


Analysis of benefits student-teachers perceive about co-teaching within an EFL basic course

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Artículo de investigación



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Abstract

Adjusting to current times, two teacher-researchers from ÚNICA undertook the endeavor of devising a collaborative scheme intended to enrich a group of 12 Basic English student-teachers with knowledge on co-teaching, embodied in an array of methodologies, skills, expertise, and background. These benefits were encompassed in co-teaching, which implies two or more educators designing, teaching, and assessing a part or the entirety of a class. Through cross-examining a series of participant reflections and interviews as main data collection instruments in this action-research study, researchers found that student-teachers praised co-teaching as a strategy to incorporate in their future language classes to foster, on one hand, varied pedagogical strategies and resources, and on the other hand, their envisioning of the co-teaching roles in the future, which is connected to the construction of student-teachers' identity, an aspect of professional development. Furthermore, participants assigned co-teaching metacognitive benefits related to self-regulation skills, autonomy, and ownership. They valued that collegial feedback entailed advantages in different aspects of their learning, propelled by the quality, promptness, customization, and practicality of remarks provided by the co-educators.

Keywords: co-teaching, co-teaching strategies, collegial feedback, student-teachers' education, professional development

Análisis de beneficios que perciben los estudiantes-docentes sobre la co-enseñanza dentro de un curso básico de inglés como lengua extranjera

Resumen

Ajustándose a los tiempos actuales, dos docentes-investigadores de ÚNICA se dieron a la tarea de idear una estrategia colaborativa con el objetivo de dotar a un grupo de 12 docentes en formación de Inglés Básico de conocimientos sobre co-enseñanza, plasmados en una serie de metodologías, habilidades, experticias y de contextos. Estos beneficios a nivel de conocimiento se incluyeron en la co-enseñanza, la cual implica que dos o más educadores diseñen, enseñen y evalúen una parte o la totalidad de una clase. A través de una serie de entrevistas y reflexiones de los participantes, los investigadores encontraron que los futuros docentes elogiaron la co-docencia como una estrategia pertinente en sus futuras clases de idiomas para fomentar, por un lado, estrategias y recursos pedagógicos variados, y por otro lado, favorecer la visualización de los roles de co-enseñanza en el futuro, lo que está conectado a la construcción de la identidad de ellos como futuros profesores, que se constituye un aspecto del desarrollo profesional.

Palabras clave: co-enseñanza, estrategias de co-enseñanza, retroalimentación colegiada, formación de estudiantes-profesores, desarrollo profesional

Análise dos benefícios percebidos pelos estudantes-docentes sobre a co-ensino em um curso básico de inglês como língua estrangeira

Resumo

Adaptando-se ao tempo atual, dois professores-pesquisadores da ÚNICA empreenderam a tarefa de conceber uma estratégia colaborativa com o objetivo de proporcionar a um grupo de 12 estudantes em formação para o Ensino Básico de Inglês conhecimentos sobre co-ensino, refletidos em uma variedade de metodologias, habilidades, especializações e contextos. Esses benefícios em termos de conhecimento foram incorporados ao co-ensino, o qual envolve dois ou mais educadores no planejamento, ensino e avaliação de parte ou da totalidade de uma aula. Por meio de entrevistas e reflexões dos participantes, os pesquisadores constataram que os futuros professores elogiaram a co-docência como uma estratégia relevante em suas futuras aulas de idiomas para promover, por um lado, estratégias e recursos pedagógicos diversos e, por outro lado, favorecer a visualização dos papéis de co-ensino no futuro, o que está conectado à construção da identidade deles como futuros professores, um aspecto crucial do desenvolvimento profissional.

Palavras-chave: co-ensino, estratégias de co-ensino, feedback colaborativo, formação de estudantes-professores, desenvolvimento profissional

Introduction

The cornerstone of this study was to observe and analyze the practice of co-teaching dynamics in an EFL context and more specifically in the education of foreign language student-teachers. The study resorts to the analysis of reflections and interview responses obtained from first-semester student-teachers at ÚNICA University. Such instruments aimed to pinpoint their views on co-teaching after a two-stage implementation. The first of which implied that future teachers performed as language learners, and the second entailed that they carried out two lessons as co-teachers to their classmates. This study is relevant in the field of English as a Foreign Language teaching in Colombia considering the scarce number of experiences of co-teaching in the field locally, contrasted with well-documented insights overseas regarding other fields, particularly special education settings. Furthermore, as this study was carried out in a teacher's education context, it provided preliminary perspectives about the potential of co-teaching as a widespread practice among future teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Defining Co-teaching

Broadly speaking, since the 1990's co-teaching has been linked to several labels that may be perceived slightly differently but embody most of its principles: team teaching, collaborative teaching, and cooperative teaching (Friend, 2008). The literature about this concept indicates that it has been defined in harmony with the purpose, population, and setting where it has been implemented. In Cook and Friend's perspective, for instance, co-teaching presupposes that two or more educators or teaching staff be hired to share instructional duties for a particular group of students, mainly in a classroom or workspace, with specific aims, and embody collaborative ownership, joint resources, and collective accountability.

Most definitions of co-teaching refer to an action that is performed by at least two teachers sharing the same teaching space and responsibilities. For Escobar (2020), the venue, as well as responsibilities, should be aimed at "providing their students with higher quality teaching attention" (p. 38).

There are some minimal requirements for co-teaching to be considered a teaching model. In this line of thought, Aliakbari and Bazyar (2012) claim that for co-teaching to take place, it is crucial that there be a positive, collegial partnership between two teachers and that this attempt implies time and effort. According to these authors, "both educators should assume full responsibility for the education of all students in the classroom, including planning, presentation, classroom management, and evaluation" (2012, p. 56). These researchers remark on the importance of expectations from administrators and the existence of the exploratory individual and common belief systems enhanced over time for reflection.

Co-teaching Strategies

A group of researchers from St. Cloud University (2011) developed an all-encompassing set of co-teaching models derived from the learning-teaching experience they had studied.

The models encouraged by this institution and some brief considerations will be provided as follows:

One Teach, One Observe. One of the educators is assigned major instructional duties while the other teacher collects specific observational information on students or the instructing teacher.

One Teach, One Assist. One of the teachers leads the instructional process whereas the other educator assists learners with their work, surveils behavior, or checks assignments. This model may be useful for classrooms where there is a significant number of students.

Station Teaching. The co-teaching tandem splits the instructional content into parts: each instructor leads one of the groups, and afterward, groups rotate or spend a given amount of time at each station. This is a profoundly collaborative model since it entails planning the class together, selecting and designing materials together, and working in synchrony.

Parallel Teaching. Each teacher instructs half of the group of learners. The two instructors make use of the same instructional material and present it using the same teaching strategies. It is preferred and suggested for a relatively small class.

Supplemental Teaching. One of the teachers leads the instructional process with students at the target language level and expected learning pace, while the other takes care of students who need to be either provided further information, retaught material, or administered a make-up test. It is suggested for a setting in which there is an assessment monitoring process, and in which low-performers and slow-paced students are not left out.

Alternative or Differentiated Teaching. Each one of the teachers guides the teaching process under two distinct approaches to introduce and present the same information and topics. The learning outcome is expected to be the same for all students. This model implies that each educator possesses vast experience of teaching in the field and the instructional method or approach they are supposed to use in that setting. It is vital that teachers hold dialogs and conversations regularly in the interest of planning and organizing to avoid disruptions, clashes, and misunderstandings in the teaching process.

Team Teaching. Both teachers plan together, co-teach the same portion of the class, provide instructions as teaching peers, and share the same level of authority. The tandem needs to be engaged in the lesson at the same level. One teacher may introduce the new material to learners and the other creates a chart on the board while students listen for insights from the presenting teacher.

Benefits of Co-teaching for Learners

By and large, there is not a vast amount of information in connection with the benefits that co-teaching might bring along for learners (Pérez-Gómez & Pérez-Segura, 2022). Some of the scanty literature indicates that general, as well as special education students, may profit from this model, as classes are more inclusive, full of support, and diversity-oriented (Naegele et al., 2016). In line with this view, McDuffie et al., (2009) point out that more inclusive and supportive classrooms emerge in co-teaching because learners can be taught in a more individualized

fashion—and be provided with further time and assistance by their co-teachers within the half of the group that is being instructed at a particular time of the class.

St. Cloud University (2011) gives an account of a list of positive effects that co-teaching offers for students, among which stand out the following: increased chances for flexible arrangements of students; further assistance for learners as co-teachers possess different views and experience to solve issues; more organized and well-managed lessons for students to enjoy as a result of collaborative planning and joint material design; increased learning opportunities owing to the repertoire of instructional styles; learners' engagement in class, further learners' participation in activities.

As mentioned earlier, there is a restricted number of studies about co-teaching in EFL settings, particularly research explaining deeply the benefits of adopting this model for foreign language learners. Within this limited spectrum, it is worth mentioning the investigation led by Boland et al., (2019) in which is claimed that students who are exposed to co-teaching can enhance their academic performance in English because it allows them to absorb information at a pace that is suitable to their learning needs. According to them, “the multiple strategies of the co-teaching model can certainly develop students' understanding and could be a very useful method of teaching since it offers the students the same topics from different viewpoints and understandings” (2019, p.98). These benefits also occur as the result of co-teachers' levels of experience, their complementary styles, and improved classroom teaching environment. Similarly, the diversity in teaching styles stemming from co-teaching is highlighted by Sekoubaou (2018). This author claims that students' chances to learn are raised as they receive further attention derived from two educators sharing a teaching session and assorting ways of instructing. In our research project, the work of non-native English teachers was praised for they brought on their expert, communicative, and professional competencies, placing at the service of co-teaching their background knowledge about other universities and their background on research settings as well as different populations.

Collegial Feedback

Collegial feedback could be defined as the process by which individuals with distinctive levels of expertise about a discipline undertake the mutual endeavor of observing and giving feedback to their peers/learners to enhance performance or learning. However, this definition requires a narrower characterization by defining a dichotomy between collaboration and collegiality. While collaboration resides in the tandem participation of specific actions to fulfill job-related goals, collegiality refers to the quality of relations between members of an educational institution (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000). Therefore, collegial feedback involves more than just working together in the same space with a peer: it implies the setting of positive relations and communication. Collegiality and collaboration are terms that mirror each other, and mutual reflection may vary over time, actions and time spent with a collegial attitude may evolve into collegiality. Interestingly, collegiality in education has benefits yet to be tested, even more, when it is contrasted with autonomy.

Collegial work is still held aside in benefit of teacher autonomous work as a common practice in ELT and teacher education contexts. In other words, the dichotomy of collegiality-autonomy seems to be mutually exclusive unless participants find balance utilizing constant communication and sharing of beliefs. If the relationship between collegiality and autonomy are polar, or mutually opposed, the chances for learning and professional development shrink.

Student Teachers' Professional Development

The relevance of this study resided in the potential impact it could have in the development of beliefs and perceptions that ELT student teachers had on the co-teaching experience as an innovative approach at ÚNICA University.

After developing the state-of-the-art, little literature about co-teaching practices in higher education in Colombia was found. This seemingly unprecedented practice that ÚNICA has aimed to implement within its bilingual education program deserved deeper observation. The motivation to explore and implement the co-teaching model relied on the need to expose student-teachers to innovative and meaningful practices in which they performed simultaneously the roles of learners and pre-service instructors. Needless to mention that the COVID conjuncture led teachers and pupils to reflect upon the roles and practices demanded of them to make such roles and practices relevant and updated for the context. Thus, the opportunity to experience this initiative with colleagues-to-be in the area of ELT implied the presence of a variable to consider, which was the definition of identities and roles for the student-teachers' projection as professionals.

Methodology

Before approaching the methodology, it is important to clarify that the 12 student-teachers who participated in this research, engaged actively in a two-stage pedagogical intervention: in the first stage, they performed as language learners who received English instruction from the two co-professors, and in the second stage, they performed in tandems as co-teachers for their own peers. As Strauss and Corbin suggested (1998), we followed the open coding steps to analyze the 12 narratives and the 12 interviews that emerged from the two-folded co-teaching experience. To that end, we assigned a label to different phenomena identified in meaningful portions of the texts using multiple colors, which allowed us to categorize headings that pointed to similar information (temporary codes). Afterwards, similar codes were grouped by assigning a definite label (category).

Data Analysis

After applying the coding steps from Strauss and Corbin, two categories emerged: co-teaching and professional development and the metacognitive value of co-teaching.

Professional Development and Co-Teaching

The short reflections and replies given by student-teachers unveiled their interest to resort to co-teaching as a pedagogical strategy in their future teaching careers. Firstly, they considered the possibility that this technique posed upon dynamizing and optimizing the learning process

of students, and secondly, they valued that it could facilitate the workload distribution co-teachers shared and permitted them to provide a wider variety of strategies for their students.

“I would like to make co-teaching with a partner in the future because it’s faster or easier because the roles are divided, the work is divided too, and I think that it is easier for the students because they learn more with different strategies...” (Interview, Participant # 2).

“The truth is that I never had a co-teaching class, but in my opinion, it is the best way to learn, and I want to do the same in the future as a teacher because it is the best learning method for students, they learn faster” (Second reflection, participant # 1).

“Because you work... You work better with a friend. The students learn more, they... they feel that they have more help” (Interview, participant # 5).

“In the future when I am a teacher, I want my students to differentiate my unique classes in which different methodologies that make learning effective are applied” (Second reflection, participant # 12).

“Okay, teacher. Teacher, because you and James mentioned different aspects that are very important for my learning process...” (Interview, participant # 8).

“I hope to continue understanding co-teaching since I would like to be able to apply it at some point in my career as a teacher; I also want to keep in mind each of the strategies and tools used in the classroom” (Third reflection, participant # 3).

“Thanks to each of the teachers for doing a good co-teaching and showing us how to teach in different ways” (Third reflection, participant # 5).

The fragments above display that student-teachers recognized how innovative and practical co-teaching might be to get students acquainted with a larger array of didactic strategies. Also, they identified the chance that collaborative teaching offers co-educators to take care of different needs and learning styles in class. They perceived such collaboration as a prospective benefit of co-teaching in respect of their professional development, as this strategy gave them an idea about how to boost the foreign language learning process in their future students.

According to student-teachers, in an attempt to favor different learning styles, collaborative teaching endowed the co-teachers with the possibility to personalize the teaching-learning process in an inviting environment. This is true if the idea of having two teachers is associated with the ease of access students have to multiple resources, tools, and teaching styles. It goes without saying that in not-so-large classes, such as the one this project took place in, co-teaching is fruitful for the one-to-one attention ratio increases, and this makes students feel further supported.

“In the middle of the classes, I have learned different pedagogical tools that can be very useful in the future so that my students can learn in a didactic way, starting from the point that all people are different and probably, I will find students who have not had interaction with English and for them, this language is an unknown world, so I must use tools that do not make the language seem difficult and can be useful for students by promoting a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom” (Second reflection, participant # 10).

“In the future when I am a teacher, I want my students to differentiate my unique classes in which different methodologies that make learning effective are applied” (Second reflection, participant # 12).

Moreover, student teachers appraised the chance co-teaching gives co-educators to reach a consensus, as well as keep the same line of thought regarding planning and implementing strategies, which guarantees to achieve teaching goals more expeditiously. They also stressed the importance of teamwork in their professional development, as collegially oriented work renders easiness or comfort for each of the co-teachers in terms of complementing teaching styles, exchanging didactic insights, and capitalizing on the individual talents each teacher has:

“Seeing so many teaching possibilities is great, and I know I will put them into practice. It is hard, but with the effort and dedication of both teachers, you can achieve things and see that there is a person who wants to go down your same path, it is great to be able to help students and contribute collaboratively in the best way to their improving” (Second reflection, participant # 8).

“With this work, I learned that you can work as a team and see that everything can work if you have a proper order and if you have everything planned with your co-worker, and it is very good to see how the two teachers can take these bases and show us that if we plan well and we understand each other, it can be achieved” (Third reflection, participant # 4).

The Metacognitive Value of Co-Teaching

As the quotes below reveal, student-teachers recognized co-teaching to be a very practical strategy that fostered their metacognitive processes for the implementation of this strategy in the English classroom by the co-teachers provided them with enriching insights and instruction, which they could use to organize ideas, complete assignments, and distribute their time better. In other words, thanks to co-teaching, participants were equipped with self-regulation and autonomous skills. For instance, they could keep track of priorities, and break down topics and activities based on their relevance. This is intrinsically connected to

the notion of metacognitive strategies that we embrace here as researchers as these strategies imply that students identify their learning style preferences and needs, that they plan a task, that they gather and organize materials, that they organize a schedule (executive functions), that they monitor mistakes, and that they do task assessments. It also entails that they evaluate the success of a given strategy. In other words, students employ the management of the learning process overall. In a sense, this finding mirrors the postulates that Oxford (2016) stated regarding language learning styles and strategies.

Since participants were aware that they had to fulfill stages assigned by each of the professors, they became accountable for their process, devoting further time and effort to accomplish class endeavors. That preparation should not be taken as a requirement to do well on a test, but as an ongoing attitude and habit they get accustomed to, so that they fit into the co-teaching environment more easily and autonomously, which might guarantee they pave their learning pathway.

“But so far, the co-teaching has been very useful to me, because I can order my ideas and assignments in English very easily. The teachers have done an excellent job with this strategy” (Second reflection, participant #1, lines 28-30).

“Okay, the teachers were very patient with me, for example, in terms of vocabulary, yes? If I fail, I feel that I improved a little. I think I improved a little bit in vocabulary. Grammar was hard for me, but in the third term, I improved a little” (Interview, participant #8, lines 55-58).

“I think it helped me a lot in my progress, though it was hard to get used to it” (Interview, participant #6, lines 61-62).

Student-teachers developed a sense of autonomy embodied in progressive ownership while they were looking for the best learning strategies to perform well in a co-teaching setting and with each teacher. They empowered themselves regarding their learning by choosing strategies, materials, venues, skills as well as alternatives to direct their attention to and maximize their learning opportunities. It is worthwhile pointing out that such development of empowerment might have happened on account of the co-teachers’ constant guidance, through which students were provided a set of alternatives, examples, suggestions, and materials. By already mentioned advantages, co-teaching constituted an enriching pedagogical strategy fueling metacognitive purposes.

“When we do this, we can use our methods to do the test and study autonomously the topics that we think we need to practice” (Third reflection, participant #3, lines 8-10).

“Mm, for example, I saw the videos from the books as recommended by the teacher James, ahh, at the first moment in class I listened to one song by the different artists, or..., I saw the videos for the verbs. It was very, very... good..., comfortable” (Interview, participant #1, lines 24-26).

“I like their methodologies, but I know that I should take much more ownership of them” (First reflection, participant #2, lines 5-6).

“Yes, teacher, because it is allowing me to self-assess, and increase my strategies (...)” (Interview, participant #1, lines 23-24).

A connection between the development of metacognitive skills and co-teaching was evidenced in terms of self-monitoring. The enriching methodologies implied in this strategy fostered an ongoing and deep reflection that students made after a task was done. Co-educators’ collaborative remarks, teaching alternatives, and variety of exercises played an important role in students developing awareness that learning had been taking place.

“Co-teaching is a great strategy because it will allow us to work on our special difficulties in our learning problems that will allow us to move forward” (Reflection 3, participant #6, lines 18-22).

“Also, I like when, for example, I failed and the teacher said, “no, it’s incorrect, you can use...” I can use different options when the teachers give me tips. For example, one day I failed when... I forgot to use order of the sentences and the teacher said: “you can use pronouns, then verbs, and then complements” because I forgot the pronouns” (Interview, participant #3, lines 44-48).

The Metacognitive Value of Feedback

In learning-teaching processes, feedback constitutes an essential part of the evaluation stage. In co-teaching, feedback is special because it is given by both teachers in a collaborative,

horizontal, collegial, and joint fashion. After the co-teaching implementation, participants praised the fact that the two teachers were not only working together simultaneously but tried to provide them with remarks and insights from their expertise, background, knowledge, preparedness, and willingness to help them to improve. In this case, feedback usefulness was acknowledged in the sense that the two educators aimed at the same goals: make students aware of their mistakes and flaws and make them prioritize their learning goals. Subsequently, co-teachers and students jointly established an action plan so that learners could overcome difficulties.

In this study, collegial feedback was embraced as a thorough manifold process in which both teachers needed to be on the same page and keep track of all students' strengths and weaknesses. That tracking served as a follow-up stage which was nourished by the constant observations that co-teachers conducted every class, the notes they took, and the remarks they made on Zoom chats and WhatsApp, among others. Owing to the follow-up comments, students were prompted to spot mistakes they had made as well as the progress reached, and as shown below, to collaboratively establish a plan of action to improve the areas where they needed to gain proficiency.

Upon receiving feedback from two experts who were committed to the students' learning, participants valued as an asset the concern that was displayed by the educators, and ultimately, this had an incidence in their drive and will to keep learning. In this vein, the fact that feedback was not solely given by one individual rendered it more reliable, valid, credible, and impactful.

The following excerpts evidenced the importance of leading feedback sessions to convey a whole assessment cycle. In this case, for the co-teaching experience to be rewarding, co-educators should help students identify their strengths and shortcomings by using feedback-follow-up strategies, for instance, by writing personalized comments on the Zoom chat, having one-to-one conversation, making general comments about students' oral performance, and by establishing a collegial mentoring with tutees.

"When they give us feedback, I feel that it is something very useful because it is at this moment where we realize that we are failing, that we need to learn, in what things we must improve, and I like it because this feedback is not done to all students general, but in a personalized way" (Third reflection, participant #5, lines 21-26).

"Okay, teacher. Teacher, I think that the relationship between these aspects is assertive communication and continuous improvement" (Interview, participant #7, lines 9-10).

"Okay, teacher. In collaboration with the teachers' support, I gave myself feedback because I need to evaluate myself and identify my whole improvement" (Interview, participant #1, lines 12-13).

As quotes above indicate, once co-teachers have done their follow-up, they together with their students, can devise a plan of action to consolidate and reinforce what learners have been doing well and improve the areas where they require more support and practice. It is worth mentioning that the follow-up, as well as the plan of action derived from the two educators' joint work to agree on criteria to assess, the kind of activities students would do, the achievement indicators to consider, and skills to be addressed.

“Teacher, I think that is good to learn from two people because that can contribute to our learning”(Interview, participant #6, lines,7-8).

“Yes, teacher, for example, they provided me with strategies and suggestions to improve my pronunciation. I have practiced. I’m using applications” (Interview, participant #1, lines 18-20).

“In addition, the listening and feedback from both students and teachers are much more detailed. For example, the feedback was very useful because we realized how we were doing in a particular subject, where we needed to improve either in listening, speaking or writing” (First reflection, participant #2, lines 11-14).

As students receive follow-up comments and devise their action plans with their professors, co-teachers helped them focus on individual needs, which had a lot to do with personal experiences, learning styles, interests, and level of autonomy.

“Advice, yes, advice. And the advice... helped me because I learn more, I can know when I say incorrect things” (Interview, participant #3, lines 16 17).

“When they give us feedback, I feel that it is something very useful, because it is at this moment where we realize that we are failing, that we need to learn, in what things we must improve, and I like it because this feedback is not done to all students general, but in a personalized way” (Third reflection, participant #5, lines 21-26).

“I think that feedback is very important because it can help me improve my difficulty because I can recognize where I am falling. How I can I improve, What I need to improve in terms of skills because I may be better at some things, but I want to learn to improve with discipline and determination” (First reflection, participant #3, lines 12-15).

This process of attending to individual needs through feedback is called *customization*, that is to say, co-teachers can take care of every student’s learning style particularly because learners rely upon the insights based on a consensus reached by two educators. Students realize that feedback pinpoints their specific needs and not the whole group’s, and this endows feedback with a sense of validity, applicability, and concreteness.

“In conclusion, the feedback that professors gave me helped me to identify that I should have better learning habits so that in the future I can have meaningful and quality learning, which will help me as a student and in the future will reaffirm me as a teacher since with this I identify my mistakes, strengths, weaknesses and their opinions are of great importance for my learning process so that now when I study any subject I know what I should work on to improve” (First reflection, participant #6, lines 23-29).

As this fragment suggests, in a co-teaching setting, feedback should be done at least by completing a three-stage cycle which consists of a phase where co-teachers track down weaknesses and strengths(*follow-up*), a stage where co-teachers help students devise a plan of improvements and consolidation (the *plan of action*), and ultimately, a stage where a more individualized plan of action or plan of strategies is set forth (*customization*).

Discussion

Revisiting the literature about co-teaching in terms of its relation to educators' professional development, there is an emphasis on how two teachers improve their methodologies, dynamize teaching strategies, and foster an enriching learning environment. This finding aligns with the outcomes from Anani et al., (2016) which proved that co-teachers could improve in terms of teaching skills, language command, and pedagogical competencies. Notwithstanding, the professional growth angle unearthed in our study reveals how we can generate reflections in student-teachers about the way they could implement this strategy as they are immersed in a two-folded process, performing first as language learners, and secondly, as language co-teachers. This matches the notion of student-teacher identities from Sfard and Prusak (2005), who describe that there are two identities future teachers perform: one, the factual identity (foreign language learners), and the other one, the designated identity (in-service foreign language teachers). It is worth mentioning that in this study a group of student-teachers had the opportunity to perform these two identities at a very early stage in their major, unlike other cases such as López (2020), who could co-teach with two self-contained teachers in the last phase of her teaching practicum.

This suggests that to carry out good practices of co-teaching within student-teachers' education settings, it is paramount that not only do they grasp the declarative knowledge of what co-teaching is as students but experience and live the role of instructing as such in order for them to transition from that declarative stage to a performative one, which harmonizes with the discursive and performative dimensions from Benwell and Stokoe (2006). Having student teachers reflect upon their experience as language learners as well as co-teachers results in opportunities to construct their teacher identity through a professional envisioning process.

A pattern in the studies from Butterfield and Bhatta (2015); Lee (2017); King (2018), as well as Puello and Ramirez (2020), is that one of the co-teachers occupies a central role in the differentiated teaching process, whereas the other one supports and assists that leadership from the head teacher. The educator who assists the main one tends to be either a language student-teacher or a foreign language educator who may or may not have vast experience of teaching. Conversely, our research shows an angle on co-teaching in which the relevance of the findings resides mostly on student-teachers, who act as learners and subsequently perform as co-teachers. They valued the effects this strategy had on their learning process as foreign language students and opened new perspectives in their future careers as teachers.

The findings in the category *Professional Development and Co-Teaching* show how a group of student-teachers started to empower themselves as educators by assessing co-teaching as a tool to boost the learning process in their future students. It could be inferred that they envisioned their vocational path, and from this vivid experience, they could make informed choices about the context, population, and purpose of using collaborative teaching, which resembles the didactic and pedagogical teacher's professional growth dimensions from Nafiye and Hatice Celebi (2020). In narratives and interviews, their voice as educators revealed recognition of their beliefs about options to teach and co-teachers to work with. By way of example, student-teachers pinpointed the novelty of co-teaching in terms of teaching strategies, workload management, classroom environment, and time and resource handling.

Studies about co-teaching, at least the ones involving teacher education, imply that for successful collaborative teaching, there should be a two-folded cycle. One stage entails future teachers experiencing as learners and then performing as co-teachers. This will guarantee that participants' reflections become enriching for assessment purposes in pursuing and consolidating projects in language teaching education programs.

Literature revealed that the potential connection between co-teaching and metacognitive processes has not been clearly stated as mutually intertwined. One of the most prominent findings in our study is the likely benefits that collaborative teaching might provide students and teachers with concerning metacognitive strategies.

In principle, relying upon co-teaching represents an enriching environment for learners as they are exposed to a diversity of input, materials, teaching strategies, and contents, which embraces some of the benefits of co-teaching from St. Cloud University (2011). Such exposure propels language students to self-regulate and make the most of activities, tasks, and methodologies suggested by the co-teachers. In this research, student teachers highlighted that the co-teaching environment gave them insights on how to plan, organize tasks, and manage time according to the needs of the course, which relates to executive functions considered paramount in terms of metacognitive strategies.

As stated earlier, metacognitive strategies suggest learning styles preferences and needs, planning a task, gathering and organizing materials, organizing a schedule, monitoring mistakes, and doing task assessment. Also, they evaluate the success of a given strategy, exerting the management of the learning process overall. From future teachers' perspectives, some metacognitive aspects might have been privileged in the co-teaching propelled, as co-teachers took care of a reduced number of students in an online environment under the Covid-19 contingency.

Participants remarked that the enriching insights given by the co-educators permeated metacognitive awareness on how they could organize efforts and strategies to fulfill a task and reach a language learning goal, and on how to design an effective action plan to overcome difficulties previously spotted in the peer, self, and co- assessment. They also acknowledged having developed some awareness in terms of time management. That is to say, they made the most of the time provided during the week, were accountable for the work done, and set reachable goals. These three metacognitive aspects are related to the strategic competence learners are to acquire autonomously. Although metacognition encompasses individual and intrapersonal behavior, this study revealed that the collaborative job performed by the co-educators proved to be vital in fostering and mediating metacognitive processes.

Moreover, the development of autonomy and accountability derived from this experience is connected to one of the most relevant metacognitive strategies: *self-regulation*. In this research, self-regulation was embodied within the deconstruction student-teachers made from the co-teachers' insights and remarks provided at the collegial feedback stage. That deconstruction was shaped by the fact that the co-educators were showing, for instance, different techniques to handle time wisely, multiple tips to get to grips with linguistic shortcomings, and different alternatives to approach a topic or develop a task. This, in turn, sheds some light on the

connection between the development of metacognitive strategies and co-teaching propelled by the implementation of differentiated learning principles, which includes providing students with different materials and resources, different alternatives or choices to develop a task, dealing with learning difficulties in alternative ways and approaching of language skills differently considering needs and interests (St. Cloud University, 2011).

Let us recollect that this co-teaching experience yielded most of the expectations researchers had set their minds to, facilitated by, on the one hand, the small size of the group, and on the other hand, the emergency remote- teaching and online- learning setting in which co-teaching classes took place. The results from this study make room for future consideration around the implementation of co-teaching in larger groups of language teaching programs and under other modalities such as blended learning and presential mode lessons.

Complementary to the metacognition, lies the importance of joint feedback, which in this study featured a central aspect by its horizontal, collegiate, and collaborative nature, in line with the views on collegial work from Clement and Vandenberghe(2000); Aliakbari and Bazayr (2012); Anani et al. (2016); Lee(2017); King (2018)and López (2020). These traits are enriched by teachers' expertise, knowledge, and teaching backgrounds since each co-teacher contributes with their particular views and insights to students' language learning. This type of feedback was praised by learners who found it useful as it helped them to be aware of their own mistakes, connected to the metacognitive strategy of monitoring the learning process: students established a plan of action based upon self-as well as co-teachers'assessment related to self-regulation strategies, and finally, selected the most suitable strategies to reach learning goals attending individual needs; the metacognitive assessment learners made of the strategies they have used.

It was iterated that they praised the highly metacognitive enacting nature of the feedback from co-teachers and assigned that feedback these properties: practicality, reliability, validity, and impact. Thus, the observance of a comprehensive feedback process that entails a follow-up plan of action, and customization stages is instrumental in a co-teaching experience.

Considering the findings discussed, it is suggested for future co-teaching endeavors that educators involved in the process develop commitment and belonging to the learning process of their students, shaped in a disposition to meet their colleagues before classes, agree on assessment criteria and be willing to provide remarks promptly (Villa et al., 2008)

Conclusion

From prospective teachers' views, an important finding that emerged was that co-teaching might function as a great option to enrich learning processes in their future students. Learning could be dynamized by the wide variety of didactic strategies, activities, and resources this strategy implies. This finding represents a contribution to student-teachers' professional growth as they projected themselves implementing co-teaching in their career.

On a metacognitive level, it was revealed that said richness of choices also entailed customization of learning styles and learning needs allowing a personalized focus on each student, which was reflected in an increase in the one-to-one attention range (Escobar 2020).

Such increased attention range was facilitated by the not-so-large number of student-teachers taking the course (12) and by the emergency and online remote learning environment brought about by the Covid 19 pandemic. Thus, teachers could instruct lessons using parallel and team-teaching strategies without causing disruption or distraction in the management of time and space. This might have not happened if the experience had been carried out in a larger group and within an in-person mode learning environment.

Furthermore, co-teaching was praised by student-teachers as a facilitating technique in terms of giving feedback. By way of example, when the two teachers joined a collegial feedback session, there was a synergy between them for they had previously made an agreement, shaped in an assessment rubric to share criteria and boost the quality and reliability of feedback. This made feedback delivery distinctive because it derived from the co-teachers' experiences, their education, and their instructional goals. It was also revealed that feedback, in co-teaching becomes relevant if co-teachers focus on different learners' needs aside from the mere linguistic component and render it formative.

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