referred to when students are asked to talk in English. Conversely, she identified that when students worked with their classmates there was more participation because this type of work provided a more relaxing environment.

Besides, Sigona and Del Rio (2016) carried out a pedagogical intervention to foster engagement and improve speaking skills in future teachers. The participants were twenty students, and the study took place in a university in Spain in a bachelor's in foreign languages. To collect data, they implemented a semi-structured questionnaire, and they also performed interviews with some participants. During the intervention, they carried out activities in several classes,

then they evaluated the success and the contribution of these activities. As a result, they found that there is a significant bond between motivation and oral performance: the more motivated the less anxious students are. Their speech tends to be more natural when they feel motivated. They also found that when students interact with peers, their interest increases. In general, when activities were student-oriented, the levels of anxiety decreased.

In 2015, Seffar carried out an investigation about the effect of vocabulary knowledge on EFL oral competence to examine the reasons behind students' poor speaking skills. It was a mixed method study that consisted of questionnaires and interviews. The participants were two hundred students and some English teachers. She found that students' vocabulary deficiency and difficulty in articulating or conveying what they have in mind is a major problem.

Finally, Sakarkaya (2013) investigated the student's perceptions about the effectiveness of pair and group work activities inside her EFL classes in an English course at a Turkish university. In this action research, a questionnaire was administered to 23 students. Data showed that most of the students considered that when they worked in pairs or in groups, they could practice their speaking skills, they could receive pair correction, and they felt comfortable.

In the next section, we are going to present the findings emerging from our research and we will discuss them in the light of the theory and similar studies in the field.

Attitudes of classmates

The observations of classes allowed us to notice that students' oral participation could be impacted by the attitudes of classmates. The attitudes of classmates, in this

study, refer to the behaviors and reactions that classmates had in relation to the oral performance of their colleagues. In the survey, students were asked for the factors that might affect their oral participation. The factors they reported were the fear of making mistakes, the attitudes of their classmates and being mocked by their classmates. These attitudes seem to reduce students' oral participation considerably. As the following passage shows.

Sí, porque a uno le da más miedo participar, le da pena que se burlen de uno o eso puede generar también rabia y frustración. Uno se puede quedar callado muchas veces. Es desmotivante uno llegar a un salón de clase donde no se siente cómodo, llegar a quedarse uno ahí callado todo el tiempo. Eso afecta muchísimo³⁹ (Betty's interview, October 2019).

In the passage above, Betty describes how because of her classmates she felt afraid of being mistaken and being mocked. She explains that these different reactions affect students' oral participation because they produce anger, frustration, and demotivation. In the following excerpt Betty further explains her opinion.

También en parte la actitud de los compañeros, he chocado con algunos compañeros que se burlan o señalan o corrigen de mala manera, entonces como que eso impide mucho que uno participe de manera activa pues porque genera más miedo, más temor, todo⁴⁰ (Betty's interview, October 2019).

³⁹ "Yes, because we feel fear to participate, we feel embarrassed to be mocked and also, that generates anger and frustration. We keep quiet many times and it demotivates us when we enter a classroom where we do not feel comfortable and we have to keep quiet all the time. It affects a lot."

⁴⁰ "Also, somehow the attitude of classmates, we had some encounters with these classmates that mocked, pointed and gave feedback in a rude way, so that interferes a lot with my active oral participation because it generates more fear, more panic, and everything."

In the previous excerpt, the student describes how some attitudes such as mocking, pointing at students and even the way feedback was given to other classmates, might affect her speaking; she explains how her participation in speaking activities was directly affected by her classmates' attitudes.

In the same vein, Méndez and Bautista (2017) found that the environment created by classmates can hinder or foster their motivation and oral participation. In a similar way, class observations allowed us to identify that the fear to make mistakes and to be mocked reduces the students' oral participation. For example, we noticed that some students were whispering while some others were talking in front of the class, and how this affected the students' participation, and oral production because this generates a difficult environment for students and it affects their oral participation.

Language proficiency

Another key finding was the effects of language proficiency in the students' speaking. This finding is associated with the students' language background (previous contact with English vocabulary and grammar). During the observations, we witnessed some hesitation by the students when they were speaking. We also identified numerous expressions that students used for restating their ideas until they found the words to express them accurately.

We found that a third of the students had not had any contact with English after school. Two of the students reported the use of alternative means to study the language. The first one studied with the help of a friend and the other one studied the language on an international trip. Additionally, we asked them if their English oral competence was sufficient to express their thoughts. In spite of the fact that one of the seventeen students did not answer this question, ten students

considered that their competence was not enough, and six of them thought that they had enough oral competence.

In addition, students say that the lack of vocabulary affects their performance when they participate orally. We asked some of the participants if and how the lack of vocabulary affected their participation, the following excerpt shows the position of one of them.

Sí, porque por ejemplo muchas veces cuando yo empiezo a hablar y de pronto yo tengo la idea en la mente, pero cuando no encuentro como el vocabulario para decirlo ya como que me noqueo y eso muchas veces me hace perder pues lo que iba a decir el orden. Entonces sí, pienso que la falta de vocabulario muchas veces me ha impedido expresar mis opiniones⁴¹ (Emily' interview, October 2019).

The previous excerpt reveals the incidence of the vocabulary at the moment of participating, it suggests that participation is directly impacted by the range of vocabulary the speaker owns. That is, if students are asked to talk about a topic and their vocabulary is not enough to express the ideas, their speech might be affected. Besides, some students might avoid participating. Conversely, when students control the vocabulary, their oral participation is fluid, accurate and voluntary.

Respecting language proficiency, Seffar (2015) brought to light that the main factor affecting students' speaking skills was the lack of vocabulary. In a similar vein, data from our excerpt display that students' oral performance was affected directly by the scarcity of vocabulary causing that the students

⁴¹ "Yes, for example, many times when I start talking and suddenly, I have an idea in my mind, but when I don't find the vocabulary to say it I get disoriented and it often makes me lose what I was going to say and the order, so yes, I believe that the lack of vocabulary has often enabled me from expressing my opinions."

could not express their ideas accurately. It evidences that oral participation is closely related to the range of vocabulary, in other words, the quality of the performance reflects student's control of words.

Characteristics of the teachers

The participants of this inquiry considered that teachers were one of the main factors that affected their oral participation in the EFL classroom; students evidenced that the teachers' attitudes influenced them either positively or negatively. We explored the positive and negative attitudes that the teachers might have towards the class or the students. On the positive side, the students reported trustworthiness, kindness, tranquility, good sense of humor, security, patience, being knowledgeable of the class topics, correcting, providing feedback respectfully, and being supportive. Betty, one of the students, said that the positive aspects of a teacher were "*amabilidad, amistad, comprensión y apoyo*" [kindness, friendliness, comprehension, support]. Conversely, there were some negative attitudes from the teacher that students expressed affected their oral production in the classroom. For example, "*presión, mal humor, gestos*" [pressure, bad humor, gestures] (Betty's survey, 2019).

Furthermore, because this class had a native teacher and a non-native teacher, students manifested that having two teachers was positive for their language learning since they provided multiple and meaningful tools for the class. One of the students said:

*El profesor nativo nos ayuda a pulir factores o cosas en las que tenemos falencias, el profesor nativo da un gran aporte a nuestro proceso de formación*⁴² (Jerry's survey, October 2019).

Although students considered that having a native and a non-native teacher was very positive, they said that the nationality of the teacher does not influence the way they participate. Instead, they think that their participation is affected by the teachers' attitudes. For other students having a native teacher can be challenging since his accent might confuse them. In some cases, it led students to feel lost and to avoid participation. However, it was an opportunity to improve their skills. This was the case of a student, who stated:

*A veces el acento del nativo puede ser confuso y no me queda claro lo que dice, sin embargo, me parece superimportante ver clases con profesor nativo y no nativos, esto mejoró nuestras habilidades*⁴³ (Betty, Interview, October 2019).

In their study, Mendez and Bautista (2017) found that, for some of the participants, having a native teacher was a great opportunity that gave them a lot of confidence. It contributed to their process in aspects such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and reducing the anxiety. Equally, the participants of our study expressed that the opportunity of having a native teacher was positive since it enriched their intonation, pronunciation, listening skills, among others. It shows that including native teachers in the EFL courses

⁴² "The native teacher helps us to polish factors or things in which we are lacking, the native teacher gives us huge support in our formation process."

⁴³ "Sometimes the accent of the native teacher can be confusing, and I can't entirely understand what is said. However, for me it is very important to have classes with native and non-native teachers, it improves our abilities."

impacts positively the oral participation since students are provided with different elements that non-native teachers might not have.

Gender differences

Out of the 17 students, there were nine women and eight men. After the analysis of the data, we found that there were some identifiable differences between male and female students. For instance, when they were asked about the way in which they preferred to work, most males reported that they preferred to work individually, while female students felt better working in pairs. Furthermore, the data showed that when participating orally, most females were nervous. In the interview, one of the female students said:

Es el miedo como a enfrentarme a las personas, como estar parada al frente yo sola y todo el mundo mirándome, escuchándome, eso me genera muchos nervios⁴⁴ (Betty, interview, 2019).

Conversely, male students felt anxious, but also comfortable. For example, one male student stated:

La verdad me siento muy cómodo porque la verdad es que soy de las personas que no se preocupan que porque si se va a equivocar, porque si va a cometer un error hablando, que es tal vez por lo que muchos se abstienen de hablar y de participar⁴⁵(Charley, interview, 2019).

⁴⁴ "It is the fear to face people, standing in front, alone and everyone staring, listening to me, it makes me nervous."

⁴⁵ "The truth is that I feel comfortable because I am one of those people who do not worry because of making a mistake or having an error when talking. That is probably why many of my classmates avoid talking or participating."

Mendez and Bautista (2017) found that a demotivating factor for female students was being constantly in fear of making mistakes because their teacher and classmates would think that they were not good enough in English. In our study, female students also expressed that their oral participation gets affected because of the fear of making mistakes, while male students seemed to be more affected by the attitudes of their classmates.

Students' feelings and sensations

During the observations, we noticed some students that showed different reactions when they were asked to participate orally. Those reactions were very visible, and we could perceive them when, for example, some students were insecure and struggled to answer. Similarly, other students showed security even when they made mistakes. Moreover, the majority of the participants reported that when they participated in activities involving oral production, they felt anxious, nervous, and ashamed. These feelings might negatively affect students' oral production. However, a significant number of students also reported feelings that might be beneficial for their performance namely comfort and self-confidence.

Data from interviews helped us to identify the impact of these feelings on the students' oral production. For instance, Betty described how she tends to forget words and ideas when she is nervous. The following is an excerpt from the interview:

Es el miedo como a enfrentarme a las personas, como a estar parada al frente yo sola y todo el mundo mirándome, escuchándome, eso me genera como muchos nervios. Entonces

cuando nos ponen a preparar una exposición yo la preparo bien cuando se acerca el momento de yo salir a exponer siento muchos nervios y mucho miedo y eso a veces hace que se me olviden las ideas, que se me olviden las ideas que iba a decir y todo eso⁴⁶.

On the contrary, some students reported how positive feelings helped them to participate actively when they had to speak. For example, Charley manifested how he regards mistakes as something normal. In fact, he states that he always feels comfortable when speaking in class and that it might be due to his personality.

Yo la verdad me siento muy como... porque la verdad es que soy de las personas que no se preocupan que porque si se va a equivocar, porque si va a cometer un error hablando, que es tal vez por lo que muchos se abstienen de hablar y de participar. Como yo no me preocupo por eso y yo sé que si me equivoco para eso estamos aprendiendo y si me equivoco, es algo normal simplemente hablo entonces eso tal vez esa forma de pensar mía es la que me facilita todos los procesos de participación⁴⁷ (Charley's interview, October 2019).

The findings in our study regarding the emotions of students correlate with those of Cañas (2012). She found that when students participate orally, they are likely to experience nervousness and physical symptoms such as eye-rolling, red cheeks and shivering legs and hands.

⁴⁶ "It is the fear of facing people, like standing in front of the class, only me alone and everyone looking at me, listening to me. That generates to me like many nerves, so when they ask us to prepare an exhibition, I prepare it well when the moment of going out to expose, I feel a lot of nerves and a lot of fear, and that sometimes makes me forget the ideas and everything."

⁴⁷ "Honestly, I feel very comfortable because I am the kind of person that does not worry about making mistakes, because if someone makes mistakes, which is maybe the reason why a lot of students refrain from speaking and participating. As I do not worry about it, I know that if I make a mistake which is why we are learning and if I make a mistake is something normal, so maybe my viewpoint is the one which facilitates all kinds of participation processes."

Type of activity and topic engagement

Data evidenced that group presentations and debates were among the activities that encourage oral participation the most. This was evidenced when students were asked about the kind of activities that fostered their oral participation in the course, one of them said:

*Cuando hacemos debates, cuando hacemos trabajos en equipo o exposición en equipo, para mí es como mucho más fácil participar cuando estoy acompañada de otros compañeros*⁴⁸
(Betty, interview, 2019).

Likewise, in relation to debates another student said:

En los debates obviamente porque se puede decir que hay dos bandos entonces cada uno tiene un punto de vista diferente y hay que defenderlo y como somos competitivos por naturaleza entonces uno trata de defender la opinión de uno (Jeremy, interview, 2019).⁴⁹

These excerpts explain why students preferred these activities, how oral participation increases when they feel supported by their classmates, and how taking a stance is a motivating factor that increases their participation.

During the observation of the classes, we noticed a relationship between the students' participation and their engagement with the topic. In other words, the more engaging the thematic of the class, the more the students participate.

⁴⁸ ["When we have debates, teamwork, or presentations in teams, for me it is much easier to participate when I am accompanied by other classmates"].

⁴⁹ ["In debates it can be said that there are two sides, so each side has a different point of view and you need to stand it, and as we are competitive by nature, you try to defend each one's opinion"].

Data suggest that this engagement might depend on how controversial the topic is and the students' preferences. For example, when we asked them about the factors that encourage their oral competence and their participation, Charley said:

El tema del que se esté hablando principalmente por ejemplo cuando proponen temas no sé controversiales y el tema a mí me gusta y por ejemplo estoy a favor o en contra eso es lo que motiva a hablar⁵⁰ (Charley's interview, October 2019).

The previous statement shows that discussions might trigger oral competence and that students are more engaged when the discussions are around the things they like or when they have the opportunity to challenge some discourses. While for some students the engagement with the speaking activities is connected to controversy, for Emily, it is more connected to the control of the topic she has.

Pues, principalmente pienso que el tema, el tema del cual se va a hablar. Pienso que si es un tema del cual conozco, lo voy a hacer, o si es un tema la verdad complicado, no lo haría. Entonces pienso que principalmente es como uno sentirse cómodo con el tema (Emily's interview, October 2019).⁵¹

Emily remarks on the importance of feeling secure about the topic when participating. That is, for Emily the topic must provide enough security in order to take the decision of participating. On the other hand, a topic that seems difficult to talk about causes resistance to participation.

⁵⁰ "Mainly, the topic that is being talked about; for example, when they propose a kind of controversial issue and I like the topic and for example, I am for or against that, it is what motivates to talk."

⁵¹ "Well, I mainly think that is the topic, the topic of which we are going to talk about. I think that if it is a topic that I know, I will do it or if it is a really complicated topic I would not do it, then I think that it is how comfortable the topic makes me feel."

In relation to class activities, our findings are similar to those of Sakarkaya (2013) who found that class activities developed in pairs or groups promoted the development of students' speaking skills since students tend to feel more comfortable and to express their ideas freely without being afraid of making mistakes. Besides, our findings also correlate with those in Perneth (2012) who found that role-play activities and debates were very useful for promoting students' participation.

Conclusions

This study allowed us to identify the factors that affect the participation in an EFL classroom of a private university in a semirural context. Taken together, these results suggest that, in order to guarantee better conditions for the participation of students in speaking activities, teachers and students need to change some of their practices, behaviors and attitudes.

The findings in this report are subject to at least three limitations. First, the impossibility to perform the study in more of the EFL courses offered by the university for the language teaching program. Second, the number of participants and the quality of the data they provided. Third, the short length, in terms of time, of the data collection process.

Further research should focus on exploring the effects of each of the factors individually and in more detail. Besides, it would be interesting to assess the effects of the factors we found in other courses taught in English that are also part of the language teaching program.

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Practicum experiences in a foreign language teaching program: voices from the inside

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Introduction

Teaching Practicum is an important component in Teacher Education Programs since it allows future teachers to shape and to figure out their teaching skills by connecting theory with practice. It is, as Frodden and López (1998) state, for many trainees' teachers, the first opportunity to be in action. Through this experience, student-teachers should depict their pedagogical and specific field knowledge, owing to the exposure they have to a variety of issues that push them to put into action what they know. In addition, it implies a reflective process in which pre-service teachers can contrast their expectations and the relations between their previous conceptions about teaching practices and their real experiences.

Since they will be faced with such important situations, providing future teachers with optimal conditions and tools to carry out their practicum process becomes a challenge and a social responsibility for each university that offers Teacher Education Programs. In this regard, Fajardo and Miranda (2015) state: "Teacher education programmes must make an effort here in order to create a supportive atmosphere involving supervisors, mentors, and teacher educators as a strategy that might contribute towards preparing beginning teachers for professional development and growth" (p. 331).

Besides, universities should prepare teachers as agents of social transformation and emancipation (Freire, 2004) with critical and proactive perspectives that allow them to understand local particularities and current global requirements to propose effective educational practices at the different contexts where they will work.

In Colombia, some educational policies have been established in order to guarantee those Teaching Profiles. One of them is *El Sistema Colombiano de Formación de*

Educadores y lineamientos de política (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2013) as well as educational regulations for teaching education programs such as 02041 resolution (2016) later abolished by 18583 resolution (2017). In this vein, based on the aforementioned existing regulations, *The Universidad Católica de Oriente*, (UCO hereinafter), through its Faculty of Education and The Foreign Language Teaching Program, aims to train future educators that advocate for the recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity, through foreign languages such as English and French, reinforcing the mother tongue and enhancing the interest in approaching other local and international languages. Then, this process is not seen from a colonized viewpoint, such as linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2009) but as a way to access knowledge, to grow culturally and personally as an opportunity to understand others' realities.

Therefore, this impact starts from the first teaching experiences students have through their pedagogical practicum. It becomes a target setting to evidence students' progress, performance and quality of education received along the program. As a result, the practicum process becomes a tool of continual assessment which helps us reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses the program has. That is why the present study sought to make visible pre-service teachers' practicum experiences by listening to their voices. Through a systematization of experiences we were able to identify the most recurrent issues that surround English pre-service teachers' practicum, and to what extent it affects their teaching processes, beliefs and desires as future professionals; understanding that a "Systematization of experiences is conceived as a process of building cooperative knowledge, and as a self-reflection in which participants take part in social and educational transformation within specific settings" (Torres Carrillo, 2010, p. 214).

Following the systematization of experiences (See Torres Carrillo, 2010; & Jara, 2018) and underpinning a qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), we met pre-service teachers' practicum experiences from processes specifically carried out between 2016 and 2018, owing to accessibility of information in this period of time and availability of participants to take in the study. Furthermore, consent forms with information about the procedures of the research as well as ethical considerations such as participants' identity protection, data treatment, and dissemination of the information (Kumar, 2011 & Dawson, 2002) were given to participants ensuring the transparency of the study.

Hence, this chapter displays the voices of 20 pre-service teachers who did their practicum at 20 different schools (urban and rural) both public and private, in *El Oriente Antioqueño*, mainly in the municipalities of *Rionegro, La Ceja, La Unión, El Retiro, Marinilla, Guarne, El Carmen de Viboral and El Santuario*. Data were gathered through Questionnaires, *Fichas de Recuperación de Aprendizaje* (See Jara, 2018) and Focus Groups. Questionnaires allowed us to have some first approaches to pre-services teachers' experiences concerning their feelings, challenges and learnings while doing their practicum; as well as their perceptions regarding the usefulness of pedagogical, humanistic and didactic components given at the Teacher Education Program, as well as the university support in the process. It is worth mentioning that some of the questions were answered in Spanish and they required translation by the researchers. Then, focus groups were conducted to clarify and expand information from the survey. *Fichas de recuperación de aprendizaje* were such narratives done by main researchers (Professors from the Teacher Education Program) and research assistants (Pre-service teachers who were co-researchers in the process) to

systematize our experiences. Then, information was analyzed and coded based on previous and emerging categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Results and Discussion

Throughout this section, we depict the emerging results of this study contrasted with existing literature related to teaching practicum experiences as well as some theories with respect to Teaching Practice, Teaching Practicum, Pre-service Teacher, Experience and English Language Teaching Strategies.

Being a Pre-service Teacher

A pre-service teacher is a person who is going through a learning process in order to gain specific knowledge regarding teaching skills that are going to be applied in their pedagogical practice. In other words, a pre-service teacher is a student who is enrolled in a teaching training program (Geng & Darwin, 2014; Hussein & Valdez, 2017). As a result, having the first approach in the pedagogical practicum implies to deal with different aspects that influence their personal and professional development. This category shows how participants identify themselves as pre-service teachers, their roles, emotions, learnings and reflections upon it.

Pre-Service Teachers' Expectations and Feelings in their Practicum

Expectations

It refers to thoughts pre-service teachers have before starting the process. When facing a new experience, diverse

feelings may emerge from what student-teachers expect to live in their practicum. On the one hand, it is portrayed that participants over-thought managing the classes in terms of discipline, number of students, learning how to plan and the language use. One of the participants remarked that *“Una de mis expectativas era aprender a planear mis clases para que tuvieran más dinámica y que fueran realmente significativas para mis estudiantes, otra era aprender a tener un mayor dominio de mis estudiantes en cuanto a disciplina [...]”*⁵²(Questionnaire Participant 2, question #1).

On the other hand, there were other aspects student-teachers expected from this process. One of them has to do with learning from their experiences while supporting students in the language acquisition, and having good relations with their Cooperating Teachers (CT hereinafter): *“[...] my expectations when I started my practicum, was to be able to contribute to students’ learning process in a positive way. Also, I expected to learn from my students, cooperating teachers and context in order to grow personally and professionally”* (Questionnaire, Participant 5 question #1).

Dealing with the bittersweet of teaching practicum: Frustration and Satisfaction

The first most remarkable feeling that pre-service teachers experience is frustration. It was common to find plenty of comments regarding this feeling, due to because of some surrounding situations in their practicum. For instance, *“This week was kind of a mess for me. Basically, none of my planners worked and the students were acting pretty different from what they have normally been.”* (Co-

⁵² “One of my expectations was to learn how to plan my classes so they can be meaningful to my students and I wanted to learn to have better classroom management.”

researcher 1, *Ficha*, September, 2018). This is related to the following statements: “For both teacher and students, this is an experience new to them and they are not sure how to handle it” (Rivers, 1987, p. 9). Taking this into account, it is possible to say that pre-service teachers feel frustrated when facing educational realities, due to the lack of experience with daily phenomena at schools.

However, this turned into resilience, because student-teachers realized that every day is different and not everything goes as planned (Participant 6, Focus group, May, 2019); retaking participant Co-researcher’s 2 thoughts: “[...] *I will try to react differently to adverse situations. These situations are more common than I expected and I need to understand that.*”

In a similar way, unexpected situations also caused students’ frustration. These are events that are out of pre-service teachers’ hands. Results showed that most of the time, these issues emerged from the class itself, the school or from students, and it may affect the class pacing. An example of this is described below: “*I was waiting for the break to end but it was not punctual as it normally is because all teachers were in a very important meeting, so I had to wait until it finished in order to start my class*” (Researcher 3, *Ficha*, October, 2018). In addition, participants found kind of upsetting to notice that other activities were planned in their class time. In almost all of the participants’ contexts, the most common extracurricular events were religious ceremonies, strikes, teachers’ meetings, and other celebrations that changed the regular progress of the classes, “*siempre sacrificaban las horas de inglés para hacer cualquier cosa*”⁵³ (Participant 11, Focus group, May, 2019). This is a very common view novice teachers have when starting their teaching. They think the most important issue has to do with the class itself and the

⁵³ They used to do other different activities instead of English class.

topics to work on, and these student-teachers see other activities as useless or inappropriate. Nonetheless, as they gain more experience they could see those activities as part of the whole learning and teaching process.

Satisfaction

Opposite to the foregoing issue, satisfaction was the other emerging feeling that student-teachers mentioned the most. As one of the participants stated: “*They (students) were very keen regarding this topic (colours), and I was so happy they have enjoyed the class*” (Co-researcher 4, *Ficha*, September, 2018). Pre-service teachers understood that even if teaching is not an easy profession, there are situations in their classrooms that comfort and motivate them to do their best. By way of illustration a participant stated:

Me sentí orgullosa por el trabajo que hice porque uno siente que al final la manifestación que los estudiantes hacen con usted demuestra que usted pudo hacer una integración con ellos y les pudo llegar⁵⁴ (Participant 6, Focus group, May, 2019).

To sum up, we can say that even if pre-service teachers faced realities that were different from their expectations, they noticed that those were not a factor to give up. Instead, it became a challenge since those shortcomings were seen as opportunities to create new ways to approach the teaching practice and to understand educational settings from different perspectives. These issues have a close connection with Morales’ (2016) study; he found that pre-service teachers experienced awareness regarding their teaching practices in order to have a better understanding of what teaching involves.

⁵⁴ “I was proud because of what I did since at the end students demonstrated I could touch their lives.”

Practicum Advisors and Cooperating Teachers' Support

Other important actors in pre-service teachers' practicum were advisors and Cooperating Teachers (CT) due to the roles as facilitators and counselors during the future teachers' first steps. On the one hand, as a continuous observer, the cooperating teacher is the person, who is closer to the student teacher's process as a guide and support, and in some cases is perceived as a person who influences the way pre-service teachers approach and live the practicum. By way of illustration we have: "*Los docentes cooperadores han sido de gran ayuda cuando se presentan dificultades dentro del aula. Siempre son dispuestos a ayudar y a aconsejar sobre metodologías o actividades*"⁵⁵(Questionnaire, question #5). In the same line, through the focus group most of the students expressed that they have learned a lot from their CTs in terms of classroom management and pedagogical issues. This fact was also found in the study conducted by Castañeda and Aguirre (2018), the authors emphasized on the contributions that experienced teachers and mentors made in terms of pedagogical field and context understanding. Nonetheless, other participants indicated that in some cases it was tough to get along with cooperating teachers because of their attitudes and comments, for instance reluctance to share their classes with the student-teachers, difficulties agreeing on ways to teach classes, as well as class interruptions when pre-service teachers were in action. Participants affirmed, these situations definitely affected their process and made them feel frustrated. However, they also obtained learnings and reflections from those situations. "*Sometimes there is a lack of feedback and negative attitude from the cooperating teachers:*

⁵⁵ "Cooperating teachers have been of great help, when we have difficult situations in the classrooms they are always willing to help and advise on methodologies and activities."

He seemed to be upset when I asked him for a suggestion" (Co-researcher, Journal, September, 2018).

In the light of the aforementioned, we could say that cooperating teachers have an effect on novice teachers' practicum processes. Participants expressed that keeping in touch with CTs and approaching their practices and realities at school, gave them enriching elements to grow as professionals and human beings, even if in some cases the attitude of CT's was not as positive as expected. "*El puente entre la clase de práctica y el ejercicio de práctica son completamente pertinentes, el asesor, la asesora de práctica y el CT son ayudas indispensables que hacen este proceso más enriquecedor*"⁵⁶(Questionnaire, question #4).

Advisors' Feedback

Considering what the participants shared through the questionnaire, the focus group and the journals, it would not be possible to say that the feedback they received was completely positive or negative, but a constant opinion they had was the relevance of obtaining feedback, suggestions and comments from their advisors "*[...] es muy importante el feedback. Se necesita a alguien que tenga experiencia y te diga cómo mejorar [...]*"⁵⁷ (Participant 2, Focus group, May, 2019). Advisors' support was always in the pre-service teachers' speech when expressing their thoughts about the factors that influenced the way they developed their practicum, some of them always underlined the suggestions and support from their advisors.

⁵⁶ "The link between the practicum class and the practicum itself is really pertinent. Advisor and CT are strictly indispensable aids that enrich this process even more."

⁵⁷ "Feedback becomes very important in your process. It is important to have someone with experience and you need to be told how to improve your classes."

Nevertheless, factors like communication, time and how they get along with their advisors affect the quality and the way they perceive advisors' comments. However, most of them agreed that they always took those comments as a base to improve and polish their formative practice through meaningful experiences that made them aware of how their performance was.

Pre-Service Teachers' Role

Being a teacher represents more than the profession itself. In the case of English teachers, it encompasses more than just knowing the language and having the strategies to transmit it. Most of the participants agreed that they had to face many tasks apart from simply teaching language. This means, they had to step out, sometimes, of their role of foreign language teachers and they had to take on other responsibilities that were equally important in the classroom.

Participants recognized the relevance of other roles and the impact they had on their students. Most of them agreed that an English teacher is also an advisor as they have to face a variety of situations in the classroom and that the majority of these situations are related to their students' personal lives and not that much related to the class itself.

Likewise, participants affirmed that teachers should also be good listeners as they have to deal with situations in the classroom that have nothing to do with their specific knowledge. By way of illustration, a participant said: "*El principal aprendizaje es que no sólo somos docentes o personas que transmiten conocimientos sino también, amigos, consejeros y demás roles que puedan ayudar a cambiar positivamente en la vida de nuestros estudiantes*⁵⁸". (Questionnaire Participant 10, question #2).

⁵⁸ "The main learning that we can take out of it is that we are not only teachers but also friends, counselors and other roles that can impact our students' lives."

In a like manner, participants understood their influence on their students' lives and they expected it to be positive and long-lasting. This means, pre-service teachers worry about their performance, not only in terms of knowing the language but also in their human connections with their students. Participants talked about working in contexts that suffer from violence, drug abuse, drug trafficking, dysfunctional families and Colombian internal conflicts. These settings made pre-service teachers stronger and more aware of what surrounded them and their students. They took the role of supporters when these situations arose during their practicum making them have a special bond with them. It has a close relation with the results Suarez and Basto (2017) obtained in their study with pre-service teachers. They found critical reflections made by participants concerned with social and ethical aspects of their role as foreign language teachers which is also related to Freire's (2004) ideas when he states that a teacher is not just the person who knows and understands the reality but also the one who is able to intervene in the context to promote social transformations.

On the other hand, participants also mentioned their roles as motivators in the EFL classrooms. Pre-service teachers took the responsibility of sharing what they know with their students with enthusiasm and commitment:

[...] yo digo que uno siempre debería ser un mediador, digamos como una persona que siempre está ahí como para que los estudiantes puedan llegar a ese conocimiento pero que ellos (los estudiantes) también sean activos y que no se limiten como a recibir todo y ya. (Participant 6, Focus group, May, 2019).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ "I think that one should always be a mediator between students and knowledge assuring an active learning process, nevertheless they must be also very active and not passive receivers and that's it."

Finally, participants came up with an important role of being a constant learner. They believe that teachers are endless students, which is why they are able to constantly share knowledge. They agreed that this characteristic should continue during their whole professional life as it helps them to understand their profession even more. In this regard, Curzon and Tummons (2013) said that learning is considered “the apparent modification of a person’s behaviour through his activities and experiences, so that her or his knowledge, skills or attitudes, including modes of adjustment, towards her or his environment are changed, more or less permanently” (p. 12). It would be perceived as a natural feature of humans but, in this case, when talking about pre-service teachers’ lived experiences, learning means that what they did was memorable and meaningful to their processes.

Practicum Context

This issue concerns students, school and Cooperating Teachers and became one of the most influential factors in pre-service teachers’ practicum development. The way in which students behaved; how they were influenced by their own realities, feelings of tolerance, resilience and otherness; became strategies for classroom management, setting understanding and class planning. In addition, most of the participants agreed on the fact that being a novice teacher or an in-service teacher involves not only the mere act of teaching, but also being integral humans who care about students’ environmental factors that affect the way in which they learn, or even their interests to continue the learning process. So was commented by a participant: “*the most important learning I had during my practicum was the*

importance of context in the teaching process since it determines how we must plan our classes, how we must approach our students and how we must understand their realities and differences” (Questionnaire participant 15, question #2).

Moreover, it is vital to mention that most of the pre-service teachers’ learnings were related to having patience towards discipline and classroom management. Most of them felt affected by the fact that they could not control the groups, but they understood that this is something that we master through practice and experience, saying: *“Uno de los mayores aprendizajes ha sido el cultivar la paciencia a la hora de preparar mis clases y el material de apoyo. También el manejo de la disciplina ha sido algo que he ido cultivando poco a poco”*⁶⁰. (Questionnaire, question #2).

Finally, in relation to the design of material, lesson-planning and classroom management, student-teachers demonstrated a wide variety of learning in terms of contextualizing the lessons, students’ needs, teaching strategies, use of materials, realia and body language effectiveness. They recognized that teaching is something that you master and understand just while being in situ. As claimed by one of our participants: *“Aprendí que definitivamente todo tiene que ser contextualizado, no me refiero a rural o urbano. Sino a observar sus dinámicas, comportamientos. Analicé qué música les gustaba, series, si tenían acceso a tecnología. Tomé ventaja de ello y tuvieron aprendizajes significativos”*⁶¹ (Participant 5, Focus Group, May, 2019). Given the above,

⁶⁰ “One of my biggest learning was to be patient when planning my classes and designing the classroom materials; classroom management is something that I have been cultivating little by little.”

⁶¹ “I learned that you definitely need to contextualize your classes, I don’t mean rural or urban, but to observe students’ dynamics and behavior. I observed the music they liked, tv series and access to technology. I took advantage of it so my students had a meaningful learning.”

there is not a recipe or a guide that guarantees the success of novice teachers' practices, but if there is something that we must make the most of is the resources that can only be provided by the context.

Context understanding

During pre-service teachers' practicum experience, there was a noticeable process to understand the different settings in which they were immersed. We identified through the collected data that the context became the backbone of their practicum, since it was the determinant of how their teaching process should be approached and carried out. Additionally, all participants highlighted the relevance of recognizing and understanding students' realities, since they live diverse situations in their familiar, personal and social scenarios: "*Ellos viven cosas difíciles en la casa, es por esto que se comportan de esta manera. Los niños expresan todo eso a través de su comportamiento*"⁶² (Participant 13, Focus group, May, 2019).

Participants also mentioned that the ways in which they learn vary from one student to another, being this process influenced by their biological and psychological development: "*Quizás la edad en la que se encuentran influye en su rebeldía [...]*"⁶³ (Questionnaire, question #3). These aspects must be considered by student-teachers when designing and planning the classes: "*[...] ya que no todos aprenden de la misma forma y con las mismas estrategias que los demás*"⁶⁴ (Questionnaire, question #3). It is important to include the different needs students may have, for example

⁶² "They (students) live difficult situations at home that is why they behave in such way since children tend to express what they are living through their behavior."

⁶³ "Maybe it is the age that influences students' defiance."

⁶⁴ "Not all the students learn the same way and with the same strategies."

children with special needs, as one of our participants affirmed: “[...] *durante la práctica tuve diversos casos de niños con necesidades educativas especiales, por ende, ellos fueron mi mayor desafío*”⁶⁵ (Questionnaire, question #3). These facts are related to Morales’ study (2016); the author found that there were some aspects such as social changes, classroom phenomena (number of students, motivation, behavior, etc.), and the manner in which they (students and teachers) interact, that may affect their performance as teachers.

In the same vein, participants admitted that it is important to get used to the context before teaching the class. They thought that more observation time would be necessary in order to have a better understanding regarding what they are going to do. They believed that more exposure would make them aware of students’ realities and it would optimize both pre-service teachers and students’ experiences.

The Act of Teaching

This study found that pre-service teachers had a set of opinions regarding classroom management which refer to “the teacher’s ability to direct, organize and facilitate the learning environment and student behavior within a learning context” (Kridel, 2010, p. 144), also the management of time, the use of the language inside the classroom, teaching strategies, and planning; all these issues play an important role in the act of teaching.

⁶⁵ “During my practicum process I had several students with special needs and they became my biggest challenge.”

Time

This subcategory emerged from participants' comments about the dilemma they had when managing the time during their classes. Some of the constraints when managing time were because students tend to devote more time to develop a certain activity than it was planned for, or the students' lack of understanding when the pre-service teacher explained the task so he/she needed to devote more time to the direction of the task. As one of our participants affirmed: "[...] *some of my students literally took the entire class to write down the date and the topic and that affected the class so much that I could not even complete half of the plan*" (Co-researcher's *Ficha* September, 2018). According to this statement, one can say that time control within the classroom is one of the most arduous aspects of classroom management, since even if teachers have everything planned, it is not always possible to complete it as expected. In the same token, Richards (2002) states that there are many aspects of a lesson that concern its management, including students' attention, engagement in the lesson and organization; and, when they are not well handled, much of the time available for teaching can be lost in unproductive activities.

Discipline

Throughout this process of collecting and analyzing data, participants agreed that students' behavior in the classroom is another aspect that encompasses classroom management; thus, having an appropriate discipline control facilitates the development of the classes. However, in many cases, what caused students' misbehavior was the number of students in a group; although some of them may be

interested in the class, the others could act as distractors complicating the classroom environment: “*I realized that the number of students has a radical effect on the right performance of our classes*” (Co-researcher’s *Ficha* August, 2018). Another pattern we identified was that pre-service teachers believe that dealing with discipline was much more complicated than teaching the language itself (Questionnaire, question #2). Considering (Hall, 2011) the way teachers manage their classrooms when in charge, and issues such as discipline as well as control may affect opportunities for the English learning; that is why, pre-service teachers find challenging the classroom management at the very first stages of the practicum experience. Besides, they care for having a good control of their classrooms during their process in order to assure a good learning experience for their students. The aforementioned statements lead us to confirm what different authors have stated: Dealing with students’ behavior and managing the classroom is one of the most challenging issues teachers have to cope with in their initial steps (Richards & Renandya, 2002; Brown, 2000 & Harmer, 2010)

Use of the Language in the classroom

Additionally, one of our participants believed that the use of English in the classroom was also an adversity they faced since, as non-native speakers, students tended to get frustrated because they were not able to understand what pre-service teachers said during the lessons. For this reason, communication was not assertive and the use of the mother tongue was essential to convey meaning and to create a comfortable atmosphere. In terms of Lewis as cited in Richards and Renandya (2002) “Students do not want to use English in class when they can say the same thing

faster in their own language” (p. 40). As a result, preservice teachers had to deal not only with classroom management but also with promoting the use of the language among the students by trying every way all the ways to make themselves understood when using the target language.

Teaching Strategies

At the moment of teaching English, it is common that student-teachers look for the best ways for teaching the language. Nevertheless, they faced some important events that influenced their teaching practices.

Student-teachers found out that English could be effectively learned by having fun instead of imposing it on students. One of our participants expressed: “*Mi principal desafío fue hacer actividades creativas y llamativas, pues antes no tenía ese tipo de habilidades*”⁶⁶ (Questionnaire, question # 3). Likewise, several pre-service teachers agreed with this opinion, since they conceive English as an opportunity to make students’ learning process a good experience instead of a mandatory task.

Nonetheless, the majority of the participants recognized that not all strategies provided by theory can be applied in each setting, since there are a variety of elements such as the number of students, resources, institutional beliefs, and students’ developmental stage which determine the appropriateness of those strategies. Participants concluded that it is necessary to know the theoretical aspects of teaching a foreign language because it provides them with insights that allow them to select what is suitable for their contexts’ needs.

⁶⁶ “My main challenge was to design catchy and creative activities since I did not use to have these type of skills.”

Planning

Pre-service teachers found that planning was an essential tool that guided the classes' structure, allowing them to have a better organization of the different stages in which the classes were developed.

Firstly, pre-service teachers noticed that the structure of the planners was quite complicated and confusing; however, as time went by, they felt more comfortable when they planned their classes. As stated by one of our participants: "*Al principio fue difícil, no estaba acostumbrada, todo se hizo más fácil después, ya que la práctica hace al maestro*"⁶⁷ (Participant 7, Focus group, May, 2019). Most of them realized that planning permits to have a better understanding of possible future situations, and to be aware of their own practices. As stated by Richards (1998) cited in Pharell (2002), planning helps teachers to solve problems in advance and they provide a guide to the teachers to follow when teaching the class.

The Use of Materials

It refers to any kind of didactic elements the teachers use to support their classes in order to guide their teaching practicum. It encompasses the experiences pre-service teachers had with the use of materials in their classes, which allowed them to determine whether the material was appropriate or not.

Participants recognized that the challenges regarding the use of materials in the classroom became a learning at the same time. Pre-service teachers agreed on the challenge

⁶⁷ "At the beginning it was such a difficult task since I was not used to planning but it got easier since practice makes perfect."

of contextualizing the material in order to determine its appropriateness and the impact it has on students' learning. As Shafaei (2010) states: "In order to encourage learners to receive language-learning input and produce language-learning output, it is important to deliver instructional materials through a mechanism which language learners are familiar with and further can be co-involved" (p. 54). They learnt that contextualization not only means adapting the material to rural or urban areas, they learnt that the material needs to respond to each particular classroom, it does not matter where it belongs. Participants agreed that, in order to be meaningful, the materials should respond to the dynamics of each setting.

Practitioners also reflected on the importance of responding to students' interests instead of theirs. That means, sometimes teachers want to do what is best for them instead of what is suitable for their students. As stated by Participant 2 in the focus group: "*El aprender a pensar en ellos, a no pensar en cómo yo quiero dar la clase, sino qué actividad voy hacer yo, cómo la van a recibir ellos y qué material ellos necesitan, no qué material necesito yo para dar mi clase*"⁶⁸. Pre-service teachers realized that thinking of students' needs and preferences was fundamental when it came to designing material for their classes.

This led to the challenge of being creative, which is hard when you do not have that skill. The majority of the participants admitted that they had plenty of ideas in their heads, but when it came to make them real and they lacked artistic skills, the design of material became quite difficult for them. Since everything was hand-made, they had to make a considerable effort in order to accomplish the objective of the class.

⁶⁸ "Learning to take my students into account. Considering not how I want to teach the class but how my students will receive the class bearing in mind the material they need and not the one I need."

Another aspect that was challenging for most of the participants was the lack of technology in their classrooms: they had to find new ways to transmit certain aspects of the language. Likewise, it became a great learning, as well as a gratifying aspect for pre-service teachers as their students recognized their effort to create and design different kinds of materials. They claimed that all of the time and money spent on that was worthy just by seeing their students' enthusiasm and their carefulness when using the materials during the class activities.

Finally, all participants recognized that the biggest challenge was the creation of material. Pre-service teachers did not have enough time or budget to do what their students needed, and this situation was a stress factor for them. Furthermore, even if they wanted to contextualize the material as much as they could, they had to rely on standard sources they found on the internet because of time lack due to their university responsibilities.

Conclusions

The practicum process encompasses more than the mere act of teaching a class. It is a reflective process which requires pre-service teachers' self-awareness, and the support of other agents such as cooperating teachers and advisors that are key elements in the development of this process. Accordingly, the act of teaching involves a wide range of elements that are not only present within the classroom, pre-service teachers are required to combine different factors such as classroom management, promotion of the use of the target language and teaching strategies; in order to create an appropriate atmosphere that allows students to feel comfortable while learning the language.

This research exercise was an opportunity to know our future teachers' experiences in their practicums, through introspective and retrospective reflections. It allowed us to confirm the relevance of creating spaces of dialogue to share their feelings and experiences in terms of teaching strategies, use of materials, time, discipline and students' context and behaviors. Furthermore, we concluded that the practicum influenced not only the way in which pre-service teachers developed theirs, but also their viewpoints and perceptions regarding their future as in-service teachers. Similar ideas were also found in the study undertaken by Cote (2012) who stated that novice teachers' first teaching experience affects their decisions as future teachers.

Moreover, there were a variety of comments and moments in which future teachers questioned their continuity as teachers, meanwhile some others ratified their passion and commitment with this profession. Although being a teacher is not an easy task, the majority of participants experienced positive outcomes notwithstanding the difficulties and challenges they found along their processes since these caused not only learnings regarding the language itself but also long-lasting values and principles that will contribute to students' personal growth.

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EFL classroom interaction and cooperative learning strategies

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Introduction

Conventional and traditional methods to teach languages have been proven to work and be successful in the classrooms. However, the implementation of alternatives has brought a wide range of possibilities to be explored in the field. Cooperative Language Learning was one of those innovations that emerged from the new wave of changes and approaches in the 1990's. This approach to language

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teaching bases its principles on the idea that a language is best learned when students interact and exchange their previous knowledge of the language and they work together in order to achieve a common goal.

Cooperative Learning (CL) also embraces Vygotsky's theory (1978) about the importance of interaction in the process of learning a language, stating that it is by interacting with others that language learning takes place, opposite to the conception that students should work individually in order to learn. Johnson and Johnson (1999) argue that CL is the strategy in which students work together in small groups to maximize one's and each other's learning. Also, Gillies (2014) points out that CL is a strategy in which students work together with the purpose of achieving a common goal or task. Considering this, students must establish a common purpose when working together in order to reach the learning objective.

According to Jacobs, Lee and Ng (1997), CL is "organized and managed group work in which students work *cooperatively* in small groups to achieve academic as well as affective and social goals" (p. 2). In this case, it is possible to demonstrate that CL helps not only students to fulfil academic purposes but also to strengthen affective relationships with peers in the classroom.

The implementation of Cooperative Learning Strategies (CLS henceforth) has been extensively investigated by different authors who have demonstrated the benefits that this approach has in the learning of a foreign language. Studies carried out by Contreras and Chapetón (2016), Prieto (2007), and González (2001) talk about the positive effects achieved through implementation of Cooperative Learning Strategies in different contexts, such as the introduction of diverse types of interaction in the language classroom, improvement of relationships among students,

enhancement of oral skills in the target language, as well as confidence, modification of classroom atmosphere, and the reinforcement of social skills.

This chapter intends to describe a research project carried out with a group of thirty-two 11th graders and their cooperating teacher, belonging to a public institution in Rionegro, Antioquia, Colombia. At first, the intention of working with this population was to encourage students' self-confidence in the learning of English as a foreign language. However, after several non-participant observations carried out by the researchers, a lack of interaction among the students in this classroom was identified. Therefore, the necessity of the context led us to wonder about a different way in which the students could approach the language learning process, as well as participate actively in the classes, by having different types of interaction. So, CLS seemed to be a suitable option to consider in the development of the classes.

The research was carried out under a qualitative approach, by performing an action research designed to implement CL strategies during six classes, alongside with the regular lessons that students were attending. Thus, considering the impact that the approach has on the language learning process, this study aimed at enhancing students' interaction through the implementation of CLS in an EFL classroom with the previously mentioned 11th graders. A survey to the students and participant and non-participant observations were the data collection methods used during the process. The data was analyzed based on the stages proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988): planning, action, observation and reflection. Particularly, CLS were implemented in three classes whereas three other lessons were taught under the traditional methodology normally used by the cooperating teacher in her classes,

as observed at the beginning of the research process. Only three of the steps could be implemented, since the classes were quite short (approximately 50 min) and because casual events, such as protests in the educational sector in the country, did not allow the research to be fully carried out as it was initially planned.

The results of the investigation showed that the implementation of CLS represents a suitable strategy to promote and to improve interaction in the classroom. However, it is necessary to consider the context and the preferences of the participants before its implementation, in order to obtain effects that are even more positive. Additionally, the findings suggest that CLS promote the Zone of Proximal Development theory developed by Vygotsky (1978), in which he claims that more skillful students can help the ones who need extra effort to achieve learning goals.

Understanding CLS

In order to carry out the implementation of the strategies, it was necessary to understand the underpinning concepts of Cooperative Learning and the possible implications that these dynamics would bring to the classroom. Johnson and Johnson (1999) propose five steps that need to be followed in order to reach CL successfully: *Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Face-to-face promotive interaction, Social Skills and Group Processing*. These elements allow teachers to raise awareness about the appropriate implementation of CL and the complexity that this methodology may involve in order to be applied effectively. Figure 1 displays these steps briefly.



Figure 1. Adapted from Johnson and Johnson (1999).

Around the arousal of CLS in the classroom, different proposals have come out to nourish and support the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning. Aronson (2000) proposed a CLS called jigsaw, where “group members work together as a team to accomplish a common goal; each person depends on all the others. No student can succeed completely unless everyone works well together as a team” (p.1). Thus, jigsaw can be used as a tool to encourage cooperation on students and punctually conjugate the pillars of Cooperative Learning. Additionally, different steps are necessary to develop the Jigsaw strategy successfully. One of the main steps to follow after assigning the cooperative groups is to select a student to be the leader of each group of five or six people. This person must be a well-behaved student to guide and support their group. During the implementation of this study, Jigsaw was considered as one of those strategies that could bring Cooperative Learning into our language classroom.

Alternatively, Slavin (1994) suggests a series of models of CLS called *Student Teams-Achievement Divisions* (STAD) and *Teams-Games-Tournaments* (TGT), in which students receive recognition or rewards based on the learning of all members of the team. Thus, there is no doubt about the impact and the contributions that cooperative learning provides in the successful implementation of group activities, and the importance of different roles in the classroom. By following the different theories and studies regarding this subject, teachers can implement cooperative learning successfully.

In the 1960s, Kagan and Kagan (2009) introduced the idea of structuring a program in which the interaction among children in a classroom could be manipulated in order to enhance and foster the cooperation and competitiveness of the students. Through the past decades, Kagan and his associates have worked on the application and improvement of the Kagan Structures, by compiling more than 200 strategies which allow Cooperative Learning to take place in a classroom effectively. Some of the most recognized strategies are *Round Robin*, *Think-Pair-Share*, *Numbered Heads*, *Mix-N-Match*, *Team Interview*, among others.

It is quite relevant to consider the implication of CLS in the classroom. These ones lie on the involvement of teachers, who give guidance to the successful performance of specific tasks. They are fundamental agents in the learning process since they must guide the students towards the achievement of their goals. However, Johnson and Johnson (1999) clarify what cooperative learning is not. They comment that “not all groups are cooperative and there is nothing magical about working in groups [...] to use cooperative learning effectively, one must know what is and what is not a cooperative group” (p. 68).

The implementation of Cooperative Learning must always be based upon a purpose or a goal to avoid falling into what Johnson and Johnson (1999) call a “Pseudo learning group”, which is the lack of interest of students when they are assigned a determined project, not having communication among them and attempting to mislead and confuse each other. Following this principle, Gillies (2014) claims that “placing students in groups and expecting them to be able to work together will not necessarily promote cooperation” (p. 130). These assumptions lead to the reformulation of the concept of CL, that not only refers to the way in which students are placed together, but also the understanding of what a cooperative group is, and the purpose of its implementation.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is an important concept in order to develop CLS since it provides tools to increase students’ performance. This concept was firstly developed by Vygotsky (1978), who highlights the importance of interaction among students. He suggests that ZPD is created when, in group work activities, less advanced students get to work with skillful students so they increase their learning. In this way, he explains his idea by saying: “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86).

Furthermore, when the student is at the ZPD, the different tasks to be performed must be structured differently. To achieve this, Vygotsky (1978) provides a concept called “scaffolding”. In this approach, the teacher or more advanced students help to modify a task so the student with low performance can master it successfully. Lastly, the ZPD has

a successful role when the student can master the task all by themselves, so the “scaffolding” can be removed. Thus, through the interaction that students experience working with CLS, the students can help each other achieve their learning goals.

Classroom Interaction was another important concept that was considered during the implementation of the research. Classroom Interaction is highly necessary in order to enhance students’ relations and language performance in foreign language classrooms. To this respect, Rivers (1987) states that “*Interaction involves not just expression of one’s own ideas but comprehension of those of others*” (p. 4). This suggests that, whenever students interact by discussing each other’s ideas and listening to one another, they come up with different “*interpretations of meaning*”, which allows them to create knowledge easily.

Consequently, Rivers (1987) highlights the importance of interaction in the process of language learning by saying that “through interaction students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material or even the output of their fellow students in discussions” (p. 4), which leads the students to create meaningful experiences as they exchange their ideas with their peers. In addition to the rise of language, when students exchange ideas, they show motivation in social environments which have relation to the tasks proposed in the classes (Martin & Rimm-Kauffman, 2015).

On the other hand, Choudhury (2005) discusses some features regarding interaction through pair-work/group-work by saying that “pair work and group work obviously give rise to interaction. Encouraging students to develop their own strategies is an excellent means of stimulating the learner to develop tools of interaction” (p. 80). These assumptions

lead us to believe that interaction is achieved when the students have the chance to come up with their own ways of communication. Thus, it is important that students build up their own connection with the others through the discussion of topics, not necessarily relying on the teacher's guidance but on their peers'.

Furthermore, Choudhury (2005) goes on discussing the advantages of group work or pair work regarding the teacher's role, by saying that the teacher must "give help where needed, assess the performance of individual students by noting language mistakes for future remedial work and devote more time to my slower learners" (p. 80). Since working in small groups allows them to be an "instructor-corrector-controller" to those students who require extra assessment.

There are different forms of interaction in the classroom such as Teacher-Student, Student-Student and Student-Teacher-Student, starting from more teacher-centered models to student-centered ones. Student-Student interaction is a source of discussion by some authors in regards to its relevance in the proper development of different tasks inside the classroom. Johnson (1980) argues that "peer relationships influence educational aspirations and achievement" (p. 5). Based on this statement, it is possible to say that interactions among students are fundamental in the learning process and have an important impact on the accomplishment of learning objectives, since this type of interaction allows the reflection among them, the discussion of ideas and the support in which students can reach meaningful learning.

Teacher-student interaction was considered another relevant aspect in this research project, considering that one of the researchers was immersed in the context, performing the role of the teacher as well as the researcher. Thus, she

was interacting and sharing with the students the teaching and learning experiences. To this respect, Chaudron (1995) stated that interaction is acting complementary upon each other. This means that the teacher influences students while they respond in different ways.

CLS in Action

After studying the underlying principles of CLS, implications and important considerations, it was time to put words into action. The four steps that Kemmis and MacTaggart (1988) proposed (planning, action, observation, and reflection) were the choice for this study. In the planning step, we identified the problem in order to design a plan of action to provide solutions to the context in which the investigation was taking place. Non-participant observations that took place before the implementation, helped us get to state the problem and understand what the group of eleventh graders were implying in their English classes. During the planning stage, we included the five CL steps proposed by Johnson and Johnson (1999), namely *Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Face-to-face promotive interaction, Social Skills and Group Processing*. Besides, we decided to plan a series of classes based on CLS, and some others under the grammar-based instruction, alternating the classes during the whole process. The purpose of planning the classes in this way was to compare the results of classes in which CLS were implemented, and regular classes where the classroom interaction was the same as before the research process started.

Once the planning step was ready, we proceeded to apply the designed lessons based on CLS and the ones that were carried out on regular grammar instruction. We

applied different strategies such as *Jigsaw*, *Think-Pair-Share* and *Round Robin*; and grammar-based activities such as worksheets and individual exercises were kept as well. During the implementation of the lesson plans, we carried out non-participant observations which were conducted by one of the researchers. During the time scheduled, he observed each class (CLS classes and grammar-based classes) and gathered the data, which contained items such as: class observations, types of activities, and students' attitudes towards the activities applied in both traditional instruction and the implementation of CLS.

After the planning, action and observation stages, the teacher-researcher reflected upon different aspects perceived during the classes and the implementation of specific activities. She provided field notes in which her perceptions towards each activity performed in the designed lessons were stated, and considered different details such as positive aspects, difficulties during the activities and the description of the actions to improve the issues evidenced. The data collected in this part of the process were recorded in the format of a journal, where the teacher-researcher annotated aspects regarding the students' reactions to activities, their behavior in the class and possible differences noticed in their responses to the implementation of the CLS. As for the voices of the students, a short survey was designed in order to understand what they thought about the strategies, their perspectives on the classes and the way in which their language learning took place in the classroom, as well as the aspects that they considered relevant during the process.

Classroom Interaction and CLS in the EFL Classroom

By the time the strategies and techniques were applied in the classes, the students started to give their feedback about the classes in informal comments such as “*me gustó mucho esta clase*”⁶⁹ or “*es bueno hacer cosas diferentes en la clase de inglés*”⁷⁰. In one of the implementations of CLS, it was possible to see that students got immediately engaged in the process of making the groups and cooperating with their classmates. At the beginning of the activity, it was not easy to make students participate actively, but as they followed the instructions, they started working with their classmates, interacting among them, exchanging ideas about the topic of the class by taking a look at their notes, and discussing what the possible solution to the task could be (non-participant observation N°3). One of the questions from the survey was about the students’ preferences to work in class. In additional comments, students manifested: “*Entiendo mejor los temas cuando es en grupo, compartimos ideas y nos ayudamos a resolver las dudas*”⁷¹.

One of the researchers captured different outcomes based on CLS activities applied on the first lesson. The first activity was ‘Round Robin brainstorming’ where students needed to get into groups of four, assigned by the teacher, and then received different pieces of paper with possible answers. After that, they read the question proposed and in groups, they discussed for a moment to decide what the correct answer was. When they selected their option, they had to raise the paper and show their answer. If their answers were correct, they got points for the group, which made them

⁶⁹ All the quotes in this paper were translated by the authors from Spanish to English. “I really liked this class.”

⁷⁰ “It’s good to do different things in our English class.”

⁷¹ “I understand topics better when we work in groups, share ideas and solve doubts together.”

seem engaged. In this way, Johnson and Johnson's (1999) *Positive Interdependence* stage was evidenced, for the results of the task affected all the team members, and the participation from each team member denoted the importance of their individual commitment, and the achievement of the task was successfully reached. In the second activity, each member of the group had different pieces of paper that they needed to organize in order to understand the definition of the topic for the class. In this stage, students were *individually accountable* and in groups, since they all had different information to join together in order to understand the definition. Then, the teacher walked around them to check their performance during the activity and their comprehension.

It was then possible to see that Positive Interdependence was achieved through the activity when students showed willingness to participate when performing the assignments. This proves the claims by Jacobs et al. (1997), who argue that CLS help students not only to achieve academic tasks but also to acquire social skills. This was evidenced while students were discussing possible answers to the questions in the exercise with their peers, by analyzing the questions and looking for vocabulary they did not understand from the task, as they worked in groups assigned by the teacher. If the students did not comprehend something specific, they looked for the teacher's assistance. (Non-participant observation N°1). To this respect, the study developed by Prieto (2007) evidenced a similar effect of implementing CLS in an eleventh-graders group in order to foster oral production. She claims that these strategies let the students discover amusement in the English classes, and at the same time "students establish new relationships with their classmates through cooperative learning" (p. 86).

In addition, students showed a better performance in the language by providing accurate answers to the questions given during the application of CLS lessons. This finding displayed an improvement of language learning since, when students were given the opportunity to discuss the answers with their peers, they had the possibility to clarify doubts and in groups decide on a common answer, being successful on their responses, due to their interaction and the time they had to check the information before giving a response (Non-participant observation N°3). This finding can be closely related to a study carried out by Gonzalez (2001) who claims that “cooperative work increases oral interaction; the student has the opportunity to speak in pairs, within teams, or small groups” (p. 83), which allows changes within the classroom, compared to the traditional activities that the students were used to develop. Furthermore, the students’ responses on the applied survey reflected that when they worked in groups they could “*practicar la pronunciación y evaluarnos entre todos*”⁷². These findings were not only evidenced in our research project, but also by others such as Gillies (2014) who declares that when learners agree with a common goal, they achieve the learning tasks successfully. In the study conducted by Prieto (2007), she noticed that “her students attained a certain level of knowledge and proficiency in language use by using the cooperative learning method” (p. 85).

In addition, under the implementation of CLS, the teacher-researcher found that students behaved better when they were assigned a leader who had the responsibility to guide the group during the time they were working together. She expressed that “*the leaders performed very well in their role, and it helped a little with the discipline in the class*” (Journal N°5). Through this finding, the relevance of the *Jigsaw* strategy proposed by Aronson (2000) was

⁷² “We could practice pronunciation and we could correct each other.”

demonstrated. Aronson (2000) stated that the leader of the group has to be the most mature student and has to be the one who can control the team members, in a certain way. This characteristic helped not only to ensure that all team members worked efficiently, but also that they behaved well thanks to the leader's cooperation.

The participants also manifested that they preferred working in groups rather than individually. In the survey, twenty-seven students answered that they favored working in groups of two or three people, since they considered that this interaction helped them to understand better and learn more. By sharing and exchanging ideas, they could support others: "*Los que saben pueden ayudarles a otros que no saben*"⁷³. This finding proved the effect of CLS on the learning process. As Johnson and Johnson (1999) argued, this strategy helps to maximize one's and each other's learning. Then, students confirmed the theory that learners can improve their learning when they compare their ideas and help each other to reach the learning goal.

The preference of working in groups was also evidenced in Journal N°4, when the instructions for a grammar-based class were given and the teacher said that students needed to perform the warm-up activity individually. Subsequently, students expressed that they wanted to work in groups by complaining and asking the teacher if there was a possibility to work with their peers. To this respect, it is possible to express that CLS provide suitable elements for the learning of a foreign language such as the exchange of ideas which helped students with the comprehension and learning of this language, as well as the improvement of participation when students were in a cooperative environment. Moreover, their discussions allowed them to make less mistakes when performing the activities.

⁷³ "The ones who know can help the others."

Findings related to the Zone of Proximal Development could also be identified during the implementation of CLS. It was seen that CLS helped less advanced students to understand the topics better when they had the possibility to work with classmates who could provide them with further explanations and clarifications on the topics studied during the lessons. While carrying out a non-participant observation, one of the researchers particularly noticed that, without being asked, there was one student who “*was helping peers from another group explaining the use of ‘still’*” (non-participant observation N°1). This finding evidenced Vygotsky’s theory concerning ZPD, when he claims that ZPD is formed when less advanced students get to work with skillful students so they increase their learning. The effectiveness of the ZPD was also confirmed when the students who had difficulties at the beginning of the implementation of the CLS could master the tasks successfully by relying on their peers.

One of the reasons that led us to investigate the implications of Cooperative Learning strategies in the EFL classroom was the limited interaction that the students and the teacher demonstrated during the initial non-participant observations. As one of the journals says: “The interaction among students seems to be discouraged in the classroom. They only work individually on their worksheets” (Non-participant observation N°1). Later, in the survey, students stated the significance of interaction for the English language learning. They provided different reasons by declaring: “*La interacción rompe la monotonía y hace más interesantes las clases*”⁷⁴, as well as: “*Cuando interactúo con mis compañeros, puedo comprender mejor y reconocer mis errores*”⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ “Interaction breaks monotony and makes the classes more interesting.”

⁷⁵ “When I interact with my classmates, I can understand better and recognize errors.”

The students' opinions rely on the theory proposed by Rivers (1987), who expressed that "through interaction students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material or even the output of their fellow students in discussions" (p.4). This goes along with the perception that students had about interaction with their classmates, considering that the main reason why they preferred to work with their peers was to accomplish academic purposes successfully.

Based on the reflections carried out by the teacher-researcher at the beginning of the implementation of CLS classes, when the groups were assigned by the teacher, the students did not seem to be comfortable working with their peers. However, an improvement of coexistence among students was evidenced, given that in later classes the teacher assigned the groups and the students agreed to work with different classmates from the ones they were used to work with. They also showed positive attitudes towards the groups assigned, participating in the activities and discussing the topic of the lesson in their groups (Journal N°1 and Journal N°5).

Moreover, the interaction during the activities helped students with the identification of possible difficulties in their learning process and the recognition of weak concepts, due to the fact that while they were exchanging insights, further questions emerged, making students aware of the understanding or the doubts they still had (Journal N°5). As Johnson (1980) claims, "peer relationships influence educational aspirations and achievement" (p. 5). Thus, when students have the possibility to share and compare their understanding of a specific topic, their learning was more significant thanks to the influence that interaction has on their language learning.

We also found out that interaction helped students to be engaged in the classes focusing on studying the topics of the class, as stated by the teacher-researcher: "*I perceived that the majority of the group was working in the activity, trying to understand the topic*" (Journal N°4). This proved the level of engagement that interaction allows by making the students interested in the lesson being applied. This finding is reflected on the words of Martin and Rimm-Kauffman (2015) when they claim that "students demonstrate social engagement through their active participation in positive exchanges with peers that are connected to the instructional content of the lesson" (p. 360).

In contrast to the classes in which CLS were implemented, the lessons performed under the grammar-based instruction showed different and significant results that gave us relevant information about the effect of both approaches. Even though the teacher-student interaction was evidenced on informal observations of the classes with the Cooperating Teacher, we could notice that her interaction with the students existed but it was not in a close one. Thus, the interaction in the classroom must be promoted, considering different strategies which involves cooperation as those suggested by Johnson and Johnson (1999), which can help us to strengthen not only the interaction among teachers and students in the classroom, but also to promote the language learning.

A contrast among the lessons taught under the regular interaction and instruction and the ones delivered with CLS was possible to be undertaken. We found out that during the lessons that included a strong focus on grammar, students seemed to have felt less engaged than they were on CLS classes. This was evidenced in the first class, when the teacher introduced the class with a warm-up activity that was carried out individually, and students complained by

saying that they preferred to perform the activity in groups (Journal N° 4). This showed the preference that students had towards working in groups, since in CLS classes they showed better attitudes and they seemed to enjoy the classes. Again, interaction was being required by students in the classes, so they could feel more comfortable in the lesson, trying to share what they knew and even what they were learning at the moment, as previous evidence has suggested in this study. Additionally, the fact that there was a clear approach or even preference on teaching grammar does not mean it was neither belittled by students nor overestimated by the cooperating teacher.

Behavior was another factor to consider on the CLS and grammar-based classes contrast. Through the analysis of the non-participant observations, a variation in the students' behavior during the performance of the activities was noticed. During the implementation of CLS lessons, students acted in a polite way, they tried to be respectful to each other and there was also noise reduction, as it was reflected by the researcher on his field notes: "*Students showed good manners, they were polite to the teacher when asking for guidance*" (Non-participant observation N°3). On the contrary, when grammar-based lessons were developed, some misbehaving patterns were evidenced such as student's constant interruptions during the explanations of different topics, and the overall noise at the beginning of each task. In regards to this situation, the researcher claimed that "*during the explanation in relation to 'still, already and yet', students kept misbehaving, to the point that the teacher stopped her lecture and made an intervention in Spanish*" (Non-participant Observation N°2).

Conclusions

The previous findings showed that Cooperative Learning Strategies contribute not only to the improvement of interaction but also to language learning and engagement in classroom activities. CLS help to build shared meanings among members of the groups, making the learning an enjoyable and productive process where participants establish interdependent relationships. These findings are relevant to our field since through the implementation of CLS we discovered the important implications that this approach brings to the context, such as its significance on improving interactions in the classroom and the components to achieve language learning successfully.

After the analysis of the data, we concluded that CLS have an interconnected relationship with interaction, given that they complement each other in a way that the strategies that Cooperative Learning allowed students to interact among them. Thus, without interaction there is no cooperation. Moreover, different findings emerged from the investigation such as the improvement of social skills, since students enjoyed working with people different from the ones they normally worked with, showing a reinforcement on their coexistence.

This research illustrated the necessity of a change in the teaching strategies currently applied in the language classroom which are still focused on grammar instruction. That is why it is necessary to adopt strategies in which students can interact by exchanging knowledge and supporting their peers. One way we found to accomplish this was through the implementation of some Cooperative Learning Strategies. It would be quite valuable and enriching to try different strategies such as *Team Interview* or *Rally Table*, as suggested by Kagan and Kagan (2009).

We believe that for further investigations about this issue, the amount of time must be increased in order to conclude with wider results. That is why we consider that longer lessons might help to acquire better results in future investigations as, during the implementation of the lessons planned, there were some activities that could not be completed in view that one hour of class was not enough, and some external factors had influence over the sessions as well.

To conclude, our research project's aim was to encourage other teachers and researchers to promote and implement CLS, bearing in mind the context needs, the students' likes, and other aspects that can influence the investigation so it can be adapted for different purposes. We strongly believe that it would be appropriate and interesting to analyze students' self-confidence through the implementation of CLS as another way of taking advantage of this valuable approach to language teaching and learning.

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The effects of different types of feedback on elementary students' 12 compositions

*Daniela Sierra Montoya**

Introduction

“Good job!” and “Well done!” are common expressions teachers write in red ink at the top of the page near a number, communicating students how close they were to achieve the learning goal in writing productions. However, what does “good job!” mean? how can students use this feedback to improve their performance in further productions?

This chapter accounts the results of a study about the effects of different types of feedback on elementary students' written production in English as a Second Language (L2 composition). It was conducted in an English class at a bilingual private all-girls school in Medellín, Colombia. The 20 participants involved share a similar level of proficiency A0, having all passed the Cambridge Starters Test which prepares

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students for level A1 as explained in the Common European Framework of Reference (2001). Nevertheless, these test results were not taken into account since the intervention was intended to be implemented to all the participants with no regards to their starting level of English proficiency.

The theory of second language acquisition (SLA) was revised and the assumptions of Krashen (2004) and his five hypotheses were taken into account. These hypotheses provided clues to understand how acquisition takes place. One important aspect worth mentioning was that conscious learning serves as a monitor to change students' production and correct mistakes. This started to lead the way into looking for ways to affect these two aspects of students' performance. Additionally, when speaking of a second language, each of the four skills must be taken into consideration: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The last one was chosen to be intervened since the students in the context chosen had shown difficulty and struggled with the process of L2 composition.

During the observation of the group before the research, it was identified that the participants' written accuracy was poorer compared to their performance on the other three skills. Students showed many mistakes in punctuation, capitalization, spelling of common words, and coherence. Students were noticeably more stressed, increased questioning, asked for more time and required extra help when facing writing tasks. Students were not improving their writing production accuracy due to the fact that they were not given feedback of any type and instruction and practice were not proving to be enough to make an impact on their accuracy. For these reasons, implementing a strategy to ease the writing process was an appropriate choice to apply.

The goal of the study was to contrast the effectiveness of different types of feedback, namely, direct, indirect, metalinguistic and checklists, in a group of elementary students in terms of accuracy and written production. The four types of feedback implemented were compared by checking students' correction of texts and the number of mistakes that persisted after the feedback was given. Furthermore, the study also investigated the students' responses towards the types of feedback, their awareness regarding their own mistakes, the importance of correction in their learning process and the accuracy that each feedback provides for students' correction of their own mistakes.

Action Research is a qualitative form of Educational Research born and raised in the classroom. The idea of this research arrived by reflecting on the day-to-day practices, the complexity of teaching and the challenges faced, therefore, a plan to improve is set forth. As educators, we constantly tend to refine our teaching methodologies, strategies and procedures in the classroom, and when achieving the teaching and learning goals becomes problematic it is time to apply this sort of reflection. Given this scenario, Action Research becomes pivotal for teachers-researchers to feed the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and find answers to enlighten the path towards more effective ELT practices.

The participating teachers evaluated current theory and trends and developed a systematic approach to answer a research question, Sagor (2005). In this particular study, third graders in this school were about to take an international exam which would certify them in level A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (2001). They were capable of holding everyday conversations naturally and respond to written tasks as the ones proposed by Peha (2003) corresponding to authentic assessment

tasks, in which students need to be aware of the exigency they require and also, their own level of proficiency so they can advance towards the goal, O'Malley and Valdez (1996). Thus, students were able to provide information in English in the two instruments used with them.

Firstly, surveys were proper to collect information regarding the effectiveness of feedback. Secondly, students were given prompts to write during 16 sessions of class. These pieces of writing were gathered in a mini book they had previously decorated as to ignite curiosity for using it. Although students were the respondents on the writing activities, their performance was the source of information that counted as a second party for the purpose of triangulation. These mini books or journals provided information about the first category of the study: writing accuracy. The third instrument that was used to lead this qualitative research was the teacher's field notes. These notes pointed at gathering data about categories: effectiveness of feedback and students writing accuracy.

Ethical considerations were carefully treated ensuring the privacy of the participants. Although their mini books were personalized, all of them were treated indistinctively to track each students' mistakes under a number assigned at random, corresponding to each mini book. Moreover, students, parents and school's directives were informed that the implementation followed strict academic purposes and with the commitment to later divulge the results with the English department in order to implement any possible plans for improving teaching and learning practices.

The process followed to conduct the research is better described in figure 1. On week one, after the design of the project, the students received the first survey to inquire about their prior knowledge and perspectives regarding feedback.

Then they did the pretest, which was a free writing task encouraging students to demonstrate the type of writers they were. On week two, students did their first entry on the mini book after the pretest, and they corrected their work based on the direct feedback (correction of mistakes) they had received. The same procedure was repeated over the following weeks: on week three, they received checklists (where they self-assessed their writings); on week four, their work was corrected using indirect feedback (pointing out the mistakes without providing the correction); and on week five, they received metalinguistic feedback (correction of mistakes and linguistic explanation). On week six, students did the post-test and the second survey, and data were analyzed on weeks seven and eight.

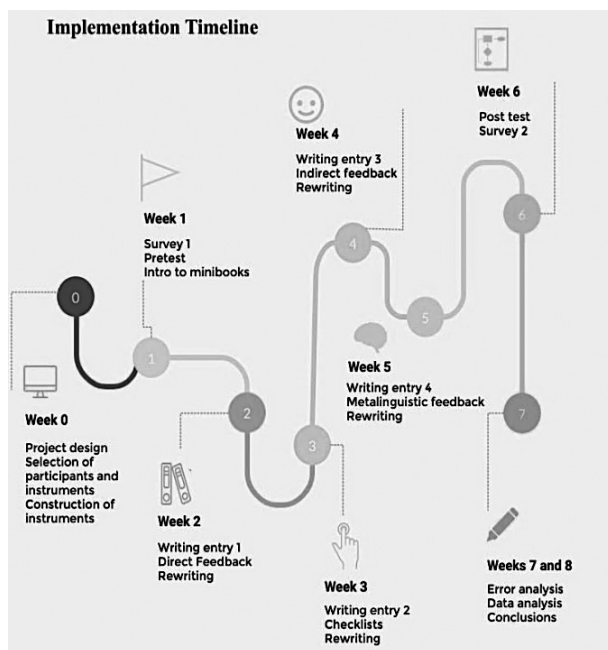


Figure 1. Research implementation timeline

Data from the three sources were analyzed and triangulated following a system of patterns. Findings reveal that direct and metalinguistic feedback proved to be more effective to help third graders to improve accuracy in their L2 composition. Nevertheless, no feedback was useless since students demonstrated a considerable decrease in the number of mistakes they made after being exposed to systematic feedback during the six weeks of the intervention.

Second Language Acquisition and Assessment

SLA is the description of some hypotheses that are supported by evidence found in different research studies and explain how subjects acquire a second language. The hypotheses are the acquisition-learning distinction, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. These hypotheses summarize the theory of second language acquisition, however, for the purpose of this study, the input hypothesis may be considered the most relevant out of the five. All these hypotheses were proven to be accurate when explaining how learners acquire a second language.

The acquisition-learning hypothesis explains that adults have two different ways of acquiring a language, one that is not conscious and similar to a child's process, a natural way of getting the language. The second way is called learning, this describes a conscious process of understanding and gaining knowledge about the language. It is a state of being aware that the acquisition is occurring (Krashen, 2004).

The natural order hypothesis discovered that the acquisition of language grammar structures takes place in a certain order. There is enough evidence to prove that there are similarities in the sequence learners acquire grammar,

a predictable order (Krashen, 2004). This theory was first proven by the studies of Brown in 1973 (as cited in Krashen, 2004 p. 15). He reported that children learning English as a first language acquire some structures sooner than others. Later on, Dulay and Burt in 1974 (as cited in Krashen, 2004 p. 5) indicated that for second language acquisition children also showed a “natural order” to acquire the grammar structures.

The Monitor hypothesis explains how learning and acquisition have their own purpose and work in different ways. Learning, which is conscious, serves as a monitor to change our output and correct our mistakes. This hypothesis proposes that the role of learning and the knowledge of rules are very limited and only useful after the acquisition has taken place.

The input hypothesis is currently the most prominent theory since it provides an answer that may impact all the language teaching areas. This hypothesis explains that a learner needs to understand the “next step” to move towards it. A learner cannot pass from one level of knowledge to another if he/she has not grasped the content of the next level. The input hypothesis states that comprehension is essential to acquire a language. Having said this, a learner needs to understand what has not yet been taught to him/her. The explanation is that people do not only use their linguistic competence; the context is another tool, and this extra-knowledge about the world is what helps us understand beyond and advance from A to B level. Structures are acquired by understanding the meaning of an input that contains a little bit more of what we know, this “plus” is required to achieve acquisition (Krashen, 2004). This hypothesis has enough evidence to be supported and to encourage teachers to provide a comprehensible input that goes one step beyond students’ level of proficiency and then, acquisition will take place.

Lastly, the affective filter hypothesis states that some affective factors influence the second language acquisition process. These factors are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Motivated and self-confident learners usually perform better at second language tasks and less anxious individuals have also an advantage when acquiring a second language (Krashen, 2004).

Behind writing production there are a lot of processes that are taking place. Writing is the result of all the competences that a student has mastered and that are later translated into a written piece. L2 composition can be defined in three dimensions: the text structure (syntax, morphology, lexis), the processes or strategies each individual uses to compose (planning, revision, search for words) and the socio-cultural contexts of these individuals (self-image, community discourse) (Cumming, 2001; Barkaoui, 2007). Hyland (2003) describes writing as a productive skill, which therefore requires a high level of accuracy and that for many, is the most difficult skill to learn (as cited in Salmani, 2014, p. 121).

Writing also requires some other practices to be a successful process. All these need to be taken into account and applied by teachers: motivate students to engage in writing frequently, provide feedback, support and attend affective factors such as motivation, students' autonomy and self-assessment (Barkaoui, 2007). This research project made an attempt to alter writing composition in terms of text structure, the first dimension mentioned above, by implementing effective feedback on students' writing compositions.

To develop a fine tool to evaluate students is essential and valuable for teachers and school administrators. For this reason, the tools to assess this skill have been increasingly analyzed (Shaw & Weir, 2007). The objective of any assessment process is to support and enhance student

learning and to collect information about students that will help to direct future instruction (Salmani, 2014). Evaluation is a tool to assess the progress and the range of achievement of the goals designed for a class (McLaughlin, 1975).

Alternative Assessment has been adopted as an umbrella term to describe contrasting methods to standardized and traditional tests. Numerous adjectives have been used to describe authentic assessment, such as performance, continuous, ongoing, informal, descriptive, direct assessment, dynamic, instructional, responsive, complementary and formative assessment (Tsagari, 2004). Jang (2014) describes alternative assessment as suitable to assess linguistic knowledge in the communicative competence through meaningful interaction relevant for learners' lives. Alike, Mueller in 2018 defines authentic assessment as a means of evaluation where students show a meaningful application of essential knowledge skills through real-world tasks, and O'Malley and Valdez in 1996 determined it as "the multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities". (p.4)

Additionally, O'Malley and Valdez in 1996 detail three forms of authentic assessment, namely, performance assessment, portfolio assessment and self-assessment. The first one consists of students' responses constructed either orally or in written form. These responses are usually elicited by the teacher and require students to bring prior knowledge to execute complex and significant tasks related to realistic or authentic problems. Portfolio assessment refers to evidence of work gathered during the course period in which progress towards instructional objectives is analyzed. Self-assessment implies a certain level of freedom for students to propose means and pace for assessment within a self-regulated learning process.

Performance assessment is characterized by 1) constructed responses provided in spoken or written language through a performance or product; 2) higher-order thinking in the construction of responses to open-ended questions; 3) authenticity, in an engaging real-world setting; 4) integration of skills; 5) process and product assessment, rather than one correct or unique answer; 6) depth versus breadth, since complete information about students skills is presented with effective feedback.

Hyland (2003) states that the key to designing proper assessment criteria is to clearly state what each student needs to improve or to get to the next level of proficiency. Also, O'Malley and Valdez (1996) affirm that teacher judgment has a very important role when assessing writing and, in order to make an unbiased judgment, rubrics are required when grading authentic assessment tasks. Also, the criteria for evaluation should be public and known in advance, making precision about what students are expected to demonstrate, associating performance levels with numerical values.

According to O'Malley and Valdez (1996), students need to understand the task, that is to be aware of the exigency it requires and their own level of proficiency, so they can advance towards the goal. This is possible through checklists that enable them to analyze their writing against the standards. These expectations need to be written in a simple way, containing the scoring criteria regarding the standards to be evaluated. Given the age of students in this research, the requirements for each task were explicit and explained in detail. Checklists use simple and familiar wording. Checklists were one of the types of feedback implemented on this research, as a means for students to self-assess before handing in authentic writing assessments and for teachers to provide later effective feedback.

Moreover, to describe the importance of having students understand evaluation standards, Lee in 2007 describes five principles to ensure success in writing tasks with a formative purpose, namely, sharing learning goals with students, helping students understand the standards they are working towards, involving students in assessment, teachers providing feedback that helps, and creating a classroom culture where mistakes are a natural part of learning and where everyone can improve.

Furthermore, Wiggins (2012) highlighted the importance of feedback during the learning process as a means of improvement. He defined it as the information that a teacher provides to pupils about the progress to reach a goal. Feedback equips students with tangible actions and strategies on how to act purposefully. For feedback to take place, students must be able to understand the procedures they should follow in order to improve their work. Also, effective feedback is given consistently and continuously, using formal criteria to help students internalize it and put it into action in further assignments. Additionally, feedback in any form is a valuable tool to improve formative assessment since students are given opportunities to adjust their work before coming to a final product. This is why time plays an important role when providing feedback. If feedback is not proper in time, students can lose focus or feel discouraged in the process.

Ellis (2008) described three main types of error correction, namely, Direct Corrective Feedback (DCF), Indirect Corrective Feedback (ICF) and Metalinguistic Corrective Feedback (MCF). When using Direct Feedback, teachers locate students' errors and provide an immediate correction. It is said to be useful when the language level of learners is low because they are provided with solutions

to rephrase their thoughts. However, since it requires little analysis, long-term learning is not assured.

Alternatively, Indirect Feedback is given when teachers identify students' errors whether underlining them or marking them within sentences. This type of feedback has been regarded as useful to guide students through problem-solving, motivate them to reflect about linguistic forms and to lead to long-term learning given the nature of inquiring awoken in the process of revision. Regardless, certain linguistic awareness is needed to successfully correct errors and, according to Al-Ahmad and Al-Jarrah in 2015, in most cases, young learners are not equipped with the skills to effectively search for information and have not mastered grammar structures yet to make their own corrections.

Although wide research has been carried out in order to determine whether DCF or ICF has a higher impact on long-term learning, the topic is still being debated and not one definite conclusion has been set yet. Furthermore, various studies cited by Ellis in 2008 point that MCF, which implies making comments about the type of errors learners make on pieces of writing, may be as effective as DCF to improve writing accuracy. When using MFC, teachers' observations can be oral when returning the pieces of writing to the learners or written near the mistakes. If the latter, teachers can also choose to use codes as abbreviation labels determining the nature of the mistakes or to provide learners with metalinguistic explanations of their errors. The type of errors teachers mark will also depend on whether the correction is Focused or Unfocused, which means seeking for improvement in a certain syntactic category or more open to making any type of correction. The table below explains these types of feedback with further detail.

Type of Feedback	Description	Example
Direct	The teacher points at the mistake and provides the correction.	I like going to the pool (<u>whit</u>) with my family
Indirect	The teacher indicates there is a mistake, generally underlining the word, but does not provide the correction.	I like go to the pool <u>whit</u> my family
Metalinguistic	The teacher provides an explanation of the type of mistake.	I like go(1) to the pool whit(2) my family. <i>(1) Verbs of like and dislike are followed by a verb in the ing form.</i> <i>(2) Spelling.</i>
Checklists	Clear criteria about the expectations over the product is provided in the form of a checklist. The items are normally listed in a rubric, for the sake of presentation in the example chart, they are only listed as a demonstration.	-I begin all sentences with capital letters. ___YES ___NO -I use capital letters for names and days. ___YES ___NO -I finish my sentences with a period. ___YES ___NO

Findings and Discussion

All the writing exercises were developed on a mini book students had received and decorated as to ignite their

motivation. During the intervention students were given a different authentic assessment prompt to work on each session. The teacher collected the mini books and applied a different type of feedback each time and then asked students to correct their work when the feedback was provided (See some examples on images 1 to 4). The improved versions were also checked, and the amount and nature of errors were tracked. Consequently, graphics are shown in this section to ease the understanding of numeric data such as the number of mistakes tracked analyzing the mini books, time on tasks tracked in the field notes, and responses from students in the surveys applied through Google forms. After analyzing the differences in the four types of feedback, and the baseline test and the post test, as well as the information gathered from surveys and teacher's field notes, the following findings emerged.

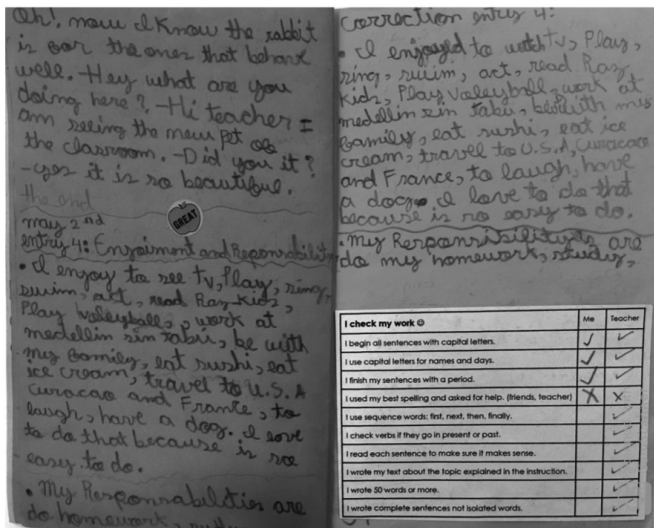


Image 1. Feedback provided with Checklists.

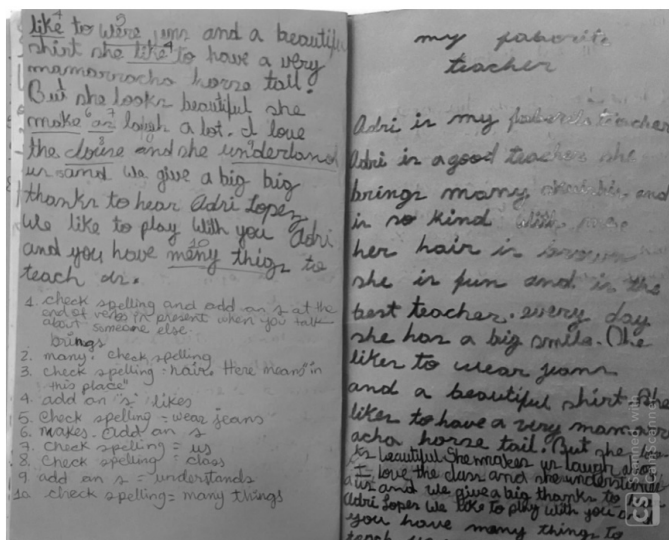


Image 2. Metalinguistic Feedback

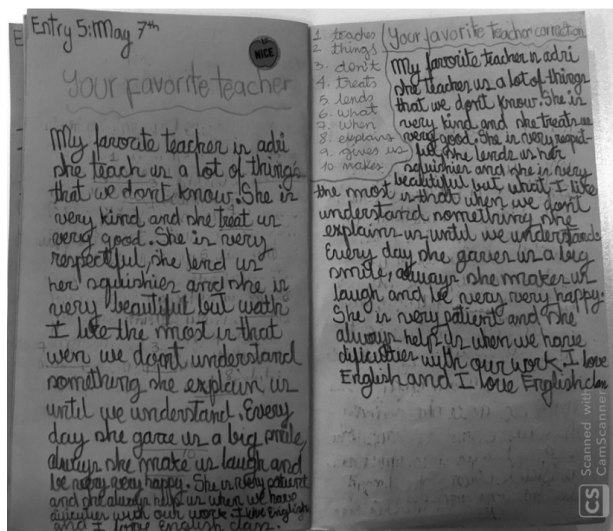


Image 3. Direct Feedback.

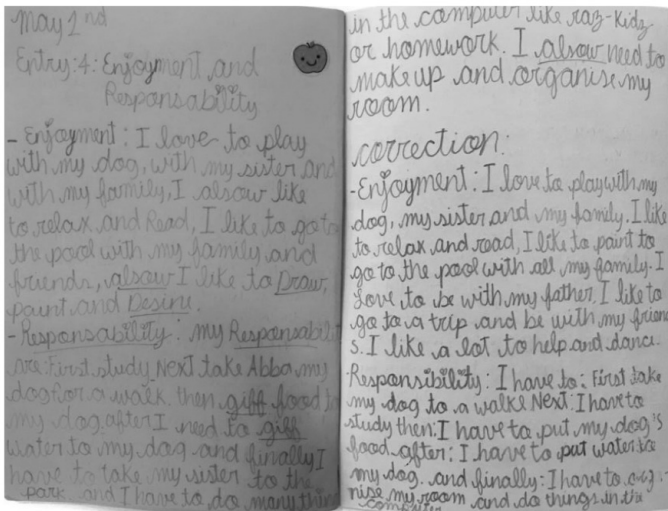


Image 4. Indirect Feedback.

Writing Accuracy and Language Awareness

Direct and metalinguistic feedback proved to be more effective than indirect feedback and checklists, which is similar to what was revealed in the studies carried out by (Chandler, 2003; Jamalinesari, Rahimi, Gowhary, & Azizifar et al., 2014; Kamalian & Lashkarian, 2014; Al-Ahmad & Al-Jarra, 2014). As in the mentioned studies, students in the present research were more motivated to correct their work when direct feedback was provided. They claimed to like more when the teacher corrected their mini books “spotting the mistakes and giving them the correct forms.” (Survey 2, participant 3). Figures 2 and 3 correlate with the results. Figure 2 represents students' answers to survey 2 regarding the type of feedback they preferred. It is observable that over 80% of students preferred Direct and Metalinguistic

Feedback, named as Underline – Number and Correction and Underline – Number – Correct ion and Explanation.

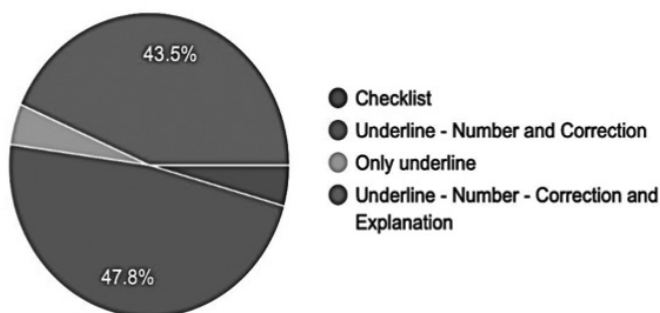


Figure 2. Survey 2, Question: Which type of feedback helps you correct better your work?

Figure 3 represents a comparative chart among the number of mistakes in the pre and post-test (original and correction in the chart) when applying each type of feedback. It can be analyzed that Checklists and Direct Feedback were the least and most effective written correction correspondingly. The participants in the study done by Chandler in 2003 claimed to learn more when Indirect Feedback was given, and he affirmed that a certain level of language was required for students to do their independent corrections when receiving indirect feedback. In a like manner, young learners in the present study struggled to correct their own mistakes because it was hard for them to find out what the mistakes were when indirect feedback was provided, however, Indirect Feedback still proved to be effective. Students claimed to prefer “the correction” and “the explanation” (Survey 2, participants 8 and 17).

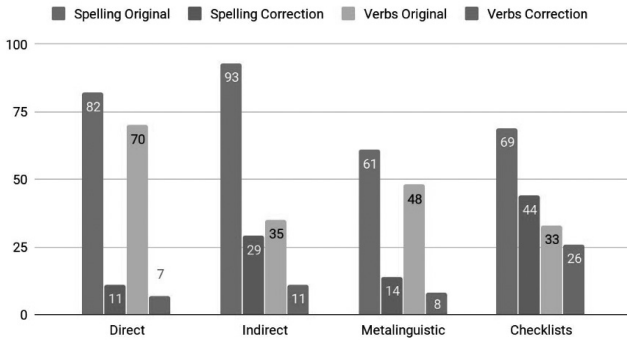


Figure 3. Comparison among the four types of feedback

Given the fact that third graders are still acquiring the language, metalinguistic feedback might be more friendly for them since it teaches them to “learn from their mistakes” in an understandable form, as it should be according to the input hypothesis proposed by Krashen (2004). Ultimately, Ellis (2008) stated that Direct Corrective Feedback is particularly useful for learners at a low level of performance since they receive immediate solutions to reformulate their thoughts.

In the same vein, as students were exposed to different types of feedback, they started inquiring about language use. The teacher reported in her field notes how they started asking more questions about spelling, vocabulary and grammar. These can be an indicator of an increase in students’ linguistic awareness. This particular group had not shown this trait in the past. They had usually corrected and accepted written correction without further inquiring or just by nodding. Students questioning and wondering about structures of the written language in this context is a positive sign of interest and learning. Besides, among the benefits of authentic assessment in terms of students’ products, O’Malley

and Valdez (1996) highlighted the processing of information occurring in students' minds because of the challenges to solve real world problems and come up with solutions to engaging tasks. This thinking and the use of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) were observable in this study since those tasks students were proposed pushed them to inquire, reflect, self-assess their work and performance, ignite language awareness and evaluate the feedback they received.

Learning environment

The learning environment and the motivation towards writing increased considerably following the considerations stated by Barkaoui (2007) and Lee (2007) regarding enhancing success in the writing process. Motivation was present in the classroom since the moment students were first exposed to the mini books and decorated them. The writing process was continuous with clear expectations on the prompts and understandable feedback was constantly provided to improve their. Mistakes were a natural part of the process, so students were not afraid of making them but wanted to avoid them in further compositions.

Students' time on task was an additional enhancement observed. Figure 4 shows how pupils improved the time they spent working on their writing compositions. It can be analyzed that students got used to being assigned 20 minutes for creative writing and this continuous practice resulted in more complete texts. Another explanation is that the "number of words" was included in the writing prompt for each mini book entry. For this reason, students were clear about the goal expected and the number of words their texts should contain, spending more time at writing.

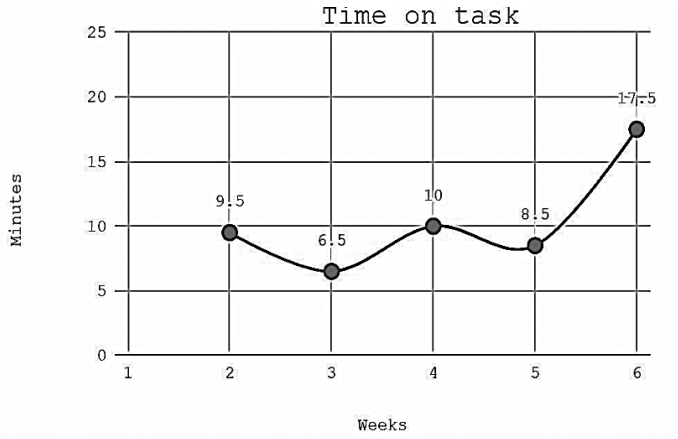


Figure 4. Time on task through the intervention

Conclusions

Although it was demonstrated that direct and metalinguistic feedback were the most effective in improving students' written accuracy, it is worth stating conclusions regarding the impact that each type of feedback had on students.

When students received their corrections using Direct feedback it was easier for them to do their corrections, since it was clear for them what their mistakes were and how they could improve them. It was fast and easy to understand. There was also a tendency to avoid repeating mistakes on further compositions.

When Metalinguistic feedback was provided, students affirmed to "learn more English" (Survey 2, Participants 2, 4, 6, 7, 10) which shows how their language awareness was stimulated in terms of the input hypothesis, Krashen (2004), since comprehensible input was given so learners were pushed towards a slightly bigger level of exigency.

Indirect feedback was effective when students were familiar with the type of mistakes they made, but when they did not have notions on the nature of the error, they felt discouraged because neither they found the mistake nor they could correct.

At the beginning of the intervention, students were not familiarized with checklists for self-assessment, but as the process advanced, it was noticeable how these instruments were natural for students and they even realized what the expectations on their work were. Consequently, when asking for self-assessing their work, students retold the items included in the checklists, demonstrating apprehension of them. This confirms that sharing understandable learning goals and expectations with students help them achieve them, Lee (2007).

Wiggins (2012) affirmed that effective feedback should be understandable for students, as well as constant and continuous, and provide them with opportunities to adjust their work. These four elements guided the intervention process in the present research and they proved to be reliable. Regardless of the type of feedback provided in each writing task, they always aligned with the characteristics mentioned by Wiggins, and although direct feedback and metalinguistic feedback proved to be more effective to improve written accuracy, indirect feedback and checklists also had a positive impact on this variable. Thus, no feedback provided was worthless to enhance writing accuracy, this means that giving understandable, constant and continuous feedback to students, and permitting them to make corrections on their compositions, have a positive impact in their writing accuracy.

An action plan derived from the conclusions stated above might be described as follows:

- Students constantly look around for examples and models on how to write words correctly. Having more sources of vocabulary posted around the classroom (word walls) can be beneficial and help students write more fluently.
- To have a clear rubric explaining students the number of words they are required to produce in each written composition is advisable. It was observed that students write longer pieces of writing when they are clear about this criterion and write less words when this requirement is omitted.
- Re-writing and having students correct their texts is time-consuming and discouraging for elementary students. Handwriting can be mixed with moments of computer typing and correcting to help students correct and feel more motivated.
- Regular exposition to feedback enhances students to inquire about their processing of information and production. The more practice and feedback students received, the more aware they were about their compositions and the more motivated they were towards writing.
- Teacher training is essential to learn how to apply proper feedback, ongoing and in time.
- Feedback and written correction are time-consuming and teachers' lack of time and training is a limitation.

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Learning and teaching English: an experience of rural school teachers

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Introduction

English is seen nowadays as a global language and as “a medium of a great deal of the world’s knowledge” (Crystal, 2003, p. 110), and the international language (Kachru, 1990; Philipson, 1992) becomes one of the most outstanding

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challenges in educational practices in Latin American settings (Correa, Montoya & Usma, 2014). In the Colombian context, different strategies have been implemented to qualify English Learning and Teaching (ELT hereinafter) along the country such as *Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo, 2004-2019*, *Proyecto de Fortalecimiento al Desarrollo de Competencias en Lengua Extranjera 2013 (PFDCLE)*, *Colombia Bilingüe 2014-2018*, among others. Nonetheless, these proposals do not seem to be close to real contexts needs and particularities, ignoring that English is now spoken by a variety of communities under diverse conditions (Barros del Río, 2019). Authors such as Correa, Montoya and Usma (2014), Garcia and Marín (2015), as well as Roldán and Peláez (2015) support that fact. They demonstrated that the existing Colombian language policies have some gaps in terms of content, continuity and decontextualization. Among those voids, we find rural education conditions. Thus, this need of qualifying English language learning in rural contexts has given rise to the importance of English teachers' training.

In this regard, *La Universidad Católica de Oriente (UCO)*, geographically surrounded by rural settings in *El Oriente Antioqueño*, is close to realities of rural education. One of its objectives is to support the development of Educational practices which help the growth of the region. That is why, through its Faculty of Education and through its Language Teaching Education Program, the University seeks to contribute to better practices in the ELT in different rural settings. One of the strategies to achieve those goals has been to train elementary school teachers in charge of English in rural schools through ELT courses and strategies to teach that foreign language.

Hence, the intention of this chapter is to describe the lived experiences of eight Elementary School teachers from rural contexts, within a Professional Development Course (PDC hereinafter) offered by the University and related to English and teaching strategies. This research project emerged from the different experiences faced in the course and the continuous reflections held in a students' research incubator focused on English Teaching in rural contexts (TERC⁷⁶). Through this study we sought to know what this course meant for rural school teachers and to reflect upon to what extend this PDC did take into account participants' particularities and needs as rural school teachers. Additionally, the findings became an opportunity to obtain first-hand information which can result useful when creating professional development proposals for teachers who teach English in such settings. This research exercise was underpinned by a qualitative approach and held a case study methodology following Stake's (1995) perspectives. Besides, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and interactive techniques were undertaken as data collection methods. Results permitted to approach the teachers' points of view on their lived experiences throughout the course, as well as their feelings when implementing the teaching strategies learnt in their teaching practice. As a main conclusion, it was found that adapting contents and strategies based on teachers' suggestions, voices and realities can contribute to the creation of effective and contextualized lessons that allow a significant learning process within their classrooms.

⁷⁶ Students Research Incubator, Teaching English in Rural Contexts, which objective is to introduce students to the rural educational realities through research processes.

Learning and Teaching English: An experience of rural school teachers

Reporting the experience of rural school teachers when learning and teaching English in *El Retiro* Municipality is based on a methodology of Systematization of Experiences. According to Jara (2018) experience is a sociohistorical, dynamic, personal, collective and complex process considering the context and particular situations where the event takes place. In that sense, it is connected with the characteristics of people that personally or collectively live it. Systematization of experiences as a research method has four moments or situations: there is a starting or initial situation that reports the experience of the participants in terms of English language learning and teaching, in this case, the teachers' views and motivation towards English learning and teaching in rural settings. There is a second situation called intervention, that deals with the experience the participants obtained while living or participating in the event. In this exercise we referred to Perceptions of the course. The third moment refers to the final situation that includes the lessons learnt, in this case, to the experiences of the course learnings and their applicability in rural schools, as well as teachers' suggestions for future professional development courses (Jara, 2018, p. 133 - 164).

Teachers' views and motivations towards English Learning and their Teaching in rural settings

Motivation emerged during the exercise as extrinsic and intrinsic, and it is reflected in the English learning and their teaching in rural settings. Motivation "is responsible

for determining human behavior by energizing it and giving direction” (Dörnyei 1998, p. 117). According to Brown (2000) there are three known perspectives. The first, a behaviorist perspective where the reward plays an important role: people behave or act to receive a reinforcement, influenced by external and individual forces. The second, a cognitive perspective is related to the individual’s decisions, the choices they make to live certain experiences; and third, a constructivist perspective, related to the social context and internal decisions. The social context influences the decisions the individual makes, as well as the actions. From those perspectives, there are two types of motivations, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the activity done for the sake of the activity itself, without expecting any reward but feelings of competence and self-growth (Brown, 2000). Extrinsic motivation on the other hand, are activities carried out anticipating a reward, for example a better salary, a job promotion, better grades and looking for a positive response (Brown, 2000).

It was possible to identify intrinsic and extrinsic motivations the teachers had at the beginning of the course in relation to English learning and teaching.

In relation to intrinsic motivation the teachers took it as personal growth, for example teacher Sofía (Focus Group [FG hereinafter] 1) said that *“poderme comunicar con otro(s), para mí el aprender inglés significa el abrirme y el comprender al otro.”*⁷⁷ At this point it is interesting that she confirms that learning a second language is the need people have in coming closer to those that think and speak differently to me. Eliana (FG1, 2017) manifested that being proficient in the language, in a general sense, has been a personal challenge

⁷⁷ “To be able to communicate with other people, therefore to learn English means to be open and understand others.”

and a personal project. Marta, from the FG2 (2017) took it as personal growth as she had tried to learn the language in several occasions, but thanks to the external motivation and help of the Education Office, she has awoken that intrinsic motivation once again, *“tengo que sacudirme porque no puedo faltar”*⁷⁸ (Marta, FG2, 2017). According to the teacher in charge, the main idea was to help them get confidence (Interview, 2018) from the beginning of the course.

These elements respond to what Maslow (1954) calls the need for self-actualization: “The desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (p. 46). On the other hand, learning a language as mentioned by the participants, is an opportunity to value the world, the personal development and to show respect for other cultures and social interaction (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006, p. 8*).

The following extrinsic motivation responds to students’ needs for a second language. Teachers took this opportunity as personal growth improving pronunciation not only for them but also for the children, so they do not teach them mistakes (Beatriz, FG1, 2017). For teachers such as Jenny (FG1, 2017), who had the need to study English to be updated to what today’s world demands in terms of a second language, considered it really relevant in education. In the same way, Carlos (FG1, 2017) confirms such statement when he affirms: *“Yo como no sé esto, yo tendría que saberlo para que mis estudiantes tengan una oportunidad diferente, lo veo con mis hijos, saben más mis hijos de inglés que yo, y yo soy docente.”*⁷⁹ For Alvaro (FG2, 2017), being a Physical

⁷⁸ “I have to move on because I cannot miss it.”

⁷⁹ “Because I don’t know this, I should know it so that my students have a different opportunity. I see them as my children, as they know more English than me and I’m the teacher.”

Education teacher challenges him to learn the language so he can give the contents in English to his students, a very important characteristic in order to be a better teacher (FG2, 2017). He mentions also that teachers are illiterate in many fields and that one of them is the second language, and it is necessary to learn it. The teacher in charge of the course mentioned that it was necessary to teach them what they consider useful and necessary, and that was one way to motivate them to learn the language, helping them to grow in the teaching practices (Interview, 2018).

In addition, teacher Beatriz (FG1, 2017) affirmed that most of the technology today has many instructions in English and learning the language is helping her to respond to such reality. At this point, they consider the learning of a second language very important for teachers, since that way, they can respond to students' needs and demands, opening the door to teacher training as really relevant in their context. De Lella (2003) states that teacher training is a process in which an individual is in permanent acquisition and re-structuration of their values, behaviors and knowledge in order to develop a task. In a similar way, Gatti (2008) describes this term as a process of shaping that individual experience. In this process, individuals adopt particular ways of acting in their lives, in society and certainly in the classroom. Regarding the previous definitions, teacher training could be interpreted as a constant ongoing process in which teachers face new knowledge and experiences that impact their professional and personal lives, giving them the chance to perceive themselves and their teaching practices from a fresher look. That is to say, it is an opportunity to reflect upon what they have been doing in terms of strength and issues to improve, as well as the chance to approach new ideas to keep growing. Having in mind the above-mentioned

points, it is necessary not only to consider the meaning of teacher training, but also the sort of important formative elements it provides in teaching practices. A clear example of these components is that each pedagogical model for teacher training is either affected or determined by conceptions about teachers' practices, education and learning process (De Lella, 1999). Those pedagogical models offer teachers access to vital categories in their professional field. Another important point is that teacher training is related to the complexity when achieving new scientific and technological emerging knowledge, empowering the teachers with important tools to carry on their classes (De Tezanos, 2010).

Considering these points, teacher training could be seen as a process of acquisition of new knowledge and abilities that teachers face when strengthening their professional practices, since they have the opportunity to analyze, evaluate and reflect on their teaching practices, providing them with the necessary elements to make up new and better structures to deal with the challenges a teacher has to face.

It is also relevant to mention that motivation in adults has some characteristics, as they "bring a lot of previous learning experience to the classroom and they bring their own ideas about what good learning looks and feels like" (Harmer, 2012, p. 90). For instance, this previous learning can be taken as a good opportunity to potentiate teachers' learning, as they can bring all the experience as teachers towards learning English.

Perceptions of the course (content, strategies, Course teacher's roles and resources)

Perception is understood as the process by which a person interprets an idea, a belief or reality to produce a meaningful experience of the world, in that way, a person is confronted with a reality as it is, but different subjects might show and perceive reality differently. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) affirmed, “perception is our ‘absolute proximity’ to things and at the same time our ‘irremediable distance’ from them [...] opening the world up before us” (p. xi). In this exercise, the researchers registered the perceptions given by the teachers in relation to the course content, strategies, the teacher's roles and resources.

With respect to **course content**, the teacher in charge (Interview, 2018) affirmed that the course was divided into two big objectives, one objective was oriented to teach them the English language and, the second, English to didactic strategies. In that sense, contents given during the course were oriented to respond to those two objectives. For example the warmups, provided as part of the English class motivation to the teachers, function as well as an illustration for the teachers learning English to implement with their children. According to the teacher, it was taken as very positive: “*Eso ha sido un éxito, en palabras de los profes*”⁸⁰ (Teacher Interview, 2018). In this same line, there was a project carried out by a private university's extension program, a local private company and the local government, that sought the professional development of pre-K teachers in Medellín, Antioquia (Maturana & Uribe, 2018) under three assumptions: “pedagogical, didactic and theoretical” (p. 167).

⁸⁰ “That has been very successful according to the teachers.”

The teachers confirmed that the contents given help them to learn vocabulary and grammar structures, but the textbook used in the course made some teachers feel limited in certain situations of their process (Sofía, FG1, 2017). For instance, the participant mentioned that one of the greatest difficulties when giving the content was that the teachers had different English levels (Teacher Interview, 2018). The teachers also mentioned that learning vocabulary and grammar structures was much easier to them than pronunciation and listening (Claudia, FG2, 2017), as they recognize that they have a lot of pronunciation mistakes. These statements have a relation with Harmer's (2012) ideas: *"Some adults are not keen on communicative language teaching, for example, because it is not like the way they were taught at school"* (p. 90). In spite of that, teachers prefer that the course contents are devoted mostly to pronunciation and listening (Claudia, FG2, 2017).

The teachers mentioned some **course strategies** implemented along the process such as games, audios, readings, videos, songs, homework and teamwork (Eliana, Sofia, FG1, 2017; Claudia, FG2, 2017). According to the teacher in charge of the course, the idea is that the teachers gain confidence and motivation to speak and teach the language to their students (Course Teacher Interview, 2018), as Brown (2000) mentions: *"At the heart of all learning is a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish the task"* (p. 62), moving from simple to more elaborate tasks. Teachers recognized these strategies in the four skills worked in class. They enjoyed mostly the games that promote pronunciation and speaking (Jenny, FG1, 2017) demanding a more communicative approach. As Brown (2000) affirms: *"Communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language*

and contexts, and to students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world" (p. 69). Although Harmer (2012, p. 88) indicates that adults do not engage much in games, in this particular situation, the participants enjoy the games as they can implement them at their schools. The perception they have in relation to homework is that they do not have enough time to do that at home, as they mentioned that they are too busy due to family commitments and school demands that absorb all their time, although homework builds autonomous learning (Harmer, 2012, p. 168). The teacher in charge mentions as well that she recognized all those situations. Therefore, she decided to give them strategies that they could implement in their schools, as well as giving them time to do all the activities in class, avoiding activities to do at home (Interview, 2018). This strategy responds very well to meaningful learning, as Brown (2000) mentions, it is important to appeal to students' needs, interests and professional goals, tied up to students' interests, in this case, the interest to teach English to their students. Brown (2000) mentions as well that English teachers should avoid too much grammar, abstract principles, drillings and activities that are not clear or have no connection to their daily life.

In relation to the **Course teacher's roles**, the teachers taking the course mentioned that the teacher in charge was very patient, and open to dialogue, recognizing their needs and creativity (Eliana, FG1, 2017; Claudia, FG2, 2017). They agreed that although the teacher worked with the textbook, she was always proposing new activities to keep them active: as some of them have to travel long distances to come to English class after school, they feel really exhausted and the activities proposed kept them awake: *"No estamos pues todo el tiempo encasilladas acá siguiendo el libro sino que*

*estamos también... la profe está utilizando otras herramientas*⁸¹ (Eliana, FG1, 2017). They perceived that the teacher gave them strategies to learn English suggesting to use them at their schools, as Elvira (FG1, 2017) said: *“En este curso hemos aprendido muchas estrategias que nos han ayudado para enriquecer el quehacer pedagógico en el área de inglés”*⁸². An element that they described in relation to the teacher’s role has to do with the demands when they say: *“Si la docente nos exige más, nosotros nos vamos pero tampoco aprendemos inglés”*⁸³ (Alvaro, FG2, 2017). It might probably indicate that the teacher in charge understands the teachers’ reality. For instance, the teacher said: *“Hay que detenerse e ir más despacio con ellos”*⁸⁴ (Interview, 2018) which confirms what Harmer (2012) says: “We need to listen (when possible) to our students’ own learning preferences [...] We can make a bargain, where they agree to try to do what *we* want and *we* agree” (p. 90), an accord. As a teacher of teachers under training, it might be important to find the way they want to be addressed and taught, taking “care that what we show and tell them is both clearly visible and audible” (Harmer, 2012, p. 90), as well as “if we want to know how to teach our students, we need to know what the students are like. How are they different? How are they the same?” (Harmer, 2012, p. 92), recognizing that every group of students has particular characteristics due to the social, cultural and academic context they have.

⁸¹ “We are not all the time immersed following a book, but the teacher is also implementing other tools.”

⁸² “In this course we have learnt many strategies that have helped us to enrich our pedagogical practice in English Language teaching.”

⁸³ “If the teacher do not ask us, we go and we do not learn English.”

⁸⁴ “It is important to stop and slow it down with them.”

Concerning **Course resources** and the perception students have in relation to them, the following were identified: students' textbook and its platform, audios, video beam, speakers, whiteboard, internet, cards. They perceived the book as a barrier or limitation to work more on speaking and listening (FG2, Marta, 2017), since the class was held only once a week. Therefore, they did not want to spend time in the book, they wanted to invest it in speaking and listening. They admitted that the book is well structured, but the teachers' different language levels complicate its use (Interview, 2018). In relation to this, Harmer (2012) mentions that "some people do not like coursebooks. They say that no single coursebook is exactly right for any particular class of students [...] most are based on and have too much grammar and that the language used in coursebook dialogues is not natural" (p. 180). Nevertheless, "course books are often well planned" (Harmer, 2012, p. 180) as recycling vocabulary, grammar, attractive material and adequate topics but, in certain contexts, they do not work well. In relation to the platform, they mentioned (FG 1 and 2, 2017) that they were not able to work on it as it was really complicated for them to access information such as audios and videos, as Marta mentioned: "*Gran dificultad con la plataforma, complicado, nunca pudimos*"⁸⁵ (FG2, 2017). One of the researchers was involved as coordinator and could also evidence that some teachers had difficulties using the computer, smartphones, and some of them did not have an email account, which made it much more difficult to use the book platform. They mentioned the need and desire to have more audio and video activities but not through the platform. In addition, they reported that the internet was very slow and sometimes there was no access due to connectivity problems. On top of

⁸⁵ "We had difficulties with the platform, so complicated that we were not able to work with it."

that, the school did not provide a TV or video beam (Evelio, FG2, 2017), therefore, the teacher in charge implemented practical exercises such as flashcards, games, songs and her own video beam to overcome the difficulties faced along the course (Interview, 2018).

Experiences of course learning and their applicability in rural schools

Experiences are facts which affect us and cause effects in our way of being, our thoughts, feelings and desires (Larrosa, 2006). In the case of teaching, experiences help us to have a better understanding of educational realities and provide new possibilities to improve and transform our practice. While participating in a professional development course and implementing what they learnt in their context, rural school teachers' narratives depict topics such as: their new knowledge regarding English Language, the way teachers have been implementing what they studied in the course in the different contexts they work at, and finally, the shortcomings they coped with along these processes as well as suggestions for future professional development courses.

A new way to see English language learning

First of all, teachers manifested to have a great experience in the course in terms of the class atmosphere. Because of this, they learnt to see English language learning from a different perspective; they noticed it was possible to dare to speak English. For instance, they were able to exchange ideas among them in this foreign language. Moreover, they gained confidence with their own process and it definitely contributes to their teaching experiences with students. To

illustrate that, we have the following statement given by some of the participants:

“[...] *Ahorita ya me siento con propiedad, o sea, yo ya sé, y no me da miedo*”⁸⁶ (Sofía FG2, 2017). Beatriz also claimed: “*La fluidez con la que me desenvuelvo y ya entiendo mejor cuando escucho algo en inglés*”⁸⁷ (FG2, 2017). In this regard, Álvaro and Marta stated,

*la manera como se nos presenta el inglés en las clases nos hace darnos cuenta que sí es posible aprenderlo, que podemos hablarlo y enseñarlo bien, toma tiempo y esfuerzo, pero se puede. Ahora ya nos arriesgamos más con la pronunciación y nos corregimos entre nosotros.*⁸⁸

Besides, teachers mentioned they were more confident towards English learning: “*En estos momentos me siento un poco más seguro porque ya le entiendo más a la profe cuando nos habla en inglés [...] He mejorado notablemente mi escritura en inglés y mi léxico ha incrementado, esto me da más seguridad*”⁸⁹ (Interactive technique, 2018). In this sense, they feel empowered as the language they learn in the program and with didactic strategies is now implemented at their schools, giving them confidence when teaching their classes and supporting their kids in the English learning.

These reflections above are linked to what Maturana and Uribe (2018) call a pressure-free environment, in these

⁸⁶ “Right now, I feel confident, now I know and I am not scared.”

⁸⁷ “The fluency that I have now, I understand better when I listen to something in English.”

⁸⁸ “The way the teachers give the English classes makes us realize that it is possible to learn, that we are able to speak and teach it well, it takes time and effort but it is possible. Now we take the risk with the pronunciation and we correct each other.”

⁸⁹ “At this point, I feel much more confident because I understand the teacher when the teacher talks.” (...) “I have improved significantly my writing and my lexical has improved giving me confidence.”

types of professional development courses in which they promote students' participation, motivation, risk taking, self-awareness and a close approach to their process.

From learning to teaching English in rural contexts

Giving teachers the opportunity to be listened to is an opportunity to construct transformations in the teaching of English in rural contexts. "Teachers would be more committed to be agents of their own development if they had more opportunities to say what they need" (González, Montoya & Sierra, 2002 p. 30)

Participants shared a variety of ideas regarding their learning experiences and how these happenings have somehow influenced their teaching practice. The evidence of this process can be clearly seen when they affirm: "*He adquirido estrategias metodológicas que me permiten aprender vocabulario y gramática de una manera más contextualizada, estas estrategias han enriquecido mi labor pedagógica ya que las pongo en práctica con mis estudiantes*"⁹⁰ (Interactive technique, 2018).

In this section we refer to the integration of skills which was a very important fact for elementary school teachers, since they felt that all the skills were covered in the course, having the opportunity to work on writing, reading, listening and speaking giving them confidence and the idea that it is possible to work on all the skills with their school children. Historically, they have been used to working on isolated vocabulary, emphasizing on grammar translation as the core strategy to teach English, leaving pronunciation

⁹⁰ "I have acquired strategies that allow me to learn vocabulary and grammar according to the context, these strategies have enriched my pedagogical exercise as I put them into practice with my students."

aside. These aforementioned practices are based on the lack of teachers' training in English and its teaching methodologies. Talking about this issue, one of the participants commented: "*La práctica y la integración de las habilidades han sido de gran utilidad para poder avanzar en nuestro proceso y poder formarnos de una mejor manera, para poder trabajar con los niños más que vocabulario, la pronunciación, la escritura y la lectura. Un proceso integral con los estudiantes*"⁹¹ (Álvaro, FG2, 2017).

In the same way, teachers found self and peer assessment as useful tools when analyzing their progress and keeping their pace. Teachers took it as a way to have self-growth, as well as a chance to help each other and strengthen their different skills in English. Self and peer assessment is exemplified in the following excerpt:

*Estrategias como la auto-evaluación y la co-evaluación han sido muy enriquecedoras, ya que nos permiten conocer nuestro proceso de aprender inglés. Cuando analizamos nuestro progreso y cuando evaluamos y corregimos al compañero nos damos cuenta de lo que hemos aprendido y de lo que estamos diciendo o escribiendo mal*⁹² (Interactive technique, 2018).

From the experience participants lived along the course, they became aware of the possibility to teach English using different elements distinct to grammar explanations and translations. For example, a significant strategy for teachers was the implementation of music as a way to engage learners in the process, as a means to get closer to English learning and, at the same time, to enjoy the process.

⁹¹ "The practice and the integration of skills have been very useful to advance in our process so we can get better training to work with children more than vocabulary, working the pronunciation, writing and reading."

⁹² "Strategies as self- and peer-assessment enrich the process, as they allow us to know our English learning process. When we analyze our process, assess and correct our classmates, we acknowledge what we have learnt and what we are saying or writing in a wrong way."

Most of the students “love working with English-language songs” (Harmer, 2012, p. 142). Students learn vocabulary, phrases, improve pronunciation, grammar forms, formal and informal language; they also approach cultural elements while having fun (Harmer, 2012). For instance, one of our participants said:

*El uso de la música en la clase de inglés es una estrategia muy efectiva para nosotros y aún más para los niños cuando les doy las clases porque... entonces participan con muchas ganas, aprenden mucho más fácil a través de las canciones*⁹³ (Claudia FG2, 2017).

Teachers pointed out that along the process they had the opportunity to create and adapt materials as part of the course strategies. They affirmed that when we provide students with materials which allow them to contextualize English learning, the classes become more meaningful and students’ progress is more evident. As one interviewee put it:

*Las fichas que nos ha enseñado a hacer la profe me parecen muy acertadas ya que nos permite crear material contextualizado a la cotidianidad de los niños, podemos usar contenido propio de lo que se vive en el contexto rural y esto acerca más el inglés a los niños porque hablan de lo de ellos, de lo local*⁹⁴ (Beatriz, FG2, 2017).

The aforementioned statements are connected with Howard and Major’s (2004) ideas when they establish: “For many teachers, designing or adapting their own materials, enables to

⁹³ “The use of music in English class is an effective strategy for us and for children when we give the classes because [...] then they participate with enthusiasm, learn much easier through songs.”

⁹⁴ “The flashcards that the teacher has taught us have been so accurate as they have allowed us to create contextualized material to the children’s reality, and it brings the English language closer to the children because they talk about their reality, what is local.”

take into account their particular learning environment and to overcome the lack of fit of the coursebook” (p. 101).

This fact was also discussed in previous studies related to teaching English in rural contexts. For example, García and Marín (2015) found that rural school teachers have a big concern regarding the type of materials used to teach that language in rural settings. Teachers express there is a need to take into consideration local practices, lifestyles and vocabulary belonging to rural culture in the sort of materials created for ELT. However, the materials they received are standardized and, in many cases, the information presented has nothing to do with the practices in the rural schools and is just reduced to “instructional information” (Mcgrath, 2013).

This situation depicts an additional challenge for ELT in rural schools, apart from the lack of teachers’ training, the few existing resources given for English teaching do not take into account the particularities and realities.

These results suggest that teachers felt more comfortable and connected with the aforementioned strategies due to their connection with their emotions and their context. Through them, they could see it was possible to get closer to English, to get rid of fears to speak, to enjoy learning and putting new concepts and expressions into a real context.

Challenges and suggestions for future professional development processes

Need of training in Information Communication Technology (ICTs)

Through the different data collection methods, participants talked about the challenges they had to cope with when learning and teaching English. Here we can find some of the most outstanding reflections they shared with us:

With regard to ICT skills literacy, teachers state that it is necessary to manage or be more knowledgeable of a variety of technological tools and devices, because they can provide students with several activities and strategies which can lead them to approach English in a different way. “Teachers recognized that ICT are valuable because they present possibilities for designing a variety of alternative activities which make learning more didactic and dynamic, and that this variety, in turn, catches students’ attention and increases their motivation” (Arias, Buitrago & Pineda, 2011 p. 35).

A clear example of their need to get more training on how to use ICTs is the lack of use of the platform proposed for the English course. As many of them do not manage this tool very well, they did not have access to the platform as reported previously. Consequently, they missed valuable opportunities to keep in touch with English outside the classroom and practice through different exercises topics that they have learned throughout the course. In this regard, it is important to consider different issues when teachers face the use of ICT. For instance, Arias *et. al* (2011) state:

One of the key factors to keep in mind when analyzing teachers’ attitudes towards the use of ICT has to do with their lack of confidence at implementing this type of technology in their classrooms and the limitations they possess in their communicative competence of the language. Some teachers were reluctant to use ICT due to their fear of the unknown. (p. 37).

By way of illustration here we have some reflections given by two participants. One of the teachers said: “*Yo digo que la plataforma está integrada a los procesos del curso, pero nosotros, personalmente no me meto a escuchar porque no tengo*

*el tiempo, no práctico [...] y ahora que esa una sola vez a la semana es muy difícil*⁹⁵ (Marcela FG2). In the same way, another commented: “*A mi sí me parece y que se nos quedó en la plataforma, es complicadito, es complicadita de funcionar y no, nunca la pudimos*”⁹⁶ (Sofía, FG2).

Furthermore, these tools might also make their jobs as English teachers easier because they can make the most of existing materials adaptations to contexts’ needs.

We as teachers in charge of leading professional development courses for other teachers, in many cases, take for granted that they can handle some technological tools and didactic strategies. But it is necessary to read the context and to know the reality before going through the course, for instance, the skills and constraints teachers cope with to provide a more contextualized process so they can have a good performance.

Teachers’ conditions/realities

Most of the teachers expressed their desire to keep strengthening their language proficiency and keep learning ELT methodologies. Nonetheless, there are different factors to consider when continuing this process, for instance, the low level of English they have. Although they had a first approach with the courses offered by the university, it is not enough, and they need to keep working on their learning process but at the same time they should

⁹⁵ “I think she integrates everything, but personally I do not go to the internet to listen because I do not have time, I do not practice and we broaden the little we receive here, and now that the class is only once a week, it is much more difficult.”

⁹⁶ “I think that everything remained in the platform, it is complicated and difficult to work with, we never use it.”

teach the language at the schools. The comment below is an evidence of this reality: “*He sido hasta profesor de inglés en bachillerato por obligación, por necesidad, muy difícil la... pero nadie nadie se arriesgó y me toco a mi arriesgarme y entonces creo que ese momento para mí fue muy difícil porque fue engañar a los muchachos, fue, mm, pero si nadie lo hacía alguien tenía que hacerlo, y ahora sigo haciéndolo, con menos temor pero todavía con muchas falencias*”⁹⁷ (Antonio FG2). Another teacher added: “*Yo veo esos pelaos encarrutados y yo digo qué bacano. Ojalá dictarles a los pelaos algo en inglés de educación física y llegarles a ellos, a mí sí me gustaría mucho hacer eso*”⁹⁸ (Carlos FG2).

Another factor which definitely affects teachers’ English learning process is time. Almost always, teachers have to devote extra time for professional development, but they have some other responsibilities such as family life, and it becomes a hard situation which sometimes leads to being discouraged with the process. Although they are aware it is necessary to spend considerable amounts of time to have a significant process, they have lots of things to do and it becomes a tiring and stressful situation. Similarly, González, Montoya and Sierra (2002) state that professional development processes are affected by the workload teachers have, for example with extracurricular activities. In relation to this, Elvira says:

En mi caso yo por ejemplo no tengo tiempo de llegar a la casa ni de descansar un ratito sino que yo termino con ellos como

⁹⁷ “I have been an English teacher in a high school by demand and need, and it has been very difficult... no one else wanted to take the risk so I had to take the risk, and I think that situation was very difficult for me because it was as if we were cheating the students, but somebody had to do it, and still I’m doing it, less scared but still with many shortcomings.”

⁹⁸ “I see those guys so motivated, and I say, it might be great to teach them some PE topics in English and I would like to do that.”

algo rápido y salgo inmediatamente para coger el bus para llegar acá, acá entonces no tengo como como un espacio para descansar, entonces hay momentos en que uno dice cómo ay que me siento cansada, estoy cansada, pero llega uno acá y ya se le se le pasa (r) como el cansancio uno ya se ríe eemm y pues sí, se hace muy agradable⁹⁹.

This was also evidenced in other statements they shared during the interactive technique: *“El corto tiempo para practicar y repasar que impide un buen ritmo del proceso y por ende no alcanzar adecuados resultados y/o nivel [...] El aprendizaje de otra lengua requiere compromiso”¹⁰⁰.*

Every course created and developed for teachers must consider teachers’ realities, needs, desires, as well as challenges that each context has. Teachers have the classes to give, and on top of that, most of the class planning and grading has to be completed at home. In addition, the teachers have family responsibilities that are affected by the class planning and grading they do at home, so asking them to be part of a teachers’ development course where they have to complete tasks and assignments becomes frustrating for them.

Conclusions

The different constraints evidenced in the Colombian Language Policy concerning teachers’ professional development (PD) have shown the need of proposing and implementing new strategies for training teachers. Examples

⁹⁹ In my case I do not have time to go home and have a rest, but I have to finish work fast so I go immediately to take the bus to be here, so I do not have a chance to rest and sometimes I say “I’m tired” but as soon as I get here, I forget I’m tired, I laugh and the time becomes enjoyable.”

¹⁰⁰ “The short time to practice and review does not allow a good learning pace and, therefore, reaching good results or level is difficult”

of those difficulties when implementing PD have to do with limitations related to the continuity of the programs for elementary and high school teachers (Correa, Montoya & Usma, 2014) and the lack of coverage and inclusion of the particularities of settings such as rural contexts (García & Marín, 2015).

Because of the aforementioned realities, this case study describes a qualitative study in which we report the lived experiences of elementary school teachers about a professional development course (PDC). The course was designed from their particularities and needs as rural school-teachers responsible for teaching English. All the teachers participating in the study have different education training, but they do not have training neither in English nor in methodologies for teaching it.

The analysis of the gathered information allowed us to conclude that teachers found motivation to be part of this course when they changed the negative attitudes, the constraints and a priori judgements they had about learning and teaching English. Besides, it was possible to evidence that the consequence of adapting contents to teachers' suggestions, needs and realities contribute to the creation of effective lessons that participants can apply in their contexts.

Despite the aforementioned results, we found a limitation in terms of the time we could share with our participants of this study because it was, in a certain way, reduced to the data collection procedures. For that reason, we found that our research process could have been closer to our participants, and we invite future researchers to direct those inquiries in which they can have a more participative role within the CPD group in order to have a better understanding of the experiences of the teachers in these types of courses.

As a recommendation, we consider that the people in charge of creating policies related to teacher training should have a closer relationship with those teachers who are affected by those governmental actions, with the duty of implementing them in their classes. In that way, contextualized CPD courses can keep emerging and teachers' teaching practices becoming richer in terms of content and teaching strategies.

Through these types of exercises, we can strengthen the relationship between University and schools to enhance the quality of education in rural settings through academic and empirical knowledge (Jaramillo, 2019).

In the same vein, listening to teachers' voices gives the opportunity to have a better understanding of rural education realities, and to think of more contextualized teaching practices according to their needs, desires and gaps. The intention of this study, rather than gathering data is to reflect and analyze facts teachers revealed in their narratives in order to offer more pertinent proposals for professional development. As Geertz (2000) cited in Franco and Pérez (2019): "*La narrativa entendida no como recopilación de datos sino como comprensión de la realidad social y posibilidad y aproximación a la forma en que los seres humanos experimentamos y significamos el mundo [...]*"¹⁰¹ (p. 270).

¹⁰¹ "The narrative understood not just as compilation of data but as comprehension of the social reality, opportunity and approximation to the way human beings experience and signify the world."

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El presente libro *The Learning and Teaching of English in El Oriente Antioqueño: Some Initial Reflections* es resultado del proyecto de investigación «Critical literacy: from perception to practice in a BA in Foreign Languages» (proyecto n.º 642), financiado por el Sistema de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Universidad Católica de Oriente.

Since the beginning, the program has worked under the main goal of becoming one of the best Teaching Training English Language Programs of the region; working mostly on the language level, pedagogical training, and foreign language teaching methodologies that respond to the needs of our contexts in Colombia and the world. This is what we can call the period “from birth to maturity”. After a renewal of the program and in light of previous experiences, emerging practices, and some requirements from the Ministry of Education, a new period starts, in which the teachers and administrators committed to a self-reflection on the research done until today. Therefore, this book is dedicated only to the English language program where we condensed works presented by students in collaboration with teachers, showing the commitment students and teachers have to the region, to their personal and professional development, as well as to objects of interest in the field of foreign languages.

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