



TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT: ISOLATED PRACTICES?

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Abstract

The tendency of some EFL pre-service and in-service teachers is to teach a lesson without considering their underlying concepts of language and how they relate to their teaching, learning and assessment practices. Likewise, curricular changes and design take place at different level educational institutions where “a lack of connection among goals, objectives, time, methodology, programs, materials, evaluation” is evidenced. (Ortiz, Camelo, Martín, Sarmiento, Ruiz, 2006:14). Therefore, it is important to make in-service and pre-service teachers, teacher administrators and teacher trainers aware of the necessity of developing an understanding of concepts like “belief” and “language. This paper discusses these issues in the light of my teacher educator experience in Applied Linguistics and EFL Methods courses for undergraduate and

Resumen

La tendencia de algunos docentes en ejercicio y de algunos en formación es enseñar una lección sin considerar cuál es el concepto de lengua/lenguaje que tienen y cómo este se relaciona con sus prácticas de enseñanza, aprendizaje y evaluación. Igualmente, los cambios y diseños curriculares que se llevan a cabo en instituciones educativas de diversos niveles evidencian: “una falta de conexión entre las metas, los objetivos, el tiempo, la metodología, los programas, los materiales, la evaluación” (Ortiz, Camelo, Martín, Sarmiento, Ruiz, 2006:14). Por lo tanto, es importante concienciar a los docentes en ejercicio, los docentes en formación, los administradores de docentes y los formadores de docentes acerca de la necesidad de ser coherente al enseñar una lengua extranjera. Esa coherencia implica desarrollar una comprensión de conceptos como “creencia” y “lengua/lenguaje Este artículo preten-

graduate levels respectively in 2010 and 2011 at a public university.

Key words: belief, language, discourse, ideology, teaching, learning, assessment.

de discutir los aspectos mencionados anteriormente considerando mi experiencia en los cursos de Lingüística Aplicada y Métodos de enseñanza orientados en los niveles de pregrado y posgrado respectivamente, en el 2010 y 2011.

Palabras clave: creencia, lengua-lenguaje, discurso, ideología, enseñanza, aprendizaje, valoración-evaluación

Introduction

Some theorists consider teachers' reflections should attempt "to expand one's understanding on the teaching-learning process" (Murphy, 2001:499 in Celce-Murcia). This understanding may promote pre-service and in-service teachers not to see teaching, learning and assessment as isolated practices. According to an online comment one student states, "I used to evaluate my students without realizing I included topics we had not studied, now I think I was unfair in that moment" (graduate student 5, 3/28/2012 evaluation seminar). This shows a lack of awareness in relation to the correspondence between what he taught and what he evaluated, which likely compromises validity and fairness in the learning- testing/assessment practices.

In addition, the indiscriminate use of the terms testing/assessment and evaluation shows the lack of this teacher's knowledge and understanding of the teaching-learning processes. "Most of the time, testing is not taking the importance that it requires in the teaching-learning process. First of all, the

text books provide the tests and some teachers just administer them without analyzing the language, the design, the level of difficulty, and all the principles that we discussed in the seminar" (Graduate student 7, comment on-line forum 3/28/2012 evaluation seminar). "Unfortunately, before this seminar, I did not have a clear idea of assessment and testing contributions to students' and teachers' learning process, due to this, I used mainly oral or written tests to keep track of my students' progress" (graduate student 9, on-line forum 3/28/2012 evaluation seminar). These graduate students' opinions evidence that teachers need a space to reflect on their practices, which may permit them to clarify theories and help them to shape their own informed philosophy of English language teaching.

Aware and informed teachers have the potential to important agents of change in their educational contexts. As stated by Richards, J. & Lockhart, Ch. (1996:4): "teachers who are better informed as to their nature of their teaching are able to evaluate their stage of professional growth and what aspects of their teaching they need to

change.” As a consequence of assuming reflective attitudes, teachers may be real facilitators and supporters by approaching students as key- active participants in the teaching-learning and assessment processes. Likewise, more coherent practices may take place in the EFL/ESL classroom. “Nowadays, it is almost impossible to think in a successful teaching and learning process if we do not have clear knowledge about what they (testing, assessing and teaching) really mean in education.” (Graduate student 11, on-line forum 3/28/2012 evaluation seminar).

Considering my experience in applied linguistics and EFL methods classes at undergraduate and graduate level since 2010, I have witnessed how teaching, learning and assessment are perceived as isolated practices. This means that most of the times, the objectives of teaching and learning do not match the purposes of testing and assessment. This aspect has been evidenced in reflections students have done on on-line forums, workshops, essays, and videos recorded from some lessons taught.

The same lack of coherence has also been evidenced when making curricular changes or implementing those changes. Ortiz, Camelo, Martín, Sarmiento, Ruiz, (2006) conducted a study entitled ‘Revising a Foreign Language Curriculum: A Challenging and Enhancing Experience at a Public School in Bogotá’. The curriculum evaluated in that institution evidenced “a lack of connection among goals, objectives, time, methodology, programs, materials, evaluation”(p.14). Thus, an institution that attempts to make curricular changes without

these factors in place may threaten the goals and results of the teaching-learning-assessment practices.

Implementing a new curriculum without getting all the members of the academic community to understand the approach and theories behind its creation may threaten its validity. The study by Ortiz, A., et al. (2006) concluded that the curriculum was not operative given “...the multiplicity of beliefs and attitudes towards English as a subject. Even among teachers, who are supposed to agree on the instructional program, there are various interpretations of the same item.” (p.19). This quote does not necessarily imply that every teacher must have the same beliefs, but at least students, teachers, and administrators should be motivated to get to an agreement and common understanding of the processes and practices to be followed for obtaining a common goal.

Considering the graduate and undergraduate students’ vision in relation to teaching/learning/assessment practices, the curricular changes generated at the Languages School in the last two and a half years, and the new teachers who have enrolled in the Languages School at UPTC, I consider relevant to open the discussion in relation to the necessity of becoming informed and qualified professionals. In this way EFL/ESL pre-service and in-service teachers, mainly, may develop respect and value their profession and students. I do agree with Pritchard, (2009, X) when he claims that “when teaching is based soundly on the best available understanding of the processes that lead to effective learning, it has a greatly improved chance of being effective.”

In order to open the discussion I will first refer to the “philosophy of language teaching” by defining key terms like belief and language. I will show how certain definitions of language may relate to teaching/learning and assessment practices. Second, I will describe the mismatch evidenced in graduate students, who participated in the EFL methods seminar in 2010 and 2011, in relation to their beliefs and teaching/assessment practices. Finally, I will share some final reflections for in-service/pre-service teachers and administrators to consider.

Philosophy of Language Teaching

Defining the philosophy of language teaching may comprise a myriad of perspectives. A philosophy of language consists of those evolving principles and theories that reflect and effect or influence a teacher’s way of feeling and behaving in and outside the classroom. Constructing one’s philosophy deals with confronting beliefs, understanding theories, considering a specific population’s needs and expectations, and becoming informed about EFL/ESL teaching-learning theories. Thus, in this section I will define the terms *belief* and *language*, since I consider they are the basis for adopting critical stances toward teaching/learning and assessment. I will briefly discuss how certain language definitions may determine a teachers’ selection of certain methods and testing/assessment practices.

Richards, J. & Schmidt, R. (2002: 541) define a teachers’ belief system as the “ideas and theories that teachers hold about themselves, teaching, language learning

and their students.” I conceive a belief system as a set of principles resulting from a teacher’s individual understanding of teaching, learning and assessment practices. The generation of such system may be influenced by values, a particular vision of the world, and personal and professional backgrounds, among other aspects. Those beliefs are directly related to teachers’ decision making processes which determine their philosophy of English language teaching and learning. This is evidenced in one of the graduate student’s perception in relation to this aspect; “When I think about the philosophy of teaching I need to take into account my beliefs about teaching, my experience as a teacher and the way it may be transformed or adapted through time” (st1 on-line forum, 2010). In this way, teachers’ beliefs determine the decision-making processes.

Considering that students are the ones affected by those decisions, it is important to analyze how teachers’ beliefs and conceptions in relation to *language* may create a “successful” teaching-learning environment. Graduate and undergraduate students, who attended to EFL methods and Applied Linguistics classes in 2010 and 2011, at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia were asked to define the word *language*. From 100 students 70% conceived language as “a system to communicate something in a correct way”, the 20% defined it as a process, and the other 10% stated it is a “faculty”(survey October 2010, April- October 2011, March 2012). As a result, an important question emerges: How do those varied concepts of language relate to in-service and pre-service teaching-learning practices?

On the one hand, conceiving language as a system may be compared to taking a computer and analyzing each piece of hardware to finally discover how it works, regardless of how the system is used. Conceiving language from this perspective will produce teaching practices that focus on analyzing linguistic features of a given language in isolation from a context. As stated by Kumaravadivelu, (2006:4) "... the central core of language as system consists of the phonological system that deals with the patterns of sound, the semantic system that deals with the meaning of words, and the syntactic system that deals with the rules of grammar.". Methods such as, audio-lingual, grammar translation and Total Physical Response support the development of this type of linguistic competence.

In relation to a language centered approach to teaching one undergraduate student commented: "one disadvantage of the structuralism is that sometimes classes are approached majorly [mainly through] grammatical aspects and you do not get to communicate." (Student 2 essay, April 2012). In this way language would be perceived as an object that could be manipulated, uttered or written according to pre-established patterns without really making sense. Then some important questions emerge: what is the learner expected to obtain as a result of instruction where language is seen as a system? To what extent will managing a linguistic system permit EFL students to develop the abilities required to respond to current communicative challenges?

Teaching a language as a system deals with teachers' beliefs in relation to learning

theories that envision learners as well brain-equipped beings, that is as systematic thinkers or language processors. Cognitive theories like Behaviorism see learners as empty vessels to be filled out with information; in this case with grammar rules and structures. An animal experiment transferred to humans attempted to understand how a language could be learned by forming habits in 1950's. Learners would be expected to respond to a stimulus by memorizing information and show their language learning through norm- or criterion reference tests. As Pritchard, A. (2006:6) posits: "In the same way as a parrot might react to the question, 'How are you?' with the response, 'I'm fine', so a child correctly responding with '56' need not necessarily understand the significance of the reply." Teachers, who conceive language as a system, may use multiple choice tests as a way to measure their students' linguistic competence development. These kinds of tests do not necessarily require the learner to understand what is being said.

On the other hand, if language is defined as a "process" it allows both teachers and students to adopt different roles. A process is characterized by following stages that may vary according to the results obtained. From this perspective the process does not merely account for the analysis of the components of a language but also for the uses people make of that system to communicate and convey meaning. "I am good for grammar, but when I going to speak have problems with pronunciation, grammar, ask questions. This is the most difficult for me." (Essay undergraduate student 15, applied linguistics class, February 2011). This sample evidences the consequences of

teaching practices that focus on developing the linguistic competence, but ignore others like the socio-linguistic, discourse or strategic.

Defining language as a process may consider the learner is the center of learning. In this sense, as Kumaravadivelu, (2006:120) posits that “language teachers must foster meaningful communication by using authentic language as a vehicle for communication in class, introducing language at discursal (not sentential) level”, among other strategies. Task-based methods may provide opportunities for teachers and students to account for those processes and adopt/develop more equal, active and participatory roles. As a result, teachers and learners start establishing stronger bonds to their own teaching-learning and/or assessment processes. When students “perceive their educational development as a valuable process which ends up cultivating positive attitudes towards learning, empowering effort and promoting a high sense of motivation....In the long term, these phenomena could become integrated into both their personal and professional set of values”(Martínez-Lirola,& Rubio, 2009:104)

Considering language acquisition as a process makes a shift from testing into assessment practices. Portfolios are one alternative to account for EFL/ESL students' language processes. In the study 'Students' Beliefs about Portfolio Evaluation and its Influence on Their Learning Outcomes to Develop EFL in a Spanish Context' conducted by Martínez-Lirola,& Rubio, portfolios proved useful tools that allowed the participants to assume more responsible

stances toward their own learning processes. As concluded by the researchers “... new ways of evaluation such as the portfolio promote students' autonomous learning, which implies that they have an active role in the teaching-learning process.” (2009:108).

Defining language as a faculty provides a broader scope of the participants in a teaching learning environment. Human beings are being characterized for having managed and developed a system of codes, symbols, represented in gestures, body movements, written and oral discourses. Williams, R. (1997, p.21) cited by Kumaravadivelu, (1996:3) claims language “is always implicitly or explicitly a definition of human beings.” Hence, both human beings and language evolve; historical and social events as well as human beings needs are some of the facts that have determined that evolution. As stated by one pre-service teacher: “Even Chomsky said that the language is innate, so we were born with it, and we have a process to overcome day to day because language is like human beings, is evolving every second” (undergraduate student 10 online forum 3/28/2012)

Language as faculty is also a learner-centered perspective where teaching methods, techniques and strategies address not only the cognitive development of learners but also the communicative one. Thus, the learner is not just seen from a psychological perspective but also from a social one. Consequently, methods like the communicative language teaching and Community language learning perceive learners as social beings where interaction

plays a key role. As a result, language is a co-constructed and re-signified tool.

Likewise, assessment attempts to see how learners use language for communicative purposes. Teachers may then analyze to what extent learners have learned a foreign language to perform functions like apologizing, explaining, requesting and describing, among others. Oral presentations, interviews, oral reports, essays, are alternative assessment tools. When developing such assessment processes it is necessary to have specific criteria and a common understanding for informing teachers and students about the language development.

Language is such a powerful tool that may not just be conceived as a system, a process or a faculty. Kumaravadivelu, develops an enlightening post-method discussion considering two more visions of language: as a discourse and as an ideology. According to Wisniewski, (2006:1) "there is no agreement among linguists as to the use of the term discourse in that some use it in reference to texts, while others claim it denotes speech..." defined as "a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence..." (Crystal, 1992:25). Most of undergraduate students in the Applied Linguistics class considered "discourse" referred to the uttered speech. "When I listen to the word discourse I associate it to the oral speech for example, the politicians discourse" (Students' opinion in workshop 3, 10/04/2011). "Discourse is when for example a person speaks in front of a public" (students, workshop 3 students: 7,8,15, 5/5/2012).

Language as discourse may be envisioned

as meaning negotiation, resulting from human interactions in different contexts. In this sense, culture plays an important role to construct meaning, analyze discourse and use language meaningfully. McDonough, (2002:94) states that: "cultural influences on the learner and cultural differences in the classroom are, strictly speaking, not a category of individual but of group differences which may become manifest in attitudes to work, preferred instructional style, preferred activities, comprehension problems and a host of potentially unrecognized pitfalls." These cultural differences give discourse unique characteristics and challenge the teacher to include them.

Conceiving language as discourse, and its cultural implications makes teaching, learning and assessment challenging. In post-method condition Kumaravadivelu discusses macrostrategies as "general plans derived from currently available theoretical, empirical and pedagogical knowledge related to L2 learning and teaching." (2006:201) One relevant macrostrategy is *raising cultural consciousness* which implies that teachers and learners adopt new roles. "...instead of privileging the teacher as the sole cultural informant, we need to treat the learner as a cultural informant as well" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006:208). By providing this focus to language, values like respect, tolerance and inclusion may be developed in and outside the classroom.

The last concept perceives language as an ideology resulting from a system of feelings, beliefs and experiences shaped throughout life. In EFL educational contexts, this body of ideas is a dynamic construction that

requires the use of different cognitive, social and affective skills. Methods like project work allow teachers to develop roles such as guide and manager, while students become more autonomous and self-regulate their own learning processes.

Through this paper, I have discussed how in-service and pre-service teachers' beliefs determine the conceptions they hold about language. I have also analyzed how specific definitions of language represent particular methods and assessment practices. But, as already stated, research has often evidenced limited connection between teachers' philosophy of teaching and pedagogical practices. In the following section I will present some reflections generated from graduate students' video-recorded lessons.

Mismatch between teachers' philosophy of teaching and teaching practices.

Classroom observations enable teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of certain type of activities, strategies or techniques. Teachers may also analyze power relationships, particular students' learning styles and discourse patterns, among other aspects. However, as Wang and Seth (1998) cited by Akbari, Gaffar Samar, and Tajik, report "the subjective, judgmental and impressionistic nature of classroom observation is the reason for the bad reputation of classroom observation". Thus, most times teachers are reluctant to allow someone else enter in their classrooms, since they consider they are going to be told everything is wrong.

But, the classroom observation scope

changes when teachers record, observe and analyze themselves. When I guide the EFL methods seminar, graduate students in Language Teaching at UPTC are asked to record two or three lessons. In 2010 and 2011 some video segments were observed and analyzed together in the class. The videos evidenced there was a mismatch between what in-service teachers thought they did and what they actually did in their classes. This exercise generated some insights enabling the teachers to begin to recognize the "reality" lived by both students and themselves in the classrooms. How relevant is this mismatch when referring to teaching/ learning and assessment?

Before asking graduate students to record their classes they participated in an initial reflection workshop and an online forum, in which they were asked to mention what method they used in their classes. They were also requested to describe how that method was evidenced in particular activities implemented in the classroom. From 25 participants 15 claimed they used an "eclectic method".

"Being eclectic is part of my "business" but, to be honest I think that my practice is supported by my experience and the different contexts I have been working in. The set of activities I choose to motivate my students are according to their interests and needs in terms of language."(Student 1, online forum, 09/14/2010).

"Define the method that I use in my daily routine as an English teacher is a bit complex because I use different methods such as: communicative approach, grammar translation method, audio lingual

method.”(Student 5, online forum 11/17/2010)

These comments evidence on the one hand, how some teachers still think they can rely on their empirical knowledge to teach their classes. The risk that they are taking is addressing uninformed processes that may not reflect the achievement of particular learning goals. On the other hand, most of in-service teachers reported using strategies, activities and techniques from different methods. When students provided those responses I questioned them about the relation between e.g. communicative approach and grammar translation method. At that moment, there were not clear responses.

Five participants mentioned they used communicative language teaching:

“I think I use “communicative competence” approach introduced by Dell Hymes, and later redefined by other authors, because IT brought about a revolution in the language pedagogy since it values, somehow the importance of rules of grammar (if needed) but focusing more on meaning through a wide variety of real language activities and strategies for learners to accomplish their communicative purposes.” (Student 12, online forum, 09/14/2010).

“Nicest method for me is the communicative one because I think this really enhance the communicative skills in the students, For this reason always in my classes I try to guide interactive activities like role plays, short discussions about a statement or a certain topic, performance debates and so on.” (Student 8, online forum, 11/17/10)

In these opinions teachers show a confusion and lack of clarity in relation to “approach” and “method”. This becomes a first obstacle when describing what happens in the classroom. Likewise, it is taken for granted that using role plays and other similar activities may reflect the communicative nature of a language method.

The other 5 graduate students were not certain about the method that guided their teaching practices:

“It is still kind of hard for me to define what method I use, however, most of the exercises applied in class have been designed to fulfill students’ needs and interests.”(Student 3, online forum, 09/16/10)

“I wouldn’t say I use a specific method to teach. I realized about the importance of contextualizing our teaching practice, taking into account our student’s needs and interests and in general, the setting.” (Student 16, online forum, 09/19/10)

“Thinking about the method I use for the teaching or English right now seems to be such a difficult task, because ever since the discussions about what a method is I am a lot more confused that before about it, but I can answer about what I do take into account for planning my lessons .”(Student 13, online forum, 09/19/10)

These last three comments evidence the necessity to motivate in-service teachers to develop reflective practices that may enlighten their teaching/learning/assessment practices. Similarly, these reflections may help pre-service teachers to

establish stronger bonds and clarity in their teaching practice. Teachers may not find the right moment or space to analyze the correspondence between their beliefs, their students' performance and their pedagogical practices. How do these teachers plan their lessons? Is there any planning at all? These are some questions that may be addressed as part of teachers' reflective practices.

After sharing these comments in the classroom and on-line forums, graduate students recorded some of their lessons. As each teacher shared video segments of their teaching, the class analyzed one another's teaching using different checklists that provided specific criteria to consider. Aspects such as: teaching strategies, teachers' and learners' discourses, interaction, materials, among others, were described and analyzed. As a result, it was evidenced that the 90% of graduate students:

- Used techniques, strategies and activities that did not correspond to the method they believed they used.
- Considered students were provided more opportunity to participate in the class, than were observed in the videos.
- Did not think they spoke during 80% of the class.
- Thought their instructions were clear, and did not realize that students did neither sufficiently understand the language used in the instructions nor completely understand the topics.
- Changed their behaviour and attitudes in the classroom because they knew they were being videotaped. Students noticed that change of behaviour and the lessons ended up being ineffective, since the

teachers spoke in English all the time and students were not used to that kind of input.

- Realized some of the activities planned did not correspond to the objectives of the class. Some teachers wrote the objective on the board at the beginning of the class, but at the end activities did not help to achieve such goals.
- Noticed it was important to plan the lessons ahead: selecting the appropriate material, strategies and activities that fit the class objectives. The videos evidenced that no matter how experienced the teacher considered s/he is, it is always necessary to do some planning.
- Realized that the activities they considered were communicative, ended up being linguistic.

After doing this comparison and analysis exercises between in-service teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices evidenced in the videos, and reading some texts, teachers concluded:

"Roles of teachers and students, in my very special context, vary according to the techniques or set of activities that are developed during the school year. But I really want to close my reflection with other wise words: "The future is always uncertain, and this is no less true in anticipating methodological directions in second language teaching than in any other field" (student 8, online forum 11/23/10)

"I consider that there is not a magic formula when it comes to teaching, we just have to try to identify what works best with our students taking into account many

contextual aspects.” (Student 23, online forum 11/23/11)

“In conclusion I think I’m just endowing my teaching style, I will keep on doing it and of course trying not to be discouraged by external issues such as labor benefits which cannot be compared with the satisfaction of watching your students sparkling eyes while grinning when they are able to express something and understand the information they are receiving.” Student 13, online forum 11/24/10)

“In short I can say that I am in agreement with Kumaravadivelu’s post method condition since we as English teachers cannot focus on only one method if this can supply all the students’ needs. The important aspect is that we make good and pertinent decisions so that the ideas that we take from the different methods really becoming useful in the English language teaching process according to the students’ characteristics and socio cultural contexts.” (Student 11, online forum 11/23/10)

“Well. I strongly agree with M. when he stresses that we teachers don’t even know about the method that we are using during our teaching process, maybe TPR or audiolingual... also it is important to enhance that part about Post-method as a useful tool to lead students and teachers to a reflective thinking.” Student 25, online forum 08/11/11

A teacher’s philosophy of teaching is shaped over time. Research and pedagogical experiences, theoretical awareness, teachers’ and learners’ reflective practices, and sensitivity to the context are some of the factors that may influence the creation

of that philosophy. Observing, recording and analyzing one’s classes enlighten teachers’ decision making processes. This practice helps teachers acquire clarity and reflect on their teaching practice. In this way, both students and teachers benefit from such reflection processes, resulting in better informed decisions.

The mismatch evidenced between teacher’s beliefs and their teaching practices, reflects the necessity to provide discussion spaces for pre-service and in-service teachers to reflect on their teaching throughout their careers. In this sense, postgraduate programs and teachers’ reunions may provide such spaces to allow teachers to become aware of the reality of their classrooms and their teaching, learning and testing/assessment practices. “When I was doing my pre-service teaching I had absolutely no idea what I was doing, I just followed my instincts towards my student’s needs. .”(Student 22, online forum, 09/30/10).

Final reflections

Colombian educational systems in which EFL teachers are involved provide few opportunities for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices. However, some teachers do research and engage teachers in self-reflective practices. As stated by Jerez Rodríguez, (2008: 92) teachers may “initiate a reflective thinking process that could allow them to question their beliefs and actions as a way to improve their practice.” Thus, the intention of this paper was to open a discussion and help teachers to develop an understanding of their own philosophy of teaching by defining the terms “belief” and

“language”. Likewise, teachers are invited to analyze how the way they conceive language and the beliefs they have in terms of language learning and teaching may not necessarily correspond to what they do in the classroom. In this way more coherent teaching/learning and assessment practices may emerge

Audio or video recordings have also evidenced to help teachers’ become more reflective and critical beings. Schratz (1992:89) cited by Richards, (1996:11) claims: “audio-visual recordings are powerful instruments in the development of a lecture’s self-reflective competence. They confront him or her with a mirror-like “objective” view of what goes on in class. Moreover, class recordings which are kept for later use, can give a valuable insight into an individual teacher’s growth in experience over years.” Graduate students who participated in the EFL methods seminar, who recorded their lessons, have evidenced a change in their beliefs and scope of language teaching, learning and assessment practices. This fact could be perceived in further forums held and papers written by the participants.

Lessons recorded and observed reflected a teacher’s particular set of beliefs from which different conceptions of language were presented. Language is inherent to human beings; it is a rich and powerful tool that acquires different meanings under different perspectives. In this paper, the visions of language as a system, process, faculty, discourse and ideology have allowed us to show the interrelation between such definitions and teaching/learning and assessment practices. There may emerge more perspectives for language; all of them

will be valid as long as they account for coherent EFL/ESL teaching-learning processes and reflect teacher’s philosophy of teaching.

Educational institutions constantly change their curricular structures in order to respond to current challenges without establishing a clear philosophy of language. Sometimes, those changes do not involve all the members of the academic community; they just respond to administrative not academic decisions. Nevertheless, it is important that teachers, students and administrators understand the curricular changes of programs like Modern Languages at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia. Even more, when in the last two years novice teachers have enrolled in the Languages School. I would like to pose some questions for the administrative and teaching staff to reflect about: What understanding do the new novice teachers have in relation to the Curriculum of the Languages School or “Proyecto Académico de la Escuela” (PAE)? How is that understanding reflected in their teaching/assessment practices? How is that understanding of the philosophy of the PAE reflected in the syllabus design?

Finally, I would like to state that post-methods condition is not the magic formula for solving teaching problems. Pre-service and in-service teachers are invited to look at their classrooms and students from a perspective in which every member becomes active and responsible participants. They are also invited to become informed and qualified professionals, who, by means of research on their teaching, may start creating a contextualized and an

enlightened philosophy of language teaching. How enlightening is your philosophy of language teaching?

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