ASSESSMENT ALTERNATIVES WITHIN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This article is the result of an action research project carried out at the Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara School with a group of five trainee teachers and one English teacher. In this paper, I report a research study which aims to show how trainee teachers implement Assessments Alternatives within the English classroom using Task Based Learning (TBL), the changes in the assessment practices and the washback of including learners' needs in the evaluation process. The study showed that trainee teachers used different teachers' roles when administering TBL lessons; it also reveals that assessment practices were influenced by previous learning experiences as learners, so that they had to make decisions spontaneously. And finally the study allowed trainee teachers to be aware of the facts in their practicum.

Resumen

Este artículo es el resultado de una investigación acción desarrollada en la Escuela Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara con un grupo de cinco docentes en formación y su docente de inglés. En este artículo se reporta un estudio investigativo que mostró como los docentes en formación implementaron alternativas de evaluación en las clases de Inglés usando el aprendizaje basado en tareas, los cambios en la evaluación y el impacto que tienen las practicas evaluativas que incluyen las necesidades de los estudiantes . El estudio reveló que las prácticas evaluativas fueron influenciadas por las experiencias de aprendizaje previo y que en consecuencias los docentes en formación deben tomar decisiones en forma espontanea. Finalmente, el estudio permitió que los docentes en formación tomaran conciencia

Key words: Assessment, Alternative Assessment, complementary training program, language awareness, teaching practice.

de las situaciones que se presentan en su práctica pedagógica.

Palabras clave: evaluación, alternativas de evaluación, programa de formación complementaria, conciencia del lenguaje, practica pedagógica.

Introduction

Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara School (ENS) is an Institution located in Chiquinquirá. It offers an educational program based on public education policies. According to PEI (2009, p. 9), its curriculum is articulated with Educative Revolution, established by the Ministry of Education as the model for creating its syllabus. For example, some of the school objectives promote the practice of an evaluative, integral and objective process of learning English, which serves as a motivating way for students to acquire a better commitment and responsibility with their education.

In order to make the practices established at the PEI at Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo (ENS) real, this research project has the following aims: 1) to provide an analysis of the assessment process that are practiced by primary English teachers and trainee teachers at the Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara School (ENS); and by means of this analysis, 2) to decide what type of assessment procedures will better serve the English learning process.

Looking at evaluation changes from recent Ministry of Education decrees, different

perspectives have emerged in teaching practices. In the case of teachers who work in private schools, they follow principals' instructions to value procedures and results with successful students at the end of evaluative practices. This study sees the process and the results as integral parts of alternative assessment. Tutors for Complementary Training Program, as part of the National Policy for Normal Schools, prepare high school students to become teachers. I am the mentor for future primary teachers who need advice on how to improve their practice in the classroom; this has motivated me to research how they perceived the English evaluation as students and now as trainee teachers.

Statement of the Problem

The complementary training program at this school brings a curriculum proposal and study plan consistent with the institutional education project; it is constantly revised to take new decisions, taking into account the training needs of a teacher who teaches at pre-school and basic primary levels. Students in the complementary training program must achieve the objectives and goals proposed to obtain the title of superior primary school teacher. During a period of six

months, the trainee teachers were observed in their teaching practice noticing that they taught English classes but they did not have enough knowledge to teach and evaluate students in English classes. As soon as I received the course of English didactics for third semester trainee teachers, I took the decision of adapting the methodology to suit students' needs to help them have a better performance in pedagogical practice sessions. Future teachers do not have a good basis for assessing English learning.

Teachers have been assessing students, but there are no guidelines on how and what to assess. Tests are seen as the main way to check students' process and progress. Therefore, it is necessary to provide guidance on how tests will be used, to focus on assessing students more than assigning a score. There is a need to include an Integral evaluation system that values students' needs and interests, because all students are different, in other words teachers have to see evaluation with an inclusive view.

Research Setting and Participants

The Context

The participants of this research were five students, who conduct their teaching practicum in different teaching models including Escuela Nueva. These students have been selected using a purposeful selection (Light et al., 1990, p.53), in other terms purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990, p. 169) and criterion- based selection (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993, p. 69) cited by Maxwell (2005) as a strategy in which particular settings, persons or activities are

selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be obtained as well from other choices. They were selected because they represent each one of the students' roles that the Complementary Training Program has. Also, the purpose of selecting these five students is to obtain enough information from different views in a significant way. Trainee teachers belonged to the Complementary Training Program in a public school. They enrolled in their English teaching practicum in first semester, but they began English teaching practices in second semester, and they spent one day per week in the teaching practicum. Throughout the practicum day, they taught one hour of English in primary grades. Their previous pedagogical preparation included two semesters of English, and some concepts provided in pedagogy and psychology classes. To develop their knowledge in English they received at least five or six years of English in high school. They attend three hours (60 minute hours) of English classes and Didactics throughout the week, from Monday to Friday. The teaching practicum took place at five headquarters; 3 of these had large classes with 30 to 40 students in each classroom. The two other headquarters had small classes with 15 to 20 students. These places had limited resources. The researcher asked participants to fill in a small questionnaire in Spanish to elicit information about background information, the reasons for enrolling in the Complementary training program and their training for teaching English classes at primary levels (See Appendix 1).

A second questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was used to elicit information from trainee

teachers about teaching English classes. This source indicated that students in fifth grade felt enthusiastic to learn English and they expected to have English classes because they wanted to learn new things. Trainee teachers counted on the support of the school mentor and the school's cooperating teachers. There were five cooperating teachers; their ages ranged between forty five to sixty years old. There were four women and one man. They had specializations in various pedagogical fields, but no one had specific training in English. The five teachers at the schools had basic levels of English. For this reason, they preferred trainee teachers to teach English classes.

Theoretical Framework

Since this study focuss on the conception of evaluation through alternative assessment applied to a group of five students of the Complementary Training Program, the following concepts are considered below: 1) the definition of evaluation and assessment, 2) the relationship between critical applied linguistics and evaluation, 3) complementary training program, and 4) needs of the learners.

1. Defining Assessment and Evaluation

Formative classroom assessment gives teachers information for making decisions and providing students with information for improvement. Lineamientos Curriculares (2000, 19) claims that assessment and evaluation are two relative concepts with the same meaning in Spanish, although in this project I decide to distinguish both concepts. Evaluation can be defined as a "systematic

gathering of information in order to make a decision" (Davies et al., 1999, p. 56). Evaluation is seen as a complex process not only because it implies a structure and a sequence of stages, but also because it demands a lot of time from the teacher. Evaluation uses quantitative methods (e.g. testing), qualitative methods (e.g., observation, ratings) and value judgments. In language planning, evaluation frequently involves gathering information on patterns of language use, language ability, and attitudes towards language. This project is focused on both informal assessment, with observations, and formal assessment, with testing.

Stages and Types of Evaluations

According to the Colombian Ministry of Education, there are three different stages of evaluation. The first initial evaluation is a diagnosis in which teachers ask about learners' needs and characteristics. Also, it can be used to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses. A second evaluation of the process or formative assessment which is the use of instruments and procedures to follow and control student's learning process, by means of guiding students in the right moment and helping them to overcome their weaknesses. Hughes (2008, p.5) points out that assessment is formative when teachers use it to check on the progress of their students, to see how far they have mastered what they should have learned, and then use this information to modify their future teaching plans. Decisions made by trainee teachers throughout this research were based on the analysis of the formative assessment. And third evaluation of the results is the final summative

assessment; it uses grades to express the result at the end of a term, semester or a year in order to measure what has been achieved both by groups and by individuals.

Assessment

The expanding concept in the definition of formative assessment is summarized with information about the learning process (Black & William, 1998a, 1998b; Brookhart, 1997a, 1997b; Crooks, 1988; Natriello, 1987) as the information about pupils' progress on components of learning that teachers can use for instructional decisions and students can use for improving their performance and at the same time increase students' motivation. At this point, it is important to make a connection between formative and summative assessment, since the Ministry of Education is asking for results in regards to students' grades. Crooks (1988) asked whether the view of formative and summative assessment depends on the teachers and students, probably in our settings most of the students are interested in grades. This project looks for an agreement between teachers and students' needs when applying assessment.

2. Relationship between Critical Applied Linguistics and Evaluation

English Language Teaching is based on contextual concerns (environment role or number of students), issues of class (number of English classes per day/week or teaching strategies), inequality, race, gender, power or identity. All of these aspects, put into our praxis, provide issues in language research, due to the fact that they imply a display of concerns focused on

three main features, which also constitute critical approaches (Pennycook, 1999).

Applied Linguistics is the discipline that tends to see how linguistics work in an Educational environment beyond the analysis of the language structures (proper of Linguistics). As teachers, we can extend our vision of students' behavior towards language, by using all the critical approaches that applied linguistics offers. To illustrate this point, I would like to mention Davies and Elder (2006), whose position about the relationship between applied linguistics and the teaching practice is as follows: "We distinguish linguistics and applied linguistics in terms of orientation. While Linguistics is primarily concerned with language in itself and with language problems in so far as they provide evidence for better language description or for teaching a linguistic theory, applied linguistics is interested in language problems because they reveal the role of language in people daily lives and whether intervention is either possible or desirable" (pp. 11-12).

In teachers' praxis, this means to be concerned with the context or institutions, as schools, which implies that teachers have to be aware of the need of seeing things with a critical view.

The connection between applied linguistics and critical applied linguistics is evident when some of the applied linguistic tasks are to develop more suitable and accurate ways of judging the level of attainment of learners, and of judging how successful teaching program and projects are (this vision in terms of assessment and evaluation and it will be my last point). On

the other hand, critical applied linguistics appears as the contextualization of applied linguistics using a critical view. This view has a basis in the work of Pennycook (1999), and from his proposal I articulate two domains as suitable for framing my research: the first domain is Critical Approach to language education, which attempts to relate aspects of language education to a broader critical analysis of social relations, "turn our eyes to facts in practice" (Pennycook, 1999). Gee (2004), for example, argues how language learning is not a mental thing, but a type of social interaction in which knowledge is distributed across people, their tools and technologies. This process of interacting, as he argues, is a type of community practice, in which as teachers, we have to observe with critical eyes, based on classes build over democratic participation and the respect of differences.

The second domain is Critical Language Testing, which implies the need to develop critical strategies to examine the uses and consequences of tests, to monitor the power of teachers. Apart from this, I would like to present a complete table taken from Pennycook (2001, p. 11) who discusses concerns of critical applied linguistics.

I focused my reflection on evaluation taking into account language teaching with some concerns of critical applied linguistics above based on the daily routine of assessing and testing. I prefer to think that teachers are integrating their practices in a coherent way; also, that they are critical beings who are engaged with social change; at the same time English teachers who ask themselves questions about how they manage inequality or injustice in their classrooms; and finally to see if they are constantly questioning themselves as teachers too, with regards to their strengths and weaknesses, not only to the assessment or testing of students, but also to their own work.

3. Complementary Training

The complementary training program at Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara school is incorporated into the institutional and educative project and follows the educational principles proposed by the Colombian National Ministry of Education (MEN) in decree 4790, adopted on December 19th, 2008. The school is in charge of preparing future primary school teachers. This preparation is done by means of four academic semesters which include training in Basic areas; Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Spanish and physical education; also they place emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English as a foreign language.

4. Learners' Needs

It is necessary that all of us, as teachers, begin to see our students as individuals because in order to have success in English learning, we need to know their similarities as well as their differences. Tomlinson (2000) claims in her proposal about differentiated classrooms, that the teacher is well aware that human beings share the same basic needs for nourishment, shelter, safety, belonging, achievement, contribution, and fulfillment. Teachers who are able to recognize that an assessment is not just a process at the end of term are able to modify

their teaching practice every day. ELT inno-vation projects involve student needs, cur-riculum development (including evaluation), teacher learning, student leaning and ELT management learning. Taking into account the concepts of needs in different settings, Waters & Vilches (2001, p, 2-10) proposed an innovation of an implementation of needs hierarchically arranged in four levels, to which teachers based their future decisions in terms of teaching.

Research Methodology

This is an Action Research study because it is the process of studying a real school situation in order to understand and improve the quality of action or instruction (Johnson, 2002). Also, it is a systematic and orderly way for teachers to observe their practice or to explore a problem and a possible course of action (Johnson, 2002). Action research is also a type of inquiry that is preplanned, organized and can be shared with others. Also, as a qualitative study, it gathers useful data and interprets it through description and analysis (Burns, 2003). At the same time, it does not seek to generalize beyond the research context of ENS because it centers on the processes and on the outcomes of research.

Also, this research is considered a qualitative study; as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state, this kind of research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Cresswell (1994) defines it as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. As a researcher, I build a complex, holistic picture, analyze words, report

detailed views of trainee teachers, and conduct the study in a natural setting of primary level at ENS.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to tackle this situation, I applied an interview designed to determine teachers (primary teachers) and trainee teachers' (complementary training students) perceptions about evaluations and samples of tests to show what and how teachers are evaluating, and how these practices are being done to provide a model to be used by mentees.

I used interviews as the first way to gather information. I interviewed the participants after applying the lesson plan. They came back to the school the next day, we sat in a comfortable place and they told me about their experiences in relation to the different methods of Alternative Assessment that they were using. Each interview was 15 minutes long, and recorded all the vital information, including non-verbal. Macintyre (2000, p. 85) suggests that the interview is a face to face interaction which allows the interviewer to ask carefully prepared questions, and in addition to probe the respondents so that further information is obtained. Through this instrument, the researcher could record assessments of strength of feeling and reluctance to reply. This method serves as a data to support the idea of focusing my research in assessment. Hopkins (2002) argues that interviews help teachers to focus on a specific aspect of teaching or classroom life in detail, in this case to determine teachers' perceptions about their experiences in evaluating students. The

interviews were done in Spanish because trainee teachers weren't bilingual and they felt more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue. I applied non-structured interviews, which allowed a friendly talk with students (Seliger & Shohamy, 1990). I recorded their answers, taking notes after our conversation. I designed one interview for a group of students who attended participants' classes, to elicit information about the achievements of goals of authentic assessment in their classroom based on O'Malley and Valdez (1996), in their document authentic Assessment for English Language Learners(See Appendix 3). I designed a second interview for trainee teachers, to elicit information about the different methods of Alternative Assessment applied during the lessons. I recorded participants' answers in one talk with each participant for a total of five audio recordings (See Appendix 4).

Ten samples of tests were selected to show what and how teachers were evaluating and how these practices were being done to provide changes in assessment practices. Trainee teachers presented a total of ten samples of tests used in English classes. Matching exercises and 'Fill in the blanks' were the most common forms of evaluation. Matching is a type of selected response assessment which for them is quick to administer. Brown and Hudson (1998, p. 659) claim that this form of assessment allows students to choose the correct answer from among a limited set of options. Trainee teachers preferred to use Matching exercises to measure students' abilities to associate one set of items with another. 'Fill in the blanks', according to Brown and Hudson (1998, p. 661), is a type

of constructed-response assessment which give a language context with part of the context removed and replaced with a blank. Trainee teachers preferred to use 'fill in the blanks' because they are easy to construct and quick to administer. I decided to use a sample of a test to help me answer the first sub question related to the changes in assessment practices at Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara School.

I observed each trainee teacher in 60 minute lessons using video recording. Each trainee teacher developed one lesson at a headquarter located in different places of the city. I collected five observation forms totaling 30 pages of filled notes (See Appendix 6). Observation from video recording is a way to analyze the performance of trainee teachers. Day (1990:43), in Richards (1998), argues that classroom observation has as goals: developing terminology for understanding and discussing the teaching process; developing an awareness of the principles and decision making that underlie effective teaching; distinguishing between effective and ineffective classroom practices and identifying techniques and practices that trainee teachers can apply to their own teaching. In this research, observation is based on the alternative of assessment used by each trainee teacher, also in terms of Brown's Main Conceptions about Assessment: Accountability of schools, Improvement of teaching and learning, Certification of students' learning and Irrelevance to the work of teachers and students' learning. In order to record my observation, I filmed lessons and I took ethnographic field notes (Pentimalli, 2005), and paid special attention to the previous aspects.

By means of help and support in the trainee teachers' practicum, I followed a reflective approach, which means teachers and trainee teachers collected data about teaching, examined their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and used the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p.1). When a mentor guides one trainee teacher, it cannot be based on prescription but on supporting their engagement in a critical thinking process to analyze their own practices in search for solutions to difficulties and doubts (Barlett, 1990; Pollard & Tann, 1993; Rodgers, 2002).

A reflective journal for this research was developed by keeping a record of the assessment experiences when trainee teachers taught a lesson. The researcher spent half an hour reflecting about the participant's practicum after each lesson; to do that I retrieved the information in a reflective journal, because it helped to document the study with real samples and experiences. Also, a reflective journal allowed the researcher to ask herself about what was really happening during the pedagogical intervention.

The Pedagogical Proposal

Trainee teachers of ENS only take three hours of English classes, which is not enough time to master the language and meet the current government policies regarding second language proficiency. In regards to the evaluation processes at school, they must be redefined to improve learning and teaching, because most of the students fail the English classes. After conducting the interview (See appendix 2),

the results showed that future teachers do not have a good basis for assessing English learning.

Also, they believe that tests are seen as the main way to check students' process and progress. It is necessary to provide guidance on how tests are used, and to focus on assessing students more than assigning a score. There is a need to include an Integral evaluation that values students' needs because each student is different, in other words teachers have to see evaluation with an inclusive view. As the question that guides this research project is how students implement the different assessment alternatives in the English classroom, the main objective of the pedagogical proposal must be getting familiar with different alternative assessments.

Through the development of the units in this pedagogical intervention, trainee teachers will be able to get familiar with different Alternative Assessment, reflect on each one of them and decide how they can assess their elementary school students. To design the pedagogical intervention, five alternatives of assessment were selected: oral interview, story or tell retelling, project, constructed-response item and written samples.

In this pedagogical intervention, Task based Instruction that belongs to the Communicative Learning Approaches is going to be used to design lessons. TBL helps teachers to transfer activities into the real world. A task is an activity "where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (Willis, 2004). It also truly develops communication. Willis (2004) argues that

there are three basic premises for TBL, in which teachers must agree:1) Language learning does not proceed in a linear additive fashion, but is a complex organic process (Long 1985a; Lightbown 2000).2) In other words, teaching a discrete language item does not lead to immediate mastery of that item. "Language form is best learned when the learners' attention is on meaning" (Prabbu 1982, cited in Brumfit 1984, 234).3) 3) In addition to exposure, learners need opportunities to use the target language for a real purpose in order to learn it (Swain 1985; Swain and Lapkin 2001). This is sometimes referred to as the "Output Hypothesis".

The lessons have been designed upon the conception that teacher development is to identify certain aspects to be reflected on in the learning and teaching process. This in turn, allows teachers to grow in 'confidence', 'creativity', 'flexibility', and 'self-esteem' to respond to the actual needs and wants of their learners and simultaneously gain expertise as text developers (Tomlinson and Rinvolucri, 2003). In this proposal, students' needs are being taken into account in order to improve the teaching and learning.

The idea of evaluation as a tool for assessing students rather than measuring knowledge is the main assumption I would like to develop along this intervention. Through a task, teachers make students interpret, interact, share and produce something in the target language. Lee (2000), pointed out that a task is: 1. A classroom activity or exercise that has: (a) an objective obtainable only by the interaction of the participants, (b) a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction and (c) a focus on meaning exchange; 2. A language endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of work plans. To start with the task framework, I decided to develop five lessons based on some topics (My personality, warnings, my body, my feelings and my daily routine) taken from the syllabus proposed by the school, by means of exploring the components of the TBL. Therefore, I developed a task cycle with the following procedure: pre task, task cycle planning language focus analysis and practice.

Findings

Table 1 shows the presentation of the categories following the order of the research questions. The first and second categories and their subcategories are connected to the main question. They revealed which roles trainee teachers have to adopt when they apply the lesson. The third category reveals a connection with students' concerns; it shows two different sub categories that answer the first subquestion. The final category reveals one subcategory that is the reflection of the researcher.

Table 1. Summary of findings

QUESTION AND SUBQUESTION	CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
Research question: How do trainee teachers implement the different assessment alternatives in the English classroom using TBL?	I. Using teaching and learning to suit students' needs.	A. Using specific teachers' roles B. Being a material designer and a time keeper
	II. Improvement of the assessment practices within the English classes	A. Assessment influenced by previous experiences as learners B. Making decisions on the way
Sub questions: What changes, if any, have been evidenced in the assessment practices at Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara?	III. Helping students to overcome barriers	A. Raising students' motivation B. Becoming aware of the importance of English class.
What is the washback of including learners' needs in the evaluation process at Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara?	IV. Reflect on contextual concerns	A. Making trainee teachers aware of the facts in practice

Using Teaching and Learning to Meet Students' Needs

This first category emerged from the analysis of different instruments and it answered the main question posed in this research: How do trainee teachers implement the different assessment alternatives in the English classroom using TBL?

Using Specific Teachers' Roles

From the interviews (NSI), I found that trainee teachers use specific teachers' roles. After developing the lesson, students recognized that they have to play different roles according to the different teaching and learning situations they encounter. This can

be seen in the response from Trainee teacher 2:

Trainee Teacher 1: [Takes some time to organize the classroom and to set drawings to create a mural] Pay attention and sit down.

Student: "Teacher, tan bonitos esos dibujos nosotros solo tenemos de esos cuando usted viene… me los presta?" [Teacher, what beautiful pictures we only have these kinds of pictures when you come here… Can you lend me these?]

Teacher trainee 1: [Loud talking as she tries to begin the class] Well, sit down and listen to me. Yo les voy a seguir trayendo materiales si ponen atención y

desarrollan la actividad. [I am going to bring more materials if you pay attention and develop the activity] (TOV)

"En mi sede no hay suficientes recursos o materiales disponibles… para que un proceso evaluativo tenga éxito se deben tener los recursos adecuados" (There are not enough resources or materials available in my school…we need appropriate resources for an assessment process to be successful NSI)".

As trainee teachers were aware that students in different settings had several needs, they made decisions on the foundation building level (Waters & Vilches 2001, pp. 2-10), they suited students' needs assuming different roles in order to realize the goals of the lessons (NRJ).

Being a Material Designer and a Time Keeper

From the observations, I noticed that the conditions of rural schools were not adequate. Then, trainee teachers assumed different roles in order to develop the lessons and to assess students in a formative way. The following interaction in the classroom supports this subcategory:

Trainee teachers learned to manage the time appropriately, since they had to teach sixty minute English classes. It is mandatory that students receive one hour per week of English class, for this reason trainee teachers must schedule each class to achieve the goals. The following answers from interviews support this subcategory:

Teacher trainee 2: "Medir el tiempo a los

estudiantes es importante, si no lo hago se acaba la clase y no hemos hecho nada (Timing is important, if I don't do that the class is over and we don't do anything NSI)".

Teacher trainee 3: "En mi segunda clase me gaste mucho tiempo organizando el grupo, cuando me dí cuenta… no me quedaban sino cuarenta minutos. (In my second class I spent a lot of time organizing the class when I realized that… I had just forty minutes)."

Improvement of the Assessment Practices within the English Classes

The participants came from the traditional evaluation model; they agreed that assessment practices were designed for the results, so that the five different alternatives displayed during the lessons allowed them to see the results and the process. The second finding answers the main question posed in this research and it can be seen in the following evidences:

Trainee teacher 4: You are going to listen to the description of a famous person. [She brings the text to the students]

Student: Teacher, tenemos que leer o solo la escuchamos, con la profesora siempre ella es la que lee [Teacher, Do we have to read or just listen to?... the other teacher [cooperating teacher]she always reads]

Trainee teacher 4: Mira la idea es que todos participemos, Tú quieres aprender? [Look, the idea is that everyone participates in the activity, Do you want to learn?]

Student: Yes, teacher.

Teacher'trainee 4: Entonces, vamos a elegir a dos voluntarios [Then, we will chose two volunteers](TVO from first lesson when the Alternative Assessment used was oral interviews)

Brown & Hudson (1998 p, 653-654) cited that alternative assessment must be characterized by using real-world contexts or simulations and focusing on processes as well as products. When trainee teachers encourage students and allow students to perform, create, produce and make the learning process, this guarantees the enhancement of both participants. Two different subcategories were found along the data analysis; the first one is related to the influence of trainee teachers' previous experience when they assess students, which shapes the way they faced situations into the classroom. The second is the ability to make spontaneous decisions along the way in the English class.

Assessment Influenced by Previous Experiences as Learners

One of the motivations of this study is to show different methods of Alternative Assessment to trainee teachers, because they tended to reproduce the same assessment model they received when they were students. Richards and Lockhart (1994) and Farrell (2007) argued that pre-service or in service teachers' practices are influenced by previous experiences as learners. The following extracts from interviews revealed the way in which trainee teachers are influenced by their experiences as learners:

Trainee teacher 5: "Yo pensaba que evaluar en inglés era repetir muchas veces las mismas palabras y así se aprendían, lo que sucede es que yo aprendí de esa manera. Luego de desarrollar un proyecto escrito con los estudiantes noté que ellos sí son capaces de desarrollar diferentes actividades que los retan a usar inglés en todo [I used to think that assessment in English was drilling several times, so that I learnt them, I learnt in that way. After developing a written project with the students I realized that they were able to develop different activities to challenge them to use English NSI]."

Trainee teacher 2: "Yo fui evaluada según el número de páginas o copias llenaba en clase. Sucede que mi maestra se interesaba por la cantidad y no por la calidad del trabajo. Cuando hice la clase usando test de opción múltiple, los niños se motivaron pues no era común usar este tipo de prueba [I was evaluated according to the number of pages I filled in class. My teacher was interested in the quantity not the quality of my work. When I did the lesson using a constructed-response item, children were motivated because it wasn't common to use them NSI]."

Making Decisions on the Way

During this study I collected some samples of tests to analyze how trainee teachers design and apply tests or assessment practices (See appendix 5) within the classroom. I concluded that they prefer to use matching exercises or 'fill in the blanks' as the main form of assessment because

these kinds of alternatives demand less time to be graded. After developing the lessons, students had different options to learn and trainee teachers had a wide view of the assessment process. Next, the following evidences show what trainee teachers reveal about making decisions on the track in terms of assessment:

"After three lessons, the participants understood that they have to adapt the lessons to each context, in one case the time assigned to the story telling was not enough, and then the trainee made decisions to give more time and to let students take advantages from the assessment (NRJ)".

"Providing constant feedback to students can improve their performance. When students developed the project about family professions, they expressed how they felt about parents' jobs. This grade showed disrespect to each other family, because there were children without parents and they had not had too much to tell to their classmates… in some cases children laughed at them. The feedback provided in this case was around the need to listen to the others and to respect the differences (NRJ)."

According to O'Malley & Valdez (1996 p, 17), the result of effective assessment is to improve teaching and learning, in all aspects of the teacher's and students' lives. However, at the same time there is a need to use summative assessments that are related to the formal skills such as the control of grammar, spelling, pronunciation, and so forth. These are traditionally assessed by a teacher using summative tests while the communicative ability may be more difficult to appraise (Bachman, 1990).

"Es más fácil evaluar los escritos de los niños que evaluarlos en diálogos, creo que la parte comunicativa nos exige mayor preparación a los docentes, sin embargo a los niños solo les interesa cuanto sacaron. [It is easier to evaluate writing than speaking. I believe that the communicative part demands better training, although children are interested only in the grades (NSI)]."

Helping Students to Overcome Barriers

The third category answers the following sub question: What changes (if any) are evident in the assessment practices at Normal Superior Sor Josefa del Castillo y Guevara School? One of the obstacles in English classes is the lack of motivation to learn English caused by lessons which lack coherent assessment practices or even feedback because the cooperating teacher does not have the training needed to evaluate in English. The following evidences support the previous issues:

Raising Students' Motivation

Alternative Assessment (Black & William, 1998a, 1998b; Brookhart, 1997a, 1997b; Crooks, 1988; Natriello, 1987) provides the information about pupils' progress on components of learning that teachers can use for instructional decisions and students can use for improving their performance, and at the same time attain students' motivation.

Trainee teacher 1: "A los niños aún les

cuesta pasar al frente … por lo tanto es necesario dejarlos tomar sus propias decisiones frente a con quien quieren trabajar, así se motivan para la clase. [Students still feel afraid to pass in front of the class … that is why it is necessary to let them to make their own decisions about who they want to work with, and then they feel motivated in classes NSI]."

Becoming Aware of the Importance of English Class

Children recognize that English is important for their future studies in High school, and they feel they are being challenged to learn it.

> Trainee teacher 2: "Mis alumnos creen que esta materia es muy importante y por ello se esfuerzan por dar lo mejor aun cuando solo tengan una hora de clase a la semana. [My students think that this subject is very important and for that reason they tried very hard even if they attend only one hour of English class per week (NSI)]."

> Trainee teacher 4: "Es una responsa-bilidad de los docentes en formación hacer que desde los niños se valore esta área y se mejoren las recticas de enseñanza. [It is a trainee teacher's responsibility to make children value the English area and improve the teaching practicum (NSI)]."

Reflection on Contextual Concerns

The final category relates to the contextual concerns of the teaching practicum, the methods of Alternative Assessment that can be used in different settings, and the most important thing is the constant reflection around the evaluation process. This category answers the following question: What is the washback of including learners' needs in the evaluation process? Washback in this study means the assessment procedures with the course goals of the lessons and the reflection that is generated around it. Rodgers (2002) distills one important aspect of Dewey's view of reflection: each new experience helps "to prepare him [the child] for the future life means to give him command of himself." It means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities. The following subcategory showed that each trainee teacher learnt something useful for their future teaching life from the reflection of their practicum:

Making Trainee Teachers Aware of the Facts in Practice

> Trainee teacher 1: "La evaluación constante y significativa permite que el estudiante se sienta valorado y un ser vital en la clase. Los docentes tenemos que valorar todos los esfuerzos que hacen los estudiantes por aprender. [Constant and meaningful assessment lets students feel valued and important in the classes. Teachers have to value every effort to learn from students (NSI)]."

> Trainee teacher 2: "Vamos a seguir las instrucciones de la guía y todos completaran la guía con su propia información. [Let's follow the guide instructions and all of you will complete the guide with your own information]."

Student: "Teacher, Osea, ¿qué hoy no nos va a hacer previa? [Teacher, that means , today we are not going to have a test?]."

Trainee teacher 2: "No todas las veces será una previa, hoy yo ya los he evaluado durante toda la clase. [No, every time you will have a test. Today I have evaluated you during the whole class] (TOV)."

Trainee teacher 5: "Algunas veces uno siente que no puede evaluar en su totalidad el tema de la clase, por eso es necesario prepararnos muy bien para cada clase. [Sometimes I feel that I cannot evaluate as a whole the topic of the class, then it is necessary to prepare each class very well (NSI)]."

With this category, trainee teachers see themselves as critical beings because they question not only their practicum but also the way in which they administer and judge students' performance.

Conclusions

The implications of the study results regarding assessment in the classroom in the school contexts speak for an early introduction of different methods of Alternative Assessment and the redesign of the syllabus for the Complementary Training Program at Normal School. Assessment must be useful for improving instruction and for the institution's accountability.

Involving students in communicative and meaningful tasks that they feel are closely related to their lives, such as a life project,

family life, nature and expressing opinions, are highly formative. Giving direct feedback to students in class as well as self-assessment allows students to improve in their performance.

Trainee teachers and cooperating teachers reflect on teacher roles because they must adapt their behavior to the context in which they work. There is a need to change cooperating teachers' beliefs about English assessment to include alternatives that are different from the traditional test. The collaboration between cooperating teachers and trainee teachers could provide enrichment for both parties in the professional development of the complementary training program.

Alternative assessment can be discussed between students and teachers, in that sense both views are taken into account. For assessment to be reliable, teachers must use scoring rubrics. In terms of validity, assessment must be clear with the test scores and their interpretations. The interactivity in this study was evident because students know in advance exactly what they had to do. Finally, in terms of practicality trainee teachers use the resources available and adapt others to ensure that students were appropriately assessed.

Implications for Future Research

The results of the study may motivate further research. More work needs to be done on the assessment alternatives within the English classroom to see if the results are replicated or if there are new results; For example, additional analysis of the uses and

consequences of Alternative Assessment in primary school. The student's beliefs around English assessment can be investigated. A deeper analysis of teachers' role as designers of Alternative Assessment methods can also be conducted.

As the quality of English teaching of Primary and preschool scholars are in the trainee teachers' hands, it would have been interesting to investigate further if they have enough training at the end of the University degree to evaluate those children. The present study is the first step to see the English class of the Complementary Training program of the Normal School; it would be useful to replicate it at other normal schools around the country.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire about Trainee teachers' background information

Date:_____
Gender: Female____   Male:____

1. Where do you live?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been at this school?
4. Do you want to study at Complementary training by your own?
5. How is your English level now?
6. How are you trained for teaching English classes?
7. Where does your teaching practicum take place?
8. How many students do you have at your teaching practicum?

*Questions were asked in Spanish and translated into English for the purpose of this research.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire about trainee teachers' classes

Grade:
Number of students:
Boys   Girls
Range of ages:

How do your students feel about English classes?
Do your students want to learn English?
How have your students been evaluated in their English classes?
Is it difficult for you to plan and design assessment for English classes?

*Questions were asked in Spanish and translated into English for the purpose of this research.

Appendix 3. Sample of questions asked to trainee teachers' students during the non-structured interview

1. Do you like English classes? (¿Te gustan las clases de inglés?)
2. What do you think about English evaluation? (¿Qué piensas acerca de la evaluación en las clases de inglés?)
3. Do you receive information about scoring criteria before applying an evaluation?
   (Recibes información acerca de los criterios de calificación antes de presentar un evaluación?
4. Do you have the time required to develop evaluation? (Tienes el tiempo necesario para desarrollar evaluaciones)
5. How would you suggest that you and other students prepare for this kind of test?
   (¿Cómo sugerirías que tú y tus compañeros se prepararan para este tipo de evaluaciones?)

*Questions were asked in Spanish and translated into English for the purpose of this research.

Appendix 4. Questions asked to trainee teachers after each lesson during the non-structured interview

1. How do you perceive the assessment during your English classes?
2. Which Alternative Assessment methods do you use in your English class?
3. Have the Alternative Assessment methods worked?
4. Why do you think this has been so?
5. Do you define levels of student performance?
6. Do you find Alternative Assessment difficult to use? Why?
7. Do you give students feedback about their performance?
8. Do you share your assessment strategies with other trainee teachers?

Appendix 5. Alternative assessment lesson

TASK BASED UNIT N.1 TOPIC: MY PERSONALITY
COMUNICATIVE GOALS:
At the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Learn certain vocabulary in depth.
2. Talk about themselves and their personality.

LINGUISTIC GOALS:
To review the simple present tense, to practice some adjectives and to learn vocabulary about personality.
Nivel: Básica Primaria Grado 4 y 5 básico 1 (A 2.1)

STANDARDS:
Sigo y doy instrucciones básicas cuando participo en juegos conocidos.
Mantengo una conversación simple en inglés con un compañero cuando desarrollo una actividad de aula.
Pregunto y respondo sobre las características físicas de objetos familiares.
Time: 120 minutes

SKILL DEVELOPMENT: Listening and Speaking

ALERNATIVE OF ASSESSMENT: Oral Interview

KEY VOCABULARY: Physical appearance adjectives: tall, short, thin, fat, blond hair, black hair and spiky hair, young, old. (Adjetivos de apariencia física: alto, bajito, gordo, Delgado, caballo rubio, cabello negro, cabello en puntas, joven , Viejo)
Personality: talkative, old-fashioned, elegant, disorganized, angry, furious, scared, patient, impatient, rough, rich, romantic, creative, brave, funny, tired (Personalidad: Charlatan, anticuado, elegante, desorganizado, malgeniado, furioso, asustadiso, paciente, empaciente, brusco, rico, romantico, valiente, chistoso, cansado)

THE LESSON: PRE-TASK
Teacher introduces the task by using Classifying. Teacher presents the vocabulary on the board and shows the examples by pointing out to some students and using a poster. Define two categories Physical appearance and personality; students have to classify them in the correct group.

TASK CYCLE
Put up a poster and point to people with the correct adjectives.
Play the audio track for Students to hear personality adjectives.
Students pass in front of the class and point to the adjectives asked by the Teacher.

PLANNING
Tell students that they will hear a CD. Play the audio and then invite students to imitate the characteristics they are listening to.

REPORT: A MURAL
Students will make groups and they will be assigned a person with a specific personality in order for them to draw and color it. Then, the students will tape their drawings on the board. After that, the students will be asked to close their eyes as the teacher removes a drawing. The first student to guess which person was removed by asking: What does he/she like? Will go to the mural and will remove another drawing. This activity will continue until all drawings have been removed from the mural.

PRESENTATION
Teacher will tell students to listen and write the number of the characteristics they hear in the box next to its picture. Also teacher will point out the number 1 by the tall and explain that the first one has been done for students. Play the audio, pausing for students to write.

PRESENTATION STAGE
Listen and write the number of the characteristics in the box next to the picture.
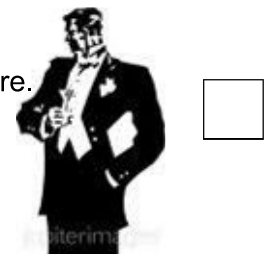
LANGUAGE FOCUS
Teacher will present a short interview describing
a specific character:
S1: What is your name?
S2: My name is Juanes.
S1: Where are you from?
S2: I am from Colombia.
S1: Can you describe your physical
      appearance?
S2: I am tall and thin. I have spiky hair.
S1: Can you describe your personality.
S2: I am creative, romantic and funny.
S1: What's your mother like?
S2: She's very patient and elegant.
S1: thanks Juanes.
S2: You're welcome.
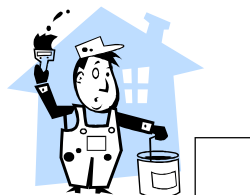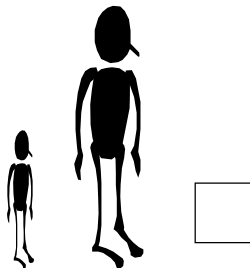
Students ask and answer questions follow the interview model in pairs.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT:
Students will prepare a short oral interview following the above model.

EXTRA CLASS ACTIVITY:
The students will receive a copy with the pictures vocabulary; they will read, match and write.