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Systematization of pedagogical experiences

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Alexandra Soto, my wife; and Arjhen, my son. I could not have done any of this without your love and support. Thank you for being there for me, always. Amare et sapere vix deo conceditur.

Jorge

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Jorge

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The present work titled Systematization of Pedagogical Experiences deals with how important, experience is for teachers. It focuses on personal teaching experiences, environments, methodologies, strategies, techniques and communicative competences to have a better picture of the importance of systematizing teaching experiences. This work has three main sections: literature review, method and the analysis, reflection and application of experiences along with conclusions and recommendations. Systematization is a way to produce knowledge which can help teachers achieve better teaching practices. I analyzed my real teaching experience in high schools and the one I got after having carried out a student-teaching assistant internship in an elementary school. After this analysis, I was able to draw some conclusions, and I must say that to me, the most important one was that in both private and public schools there is a persisting problem with the use of Spanish in the English classroom which should be figured out through the systematization of our teaching experiences. Therefore, we have to be careful when and how to allow it without being too radical or too lenient.

Keywords: Systematization, communicative competence, teaching experience, student-teaching assistant internship

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo titulado Sistematización de Experiencias Pedagógicas trata sobre cuán importante la experiencia es para los profesores. Se enfoca en experiencias de enseñanza, ambientes de trabajo, metodologías, estrategias, técnicas y competencias comunicativas para entender la importancia de sistematizar experiencias. Este trabajo tiene tres secciones: revisión de la literatura, método y el análisis, reflexión y aplicación de experiencias además de conclusiones y recomendaciones. La sistematización es una forma de producir conocimiento que ayuda a lograr mejores prácticas educativas. Analicé mi experiencia real de enseñanza en colegios y la obtenida con las prácticas de enseñanza en una escuela como parte de pasantías pre profesionales. Después de este análisis, saqué algunas conclusiones y debo decir que la más importante fue que tanto en escuelas y colegios privados y públicos hay un problema persistente con el uso de español en las clases de inglés que debería ser resuelto a través de la sistematización de nuestras experiencias educativas. Por lo tanto, tenemos que ser cuidadosos de cuándo y cómo permitir el uso del español sin ser muy radical o muy permisivo.

Palabras clave: Sistematización, competencias comunicativas, experiencia educativa, pasantía de asistente de profesor

INTRODUCTION

Systematization of pedagogical experiences was something that immediately appealed to me ever since I was introduced to it because it focuses on experiences and on how to get the best out of them. The single fact that I would be allowed to share my personal teaching experiences, that I would be able to reflect on them to learn more from a different perspective was both interesting and also very challenging. There is nothing harder than facing your own mistakes, but at the same time, it is very rewarding if you do it with honesty because, in the end, you would end up gaining new, useful and practical knowledge.

To be able to perform this systematization process, I had to first work on the necessary literature review so that I could have as much useful information as possible to reflect on my experiences from a pedagogical point of view with the proper evidence and support. This literature review covered different aspects such as questions about teaching and learning along with methodologies or communicative competences among others. After this, I had to describe my personal teaching experiences and contrast that against scientific support found in the previous section. I finally had to write my conclusions and recommendations, and I must say that writing about my teaching career which started almost fifteen years ago made me realize of my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher and it has made me see how much more I can still improve in my beloved profession with better teaching practices.

To close, I must say that all the information here should be helpful for other teachers, both new and experienced ones, and for anyone else in the education field so that they can ideally benefit from the theories and concepts shared here along with my own contributions.

CHAPTER I:

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is teaching?

Teaching is a process that revolves around the idea of taking care of people´s needs, their feelings and experiences via interventions, which will help them learn anything in particular. These interventions come in the shape of questioning, listening, detailing information or describing events or facts in order to demonstrate a skill by carrying out different activities such as note taking or discussion among other examples (Smith, 2016).

As similarly mentioned above, teaching is the sharing of knowledge and experiences that take place in a discipline and in a more general sense, it is the act of stimulating the intellectual and psychological growth of an individual by another one (Impedovo & Iaquinta, 2013).

Accordingly, It is argued that teaching is a personal contact between two individuals with one of them being more mature than the other to promote learning in the less mature individual (Kumar, 2012).

Likewise, Teaching is defined as an interactive process that takes places mostly in a classroom environment between a teacher and a student through specific actions (Subramani, 2016).

Besides, Teaching can be outlined as the means in which more experienced people take care of guiding the less mature ones in order for them to adjust to the world we live in (Mudasir & Pandith, 2012).

Additionally, Teaching can be regarded as a procedure in which an individual will try to overcome situations with obstacles and gaps by manipulating them to learn in the process of such manipulation (Hyland, 2011).

What is learning?

Any activity can be seen as learning as long as there is development in the individual being part of such activity provided the fact that his/her experiences and behavior are different than they were before said activity (Shergill, 2012).

In the same way, Learning can be stated as a development procedure to be able to respond in a correct fashion to a possibly not encountered before situation and this procedure will help a person acquire and develop new knowledge (Aggarwall, 2014).

Additionally, Learning can be defined as a permanent change in an individual as a consequence of constant practice because this consistent practice would, therefore, cause a change in an individual's behavior potentiality (Dharmaraj, 2015).

Moreover, learning is a process meant to have an individual acquire knowledge and all kinds of skills and competences, which are needed in real life. That, in the end, will cause a change in the behavior of said individual (Parankimalil, 2014).

Modern methodologies, strategies, techniques, materials (current trends)

Teacher-Centered Approach to Learning

Teachers have the main role in this model and students are seen as passive receivers of information through lectures or direct instruction. The main goal here is to test the students after having passed the knowledge onto them. A big con for the students is that they may get easily bored and they can start wandering in their minds, which may lead them to miss important topics; besides, they may not feel completely free to express their own ideas. A lecture is a teaching method part of the teacher-centered approach, which is, at its heart, an oral presentation given by a teacher to students. In a lecture, a teacher is the main source of information and knowledge, and it can be done informally, which is just talking with students. Formally, it aims at mainly transferring information and students are expected to take notes mostly; whiteboards or overhead projectors are especially useful in lectures (Varatta, 2017).

Student-Centered Approach to Learning

Despite the fact that teachers will be the figure of authority in the classroom, students in this model are considered as equals in the learning process. In this case, teachers become facilitators of learning for the students. Assessment is achieved here through formal and informal assessment such as projects, portfolios or even class participation; therefore, student learning is measured continuously during the whole academic year or period (Varatta, 2017).

Inquiry-based Learning

Inquiry-based learning focuses on having the students investigate actively and on practical learning. The teacher is a facilitator who will guide and support the students throughout the entire learning process who will have a very active role in their own learning development. First of all, students think of questions that they would like to answer. To do so, they have to write a problem statement to adjust their question in order to find possible answers and/or solutions. Then, a research process has to be carried out, but it is important for this to be done mostly in class so that they get constant help and feedback from the teacher. After this process, the students should be able to create some sort of product out of their research to present it in class. Finally, the students should have to reflect on what they learned throughout the entire process sharing what went well and what did not so that conclusions and recommendations can be drawn always with the teacher giving positive feedback (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016).

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning is a method that makes a great emphasis on group work with an academic and social goal in mind and a very common technique used here is "Think-Pair-Share" to develop social skills along the way and reciprocal teaching to develop more knowledge. The

Think-Pair-Share strategy is very useful with cooperative learning technique that focuses on encouraging students to cooperate actively in class and to do so, students are asked questions that must be answered following a three step process that starts with them thinking on their own about said question. Then they have to share their thoughts with a partner (in pairs) to finally share their ideas with the rest of the class. As for materials go, it is pretty situational depending on what is happening in the class. Novels can be a great source for reading understanding; scientific or philosophical topics can be used for writing activities or history books can be used to start debating first in pairs and then as a whole class (Lewis, 2016).

Presentation – Practice – Production (PPP)

The PPP method can be considered as a simple approach to teaching English since it is made up of three phases or stages (Presentation, Practice and Production) that are easy to recognize for people who have learned anything before and it can be used to teach functions, vocabulary and even pronunciation. First, the presentation stage focuses on having a warm up activity to catch the students' interests in the class and also in the target language but always within a context the students are familiar with. Next, the practice stage focuses on form, which means that all the students are given many opportunities to practice in class the target language being learned. It is crucial for the students at this stage to be monitored by the teacher to correct any mistakes and encourage them to keep practicing. Finally, the production stage focuses on fluency by providing the students with plenty of opportunities to put in practice the target language once again but this time without any or very limited help from the teacher (Nascimento, 2010).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The CLT stresses the ability to convey a message rather than focusing too much on grammatical or phonetical accuracy which means this method emphasizes the development of communicative abilities. In CLT, language is not seen only as grammatical patterns with vocabulary in it. It also includes language functions that students need to learn to know in order to use the appropriate language in the correct situations, which means CLT is not only about language but also about how it is used. Moreover, if students are exposed to enough English, with plenty of opportunities and motivation, language learning will happen naturally by having the students communicate in real life situations with real messages without the use of controlled language. Another thing to consider is that the use of mother tongue is accepted as a tool to progress in the language acquisition process, but it should be used only in very specific moments as a bridge to get to the target language. There are many activities that can be used with this approach such as storytelling or role-plays among others. In fact, any activity that

engages learners in real, authentic communicational situation is enough to be part of this approach because the goal here is to involve the students in social, interactive activities. Besides, an interesting fact of this approach is that when it comes to materials to work with in class, virtually any material that is authentic to native speakers is good enough such as newspapers, magazines, TV shows, menus or flyers; this kind of material is known as realia. However, with beginner students, it is advisable to use realia without too much text on it (Harmer, 2012).

Task-Based Learning (TBL)

In TBL, language learning is fostered through a series of activities or steps leading to the successful completion of a specific task; therefore, the emphasis is on the task itself rather than the language. Students can carry out a task that requires some problem-solving skills for example, and once the task is done, they can look back at such task to observe and analyze the language that was used in it to focus this time on the mistakes that were made. A common TBL task usually starts with a pre-task which means the students are introduced to the task they will have to perform followed by a task cycle, which is the stage where the students have to plan what actions/activities they will have to perform to carry out such task by focusing on the language and information they will need. A final stage would be the language focus stage in which the students will analyze the language they used throughout the task, and in such process, the focus will be on improving, correcting and practicing all the language they used to develop better language skills. This method revolves around the idea that things can be accomplished with language and how language can help us carry out different tasks. This method differs completely from the PPP method because the TBL approach starts on the final element of the PPP, which is production and therefore the methods are entirely different (Harmer, 2012).

Total Physical Response (TPR)

TPR is a method to teach mostly vocabulary by using the body through physical actions that happen when verbal input from the teacher takes place. It is meant to imitate how little children learn their native language, and it is also meant to have the students participate more naturally in class. A usual TPR class is based on instructions from the teacher in hopes that the students carry out said instructions with examples such as "Stand up" or "Open the door" which are actually required to be performed by the students. This method is, because of its simplistic nature, meant to be used with beginner levels and it should be both motivating and fun. A class with this approach should start with the teacher gathering everything needed to illustrate the words to be taught in such class. Then the teacher should say the new words and model them in

any possible physical way for the student to imitate such modeling of words. After this point, all these words should be written down on the board so that the students can make a connection between sounds and words. Finally, there should be more repetition and practice of all the words to make sure the students do not forget the new vocabulary (Asher, 1969).

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL is a method that focuses on languages and intercultural knowledge, and it is the best method to teach a subject through a foreign language. CLIL has many advantages as a method since it helps the students to raise cultural awareness along with language skills development. A CLIL lesson should focus on developing knowledge related to the specific curriculum of the subject. The target language has to be used to learn said subject, there must be abstract and concrete concept development to bring an understanding of both the subject and the target language, and there must be opportunities in the class to raise cultural awareness. Also, all four language skills should be present in this kind of lessons. Listening activities should be done all the time, all reading activities have to be carried out by using non-adapted material (realia), and speaking has to be done with a great deal of emphasis on fluency rather than accuracy. Furthermore, writing has to be seen as a process to recycle and practice grammar (Darn, 2006).

Flipped Classroom

Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach in which the traditional classroom-based learning is flipped or reversed with the main goal in mind of introducing the students to the topics to be actually learned in future classes so that they can spend their class time on activities aimed at putting into practice the knowledge they previously acquired outside the classroom to deepen their understanding of said knowledge with the help and support of the teacher. In order to flip the classroom, we can apply the Six Thinking Hats strategy. It is a strategy to guide and focus students' thinking, perspectives, and solving problem skills. Six hats in different colors are needed for the students to wear them when they are analyzing a situation or problem in class. The colors of the hats the students have to wear will reflect a role or perspective students have to take in order to solve a problem: white means data or facts, red means feelings or emotions, yellow means positive view or benefits, black means caution or judgment, green means creativity or new ideas and blue means summaries or decisions. This strategy can be used with pairs, larger groups or even individually. Another useful strategy here is the jigsaw technique. This is very effective to engage students in large classes. Teams of students have to research different aspects of the same topic or problem. Once they have done this, they have to spread among other groups to share what they have learned and also learn what others have found out

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about that topic as well. This process can be repeated as many times as needed to cover all the aspects of the problem being analyzed. In the end, all students should be able to report on the possible solutions to the topic or problem with the entire class to get feedback from the teacher. All kinds of materials can be used with this approach since it is a normal class but turned upside down. Online platforms such as www.edmodo.com or www.schoology.com are very useful to work with students on the inverted part of the class which is them checking at home what their next class/classes will be (Honeycutt, 2016).

Communicative competence

Communicative competence refers to the knowledge of syntax, morphology or phonology among other aspects of a language and it also refers to the social awareness to know when to use utterances in a correct fashion. This concept is greatly accepted nowadays in the world of education in contrast to past points of view in which grammar knowledge was considered as a top priority (Zhang, 2016).

Close to the idea above, communicative competence is the student's ability to convey ideas in a correct fashion considering effectiveness, adaptability, empathy, conversational involvement and management along with appropriacy to achieve proper communication not only based on correct grammar usage but also being socially aware (McWorthy, 2016).

Additionally, it can be mentioned that communicative competence is the ability to use the English language in a way that is both grammatically correct and socially appropriate to be able to express a suitable behavior regarding cultural context (Poolsawada, Kanjanawaseeb, & Wudthayagorn, 2014).

Besides, it should be considered that communicative competence is what language users must keep in mind to communicate appropriately in language and social contexts and to do so, not only a correct use of grammar must be achieved but also must it be used according to social situations (Mora, 2015).

Teacher's roles

One of the main roles of a teacher (any teacher) is to motivate and encourage the students to grow an aspiration to genuinely wish to learn. A teacher does not simply teach or prepares them for assessment. A teacher must be a source of inspiration for the students to feed on in order to successfully develop personal, social and professional skills so that they become fully responsible of their own development. A teacher has to assess students, be organized, promote discipline, along with good and respectful communication; and always be aware of his or her weaknesses and strengths. A teacher must also meet students' needs individually and as

a group, so that knowledge and enjoyment are part of the class (Machin, Hindmarch, Murray, & Richardson, 2015).

Following the ideas above, it can be said that a teacher is responsible for planning instructions, delivering instruction, assessing students and also controlling the classroom. However, our modern society is pushing those limits or roles of a teacher beyond that. Teachers have to prepare students and also be prepared to focus on twenty-first-century skills, thus, adding some more to their traditional roles. Therefore, the teacher must now focus on planning for evolving careers which means they have to go beyond the core standards to incorporate technology in the classroom and also provide scaffolding to help students develop their own personal ways of knowing and thinking about our ever-growing society. Besides, all of these should be carried out always keeping in mind the students' individualities so that they actually feel challenged and motivated (Stronge, Grant, & Xu, 2015).

Furthermore, being a teacher involves more than just teaching any subject in a classroom; it involves multiple roles such as being a lesson planner and designer who is always taking into consideration the students' interests. In addition, a teacher has to become a facilitator to provide students with all the resources, tools and information they may need in order to succeed in their knowledge development. A teacher must also be a leader, the person all students want to reflect on; that happens by earning their respect through not only words but also especially through actions such as counseling or even acting as a surrogate parent. Additionally, a teacher is also a tutor advising and guiding the students in their learning, and this can be done on an individual level or with the whole class as a group, which is useful to meet the students' needs (Nola, 2016).

Finally, we should also mention that teachers have the responsibility to control their classrooms keeping discipline, create a nice environment to bring joy in the classroom, guide and support students and be positive role models always paying attention to any signs of trouble in the students to quickly help, guide and even protect them from any harm (Guyana Ministry of Education, 2015).

Motivation and its roles in language teaching

Motivation is a very important factor to achieve any goal, especially in education. It is virtually impossible to think of someone learning a language without any kind of motivation. In fact, the lack of motivation is what determines the disappointment students feel when learning a language and then they just quit. It is what provides the primary boost to start learning a foreign or second language and not only that, but it also provides a force to keep that initial boost along the sometimes-tedious process of learning a language (Al Ghamdi, 2014).

Furthermore, motivation is a factor that makes a person want to learn and when we talk about a second or foreign language; two types of motivation must be considered: Instrumental motivation, which deals with learning a language as a tool and Integrative motivation, which deals with learning a language to communicate with others (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

In addition to the above mentioned, motivation not only is a factor to be considered focusing on students but also on the teachers' own motivation and this is actually something that not everybody pays attention. If a teacher is not motivated to teach, then there is a huge chance that his/her students will become unmotivated in no time. Different psychological aspects are to be considered when analyzing teachers' motivation such as co-adaptation which is basically how a teacher adapts to a new teaching environment, and this change may lead to a transformation in the motivation of his/her students. Other aspects to be considered are teacher cognition, which refers to what teachers know, believe and think and also teacher affect which refers to the emotions towards the teaching environment, students or textbooks and these play an important role on how a teacher engages in a class (Bier, 2014).

It should also be mentioned that motivation is an internal process that helps a student keep up with a good learning pace over the whole learning process to achieve great learning goals. Considering this, motivation could be seen from three different levels such as efforts emphasizing the drive of a student, desire to see what the student actually wants and affect to observe the student's emotional reactions. Additionally, it is worth mentioning integrative motivation that refers to the desires of the students to be part of the culture of the language they are trying to learn and also instrumental motivation which refers to wanting something because of practical reasons such as getting into college or getting a new job (Rehman, Bilal, Sheikh, Nawaz, & Bibi, 2014).

Teaching experience (gift or acquired skill)

Most teachers agree that no university preparation gives you the one thing you really need to be a good or better teacher, which is experience. This teaching experience comes from different activities such as planning a class, preparing class material or interacting with students in real classrooms (Bezanson, 2003).

Additionally, teaching is a challenging and pleasant experience, especially for new teachers because they go through this student to teacher transformation, which is fully loaded with positive and negative feelings that are part of the teaching profession (Meanwell & Kleiner, 2014).

Besides, it is believed that teaching is similar to other professions in the sense that it can even get to be emotionally unpleasant. However, that is not right at all because many studies

have proven that teaching brings joy to teachers in many ways such being satisfied or feel highly committed with the teaching profession with a high degree of confidence which researchers have described as positive emotional labor (Tsang, 2011).

Finally, a teacher may face many challenges during his or her career. Sometimes they may have to deal with troublesome students who are simply not interested in learning and it is at those times that pedagogical strategies may come in handy. However, the answer to figure out how to deal with that kind of student lies in the personal experiences you accumulate as a teacher and it is a great idea to deal with students in a personalized way and never make assumptions about them. It is the teacher's task to motivate the students all the time and know what takes the motivation away from them (Kelly, 2017).

Links between experience and teaching

Experience is a key factor in teaching. It has to do with the belief that more experienced teachers tend to be better teachers because of all the background they have accumulated over the years; it would be foolish to try to deny that. However, great levels of performance are actually achieved by new teachers during their first years in the profession, and then, after some time, that performance gets stable. It proves that more experienced teachers get to that point of high performance because of the boost they experienced during their first years of teaching (King, 2010).

Additionally, the idea that teachers acquire all the tools they need to be prepared to be good teachers throughout their education is implied; however, becoming a fully proficient teacher only comes from the experience you get by teaching in all kinds of teaching environments (Ladd & Sorensen, 2015).

Furthermore, teachers do not get a high degree of achievement during their first year of teaching, but as time passes by and experiences start to pile up, there is a great improvement in their teaching efficiency in the following years of their educational career, and this effectiveness gets even better when teachers teach the same grades or levels (Kini & Podolsky, 2016).

To close, less experienced, younger teachers are more likely to quit teaching because of many factors such as low salaries, little or no support from the schools they work for and even because of a poor classroom management with high levels of indiscipline (Hanover Research, 2016).

CHAPTER II:

METHOD

Setting and Participants

My entire student-teaching internship was carried out in a private school in Machala, El Oro. This institution has three sections: Kindergarten, Elementary School and High School and it has a population of one thousand one hundred students with a daily schedule from 7 am to 1 pm in Elementary school and from 7 am to 2 pm in High School. It does not have a bilingual system, but the authorities and the English department put a great deal of emphasis on English as a very important subject.

I performed as a teaching assistant in five different classrooms in elementary school: first grade A and B, fourth grade A and B and fifth grade A. They all had a slightly different number of students, but on average, there were 18 students per class with a mixed population of boys and girls in every classroom. First graders age was between five and six; fourth graders age was between seven and eight and fifth graders age was between eight and nine years old. The main teachers of each respective class supervised all of the activities performed by me as an assistant.

Additionally, I was the main teacher in five more classrooms in elementary school as well: fifth grade A and B, sixth grade A and B and seventh grade A. They all had slightly different number of students, but on average, there were 21 students per class with a mixed population of boys and girls in every classroom. Fifth graders age was between eight and nine; sixth graders age was between nine and ten and seventh graders age was between ten and eleven years old. Even though I was the teacher in such classes with lesson plans I had previously prepared, the main teacher of each classroom checked them and made some suggestions to have a better class and they were present in each class observing and guiding my teaching process.

Procedures

In order to carry out this project of systematization of pedagogical experiences, I had to gather information from both physical and digital sources such as books, journals, pedagogical magazines and other research projects. It is worth mentioning that even though most of my physical sources were published after 2012, which is considered up-to-date, I found better and more updated information on online sources, especially educational journals which are nowadays mostly or only (in some cases) published online.

As part of my student-teaching internship, I had to be a teaching assistant in five classes in elementary school and teach in five more classes in elementary school. This was part of the course component called "Pasantías Preprofesionales I." It has to be carried out in an elementary school. I also included specific details about my real life teaching experience, which was very useful to round up the idea behind the systematization process.

In order to gather information it was necessary to collect observational data with journals to keep track of everything that happened during my experience as a teaching assistant and as a teacher. Lesson plans were also necessary along with reports and supporting evidence in the shape of pictures and class observation rubrics signed by the teachers who accompanied me during my teaching practice.

To systematize both my teaching internship and my real life teaching experience I considered aspects such as the main outcomes of my teaching practice and also my own strengths and weaknesses as a teacher throughout these years to able to come up with honest conclusions and useful recommendations that could turn into useful knowledge for other teachers.

CHAPTER III:

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of results

Teaching experience

I would like to describe my teaching experience in two sections. The first section will revolve around what I did during the teaching internship I had to carry out as a course component and then, I would like to describe my real teaching experience.

In 2015, I had to do a teaching internship as a course component of the English curriculum in an elementary school. Even though I already had a good teaching background, I had never taught any elementary school kids and that was a very interesting and challenging experience. I had to observe and help in five classes during the first term and I had to teach five classes during the second term.

In the first term, I was a teaching assistant, and as such, I had to help with different things such as running attendance, handing out books, writing or even drawing a few things here and there on the board to help the teacher. I must say I was enjoying myself because I felt a little relieved since I was not the teacher but an assistant with fewer responsibilities. After observing and helping, I had to write a journal in which I had to include the activities I performed as a teaching assistant, and I also had to write an analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the lesson plans the main teacher used in those classes along with some conclusions and recommendations.

In the second term, I had to teach five different classes in five different grades. This experience was a lot different from what I did in the first term because this time I was the one teaching. I had never taught in elementary school and I was very nervous, especially during the first class, because I did not know how they were going to react to my teaching style which I obviously had to rethink to work with them because working with children is not the same as working with teenagers or young adults. Fortunately, I had no problems at all in any of those classes. The students worked properly and enjoyed the activities I planned for them such as listening to music to sing along which they loved or playing tic tac toe. Of course, not everything was about playing; we worked on different activities such as drilling exercises, reading out loud or listening to answer a few questions. I noticed it is very important to use lots of supporting material such as posters, pictures, audio material, pets and the like to engage the students because they easily drift away in their minds to focus on something else, and I had to do quick transitions between one activity and the next one in order to keep them always motivated.

As for my real teaching experience go, I started working as a teacher back in 2002 as soon as I got my TEFL certification, which I got in the United States of America. As a new teacher, I was –of course– totally eager to come in the class and enlighten my students with all

my knowledge, language skills and a brain fully-packed with fun activities to engage my students into learning. Despite my enthusiasm, I did have some difficulties during my first year of teaching at the school I was working for back those days. In all honesty, I had a hard time trying to adapt or calm my eagerness down to work with my students given the fact that I had to abide by the school rules. I did not mean to disrespect them, but I did not want to stick to them either because they just wanted me to teach a class without being able to try any kind of new technique or methodology. The school authorities just wanted the old-fashioned style of class, and that was hard for me because I was so full of energy and I needed to get it out of my system in the shape of more dynamic and interactive classes.

In my first year of teaching, I used the teacher-centered approach, which according to Varatta (2017) is a method that considers students as passive receivers of information with the main goal of testing them. I did not really enjoy those first steps into the educational field because I felt as being held back by such restrictions. However, it is fair to say that despite the particular restrictions of this method, I did manage to get some good results with my students but not nearly as close as what I would have loved to obtain. That year I worked with senior students in high school (the equivalent of 3rd "bachillerato" nowadays) with at least two lectures per week reviewing advanced grammar structures and one more class to give the students some more feedback through a Q & A activity to, then, test the students on what they had learned during the week. In this question and answer session, we had the only opportunity per week to work in a less controlled environment, and I could really tell how different students would work and react during that given day. The school I was working at that time was not a bilingual one, and the English academic coordinators just wanted the students to master all those grammar structures but not really focusing on polishing real life skills such as speaking or listening to real English other the only source they had which was me. I must honestly say that they did not like those two lectures on grammar they had the first two classes of the week, but as I mentioned above you could see a change in them, they were motivated and that is why that third class of the week flowed so differently.

Fortunately, after my first year working for that school, I found a new job in a bilingual high school in Machala. They were looking for someone energetic, open-minded and easy to talk to in order to teach subjects in English. Working for this school was an amazing opportunity for me professionally speaking because they gave me the freedom I was so eagerly looking for to work with my students. I was asked to teach English as a subject but from the American perspective, which meant we had to teach our students all the aspects of the English language as if they were actually living in the US (they called it English as a Second Language-ESL) and

we used a great book called *Elements of Language* by Rinehart and Holt. This book was great because it allowed me to prepare my students for different language aspects such as academic reading and writing; it also allowed me to work on grammar, usage and mechanics that I could simply not have been able to achieve in my old school.

The methodology I used to teach my students this class was PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) which was all about introducing a certain topic to engage the students. Then they had some time to practice under the teacher's guidance. Finally, they were given opportunities to practice English in a less controlled environment via workshops, debates, plays or the like.

According to Nascimento (2010), this method is particularly useful in this kind of class because the production stage focuses on having the students be more fluent rather than accurate putting in practice the fluency instead of accuracy theory.

My next year there, I was asked to teach a Research 101 class with the idea in mind of helping the students to be ready to write a research paper which was compulsory back those days to be able to graduate from high school. I could say that classes flowed very smoothly with no problems at all. The methodology I used for that research class was task-based learning which revolves around the idea that things can be accomplished with language and how language can help us carry out different tasks; in this case, a research paper. Harmer (2012) claims that it is useful for the students to carry out the task in the language students are trying to learn.

I worked for that bilingual school from 2004 to 2010 teaching all those years the subjects mentioned above. I must say I had a great time teaching those kids because we worked so intensely, so enthusiastically that you could actually see those students always wanting more. They were motivated most of the time, and whenever they felt unmotivated, we would have a music workshop that was all about learning a song by checking first the vocabulary they did not know and then we would sing that song until they sang it with almost perfectly. To make those music workshops interesting, we chose fast songs to make it more interesting and challenging. All of those classes obviously made me feel happy about teaching because my students were learning indeed and that would reflect not only on their exam scores but also in real-life situations where they were able to communicate successfully in English.

In early 2011, I started working for another private school in Machala, and I actually have been teaching there ever since. When I first started teaching there, I worked with eighth graders and the reason why the authorities in the English department asked me to work with that grade was that they had a project in mind to start preparing them to, in the near future, obtain Cambridge English certifications such as B1 and B2.

With that goal in mind, we started working hard that year with a book called *In Sync* published by Pearson and Longman. I worked very hard with that group of approximately 90 students all the way through from eighth to tenth grade. Granted, I did have some problems with my students because they were not learning as fast as others, which I had to deal by giving them extra classes, I can definitely say that we achieved enormous progress. That progress was actually palpable because last year those students took Cambridge tests and their scores were exactly what we were expecting: high enough scores to move them up to the next step towards certifying them with Cambridge. They are now in first year of high school (first "bachillerato") and they already started studying with Cambridge preparation course books with another teacher. During my three years working with that group of students, I applied the communicative language teaching methodology (CLT) which is all about exposing students to enough English to develop in them communicative skills. Harmer (2012) claims that exposing students to English and providing them with lots of opportunities with a good deal of motivation will help them learn naturally.

Last year I worked with a group of select students from first, second and third year of high school, twenty-three altogether, with the goal in mind of getting them ready to take Cambridge official tests at the end of that school year. They all took the Cambridge First Certificate in English test and out of all of them, eighteen passed with a C1 mention.

This year I am teaching students in second year of high school. We are working towards getting the B1 Cambridge certification by the end of this school year and I hope that with more preparation, they will be ready to obtain the B2 certification by the end of next school year.

We are currently working with a book called *Prepare* published by Cambridge and we are working with both CLIL and flipped classroom methodologies. I use the CLIL methodology with certain lessons that try to give the students some more freedom within the class environment without focusing too much on grammar structures but rather on some cultural or scientific topics. Darn (2006) states that in this kind of class, the emphasis should be on fluency and the material to be used has to be authentic English. I must say that in order to avoid my students from getting bored I always try to do activities at the beginning of the class to engage them via music workshops, poetry or quick games among other activities. In general, my students have to work on different projects to put their English in practice such as interviewing someone in English, acting out plays or recording audio books among other activities instead of traditional, boring homework because I try to stick to the Finnish teaching philosophy.

Education in Finland is very interesting because competition is deemed unimportant. Research is greatly emphasized so that teachers can apply in class what works and dismiss

what does not. Playtime is considered as sacred to the point that teachers have to give a ten to fifteen minute break to their students between every class so that they do not get stressed at all, and finally, students have very little or no homework at all because they put a great deal of emphasis on projects instead (Weller, 2017).

As for flipping the classroom goes, I use an online platform called Schoology, which works wonders when flipping the classroom. I upload videos every day about anything we are about to start learning or reviewing in our next class and their task is to make sure they watch the videos so that they come ready to class to start practicing what was previously learned at home and from time to time I upload a few quizzes to reinforce their knowledge. I cannot say they are one hundred percent ready with no questions at all when we start our next class, but they do come with a solid idea of what is about to happen and we start working and putting in practice anything the class is about. Honeycutt (2016) states that flipping the classroom helps develop communicative skills faster because they spend time in class practicing a language rather than just focusing on learning its structures or rules. Besides, it is worth stating that McWorthy (2016) states that communicative competence is, simply put, someone's ability to use a language correctly on social and academic levels to achieve communication. Therefore, flipping the classroom gives me plenty of opportunities to teach my students not only rules here and there but also how to really speak English in a correct fashion on all levels.

One thing it is worth mentioning is the fact that I experienced the same situation in all the different schools I have taught so far: use and abuse of L1 in the L2 classroom. I do not want to be radical and say that Spanish should be totally banned from all English classes because that is just an unrealistic thought.

There are many points of view to consider here: the first one is the fact that bringing or allowing L1 in the English class is not entirely a bad thing. Allowing L1 gives the students a sense of security that enables them to be willing to take risks with English (Schweers, 1999). However, this should be mostly done with beginner levels in order to elicit language, check comprehension or explain complex structures. It would not be useful to do the same with advanced students who require a much higher level of English in the class.

A second point of view here is that students can be tempted to use English for certain situations and use their mother tongue for everything else which can be very detrimental in their language development by limiting their exposure to English (Thomas, 2015).

The inclusion or exclusion of L1 has always been a difficult topic to discuss because there are those who believe it should be completely banned and those who believe it should be allowed with different degrees of permissiveness. Judging from my teaching experience, I can

say that it is, at least in Ecuador, totally up to your teaching environment. My first year as a teacher was not that easy because of the system they had in that school; they were trying to teach them mostly grammar structures in hopes they can learn English as a result of such grammar emphasis. In that case, I had to allow them to speak Spanish for many activities in the class, which was not completely ideal, but at least it helped them. In this case, allowing L1 in the class was very useful.

My next teaching experiences were not that difficult when it came to allowing or banning Spanish in the class. However, even the school where I previously worked, which had a bilingual system, needed some L1 from time to time when things got too difficult for the students to understand and I must say that the same thing happens in the school I am teaching now. Therefore, we must remember that we learn another language from the basis of our own mother tongue and that learning a new language is easier when bilingualism is recognised and used in the classroom because L1 use and translations are inevitable and also inseparable and that should be seen as an advantage for both teachers and students (Hall & Cook, 2013).

Teaching is not only my job; it is my passion. It is that activity that gets me started in the morning, that brings me joy and I do it with love, passion and honesty. Not every day is rainbows and butterflies, but most days are. I feel blessed because there are so many people out there who have a job they hate and in my case, it is quite the opposite. To me, teaching is a very honorable activity and I do not say this in a lyrical, almost poetical way. I say it because way before I became a teacher, when I was a child, I could see some of my aunts who were educators going to work always smiling. Getting back from their schools always laughing, in a positive way, about the so many crazy or lovely things students can get to do or say. Not only that, then they would talk about how some of their former students had become lawyers or doctors or even teachers and that would make them feel proud. Teaching is indeed praiseworthy and that is what made me choose this as a passion, not as a job. Therefore, I can gladly state that I am one of the happiest teachers in the world who still feels challenged every day in every single class.

Having teaching experience is extremely useful to teach better classes and obtain better results from your students. However, we all start at some point as new teachers; we are not naturally born with experience, we acquire it and to do so we have to walk a long path. Some may have almost no experience before teaching other than the observing some real classes or teaching a bunch of lessons as an academic component prior to graduating while others already have experience in the teaching field because they started some time ago and they just need to get a degree to be licensed teachers. It is worth remembering that good, proficient teachers

become so out of the experience you can only get by teaching in real classrooms with real students living the pros and cons of being a full-time teacher (Ladd & Sorensen, 2015).

Despite the fact that I have been teaching English for so many years, I cannot say there is nothing else for me to learn; that would be blatantly ignorant from me. Writing these lines and reflecting on them from this perspective behind the screen has made me see some things that could have been better in my classes with my first students during my first year of teaching or how some things I am doing right now with my students can be improved. One example of this is that I should have more writing workshops to give them even more opportunities to polish their writing skills.

In my case, there is no future pedagogue because I am already working as one but I must say that mentally traveling through my whole teaching experience has been a mind opener experience and I am very sure my classes can and must be better.

Reflection on experience

I have accumulated many great teaching positive experiences such as observing my students academically growing, improving their English day after day, communicating with them in English even better every day and demonstrating along the way they are acquiring great communicative competences.

Many are the methodologies and strategies I have used throughout all these years experiencing both positive and negative academic situations. During my first teaching year, I had to use the teacher-centered approach which is basically a lecture given by a teacher to students (Varatta, 2017). The problem with this method for me was the fact that I felt I was mostly transferring information in the shape of grammar and rules instead of actually teaching my students to develop English language skills from a more practical point of view. During this teaching year, I had to have two lectures per week focusing on advanced grammar structures by using overhead projectors and handouts that all my students got from me at the beginning of every class. At the end of these lectures, we had a small workshop to informally assess the students with some reading or listening material such as articles or real conversations that they had to read or hear in order to answer some questions. I must say the results were not always what I would positively expect from a class of mine maybe because of time factors since they did not have too much time to carry out such workshops or maybe because the lectures themselves were not totally understandable for the students. On the positive side, I had a third class of ninety minutes every week to discuss in a more informal way all we had learned or reviewed during the week. In order to do so, we had a Q and A session in which the students were freer to ask questions about grammar, pronunciation or anything they were not completely sure about.

To make this sessions more viable and more productive, students had to sit in a circle and I tried to avoid answering the questions myself, but rather ask for any student with the answers to such questions to share with the class and I would only intervene when necessary; thus, avoiding too much teacher talk time at least during this class. It is important to mention that teacher talk time (TTT) can benefit students in the shape of demonstrations, but at the same time, it is detrimental if it happens too much during the class because it would keep students from contributing and participating (Declan, 2014).

During my next teaching years, I was able to use the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) methodology to teach English in a bilingual school and I must say this was a completely different and more enjoyable experience because this methodology is great to improve students' fluency (Nascimento, 2010). I was able to work with my students on different aspects such as academic reading and writing; to do so, I first introduced some interesting science-related topic such as cloning or new energy sources brainstorming about said topics to cover the presentation part of this method. Then, to cover the practice stage, I had the students read silently an article on any of the topics we had previously brainstormed on during the previous stage. After this, we applied different strategies depending on the topic, such as scanning which is reading fast keeping an eye on important details to get the gist of the text or focused reading, which is exactly the opposite because it requires slow reading paying attention to the whole text. Another useful strategy was reading to find grammar and sentence structures that the students had to share with the class. All these strategies and techniques were carried out under my guidance. Finally, for the production stage, I asked my students to work on team debates to analyze what they had learned or workshops on identifying grammar structures if they had read with that goal in mind among other activities. As for academic writing goes, we always focused on writing essays about any science-related topics that we discussed at the beginning of the class for the presentation stage; followed by writing arguments and finding evidence to support them with my help to polish any ideas and avoid grammar mistakes. Finally, they had to put all their ideas, arguments, evidence and support down in paper to finish their essays. I put a great deal of emphasis on academic reading and writing because it is essential to develop better language skills and it also develops critical thinking skills in a foreign language (Owusu-Ache, 2014). I must say that the PPP methodology was useful for me considering the students had a pretty much advanced level of English. However, I do believe this method could be used for all students of any level since its main goal is to develop fluency instead of accuracy.

During a couple of years, I was able to use the task-based learning to teach a subject in English called Research 101. It was a pretty much straightforward approach in the sense that my

students had to be ready to work on a simplified research paper so this method was ideal for such goal. Task-based learning is all about developing some task focusing on completing it rather than on the language (Harmer, 2012). We started with the pre-task stage in which I asked my students to think of a science-related topic they would like to research on; when they were ready with some ideas in mind, I helped them choose the best options for them. Once they had an approved topic, we moved to the task cycle stage in which they had first to plan all they needed to do and then, put all those plans in action. This stage would last for at least a two or three months and during all that time, they had to give me bi-weekly reports showing their progress on their researches. Once they had all they needed, they just had to put everything together following a standardized structure to present their research papers. Finally, we had a language focus stage along different classes once their projects were completely ready so that they could share with the class what they had learned regarding English language skills and what caused them more difficulties. I think this method was useful to carry out that research paper task with those specific students, but I honestly do not think it is a suitable method for students of all levels; especially for beginner and intermediate students who do not have all the skills it requires to have in order to perform complex tasks in English such as writing research papers even if they are simplified versions.

I had the opportunity to work with a group of students in another school to prepare them to take the Cambridge FCE test and in order to do so, I used the Communicative Language Teaching methodology (CLT). This methodology focuses on developing real communicative skills along with learning what language to use, depending on the situation where the communicative situation is taking place (Harmer, 2012). This methodology was very useful for me because I needed to prepare my students to pass the FCE exam with a B2 score. The reason I think it was suitable for such purpose is that my students not only developed better English skills but they learned when and how to use language accordingly. A student may know all the grammar rules of a target language, but if he or she does not know what to say or write depending on any given communicative situation, then this student will fail miserably. The CLT methodology helped me to improve my students' English skills by exposing them to not controlled language by reading novels by different authors and from different genres instead of reading graded readers. We also listened to podcasts or just the news from any reliable source instead of listening to pre-recorded material and we even acted out real plays instead of acting out some canned conversations. This helped me expose my students to enough real English and keep them motivated all the time. All of my students passed the FCE test with B2 and even

C1 scores, which allows me to say that, based on such good results, this methodology is extremely useful for students of all levels.

I am currently using the CLIL and flipped classroom with a new group of students who are also getting ready to take the FCE test at the end of this school year. The CLIL methodology allows me to teach any topic from any other subject in English putting a great deal of emphasis on listening with the use of non-adapted material and with lots of writing and speaking activities to develop fluency (Darn, 2006). I do not use this methodology too often in my classes because the textbook we are using this school year only has a few lessons that require this methodology, but when I do use it, I must say it is very useful especially because it forces students to think outside the English box. They have to analyze topics that are not typically studied in an English class such as global warming or how genes work; that is the special thing about CLIL because it gives students more opportunities to learn English from a different perspective other than the typical everyday situations such as small talk or talking about what the weather is like. I find these classes refreshing and useful because the goal is fluency at all costs to learn another subject in English. I am also using the flipped classroom methodology, which is basically teaching in advance what the next class will be by using online resources such as blogs, online videos or educational platforms so that no time is wasted in class on explanations. Instead, the teacher and students can start putting into practice right away what was previously learned before the class actually starts (Honeycutt, 2016). I have used this methodology with a lot of success because my students have a lot more time in the afternoons at home to check what our next class will be. To do so, I created a blog where I post every day what videos or resources they need to check before our next classes and it is very useful because they can check it over and over again if they have problems understanding said resources. However, this methodology requires a great commitment from both sides in order to get good results. Teachers have to spend some extra time uploading what their next classes will be and students have to commit to checking such resources. If any of them fail to do so, flipping the classroom will fail completely.

A negative experience I can think of is what happens to me when I have students who, in spite of everything I do to teach them, to help them, cannot progress because their lives are full of family conflicts such as divorcing parents. When I have students with this kind of situation, I can see they do not even pay attention in class not because they are trying to be disrespectful but because they have no peace of mind. When an adolescent is mentally troubled, he or she cannot learn anything at all. That really makes me feel bad because I feel I fail to this kind of student. Another negative experience happens when I come across students who tell you they do not like English and that they even think it is useless to learn another language in a country

that speaks Spanish. This case is difficult to deal with because changing someone's mentality and attitude towards learning a foreign language is not easy. When this happens to me, I seek for help from our psychologist so that she, as an experienced professional in that field, can talk to this student to try to get him or her out of that negative state of mind. I obviously try to persuade him or her to see the advantages of learning another language as a kind of motivation technique. To close, we need to remember that a teacher has to motivate the students all the time dealing with every student in a personalized way to keep them motivated (Kelly, 2017).

Teaching environment

I started teaching English more than ten years ago and during all those years, I have taught in very different environments which, in one way or another, influenced my teaching style and the outcomes from those classes.

During my first year teaching English, I worked in a private school where the classrooms were very simple with a traditional sitting arrangement of rows and columns with metal chairs and desks. There was a whiteboard on the wall and a lectern for the teachers to give the lectures, and there was also an air conditioner because of the hot temperatures in Machala. This traditional sitting arrangement makes students lose focus and creates more disruptions in the classroom not to mention the fact that it does not encourage human interaction because it focuses on students individually completing their own work (Hannah, 2013). Besides, those metal chairs turned very uncomfortable after a short while and even though parents kept complaining about them, the authorities at that school never really did anything to fix that problem. This may sound irrelevant, but it is not because if you are going to have students sitting down in a not ideal arrangement feeling physically uncomfortable because of said chairs, then those students are not going to be able to concentrate. The problem there for me was that I did not agree with having my students sitting like that, but we had strict instructions not to change such arrangement because they thought it would be detrimental to the school discipline. The only time I was allowed to have my students sit in a circle was on Fridays when we had a Q and A session in a different room with more comfortable chairs and no lectern present. I must say there was a remarkable difference in my students during those Q and A sessions and I could tell they liked those classes better.

On the contrary, the next private school where I worked was quite the opposite because they had a completely bilingual system and its authorities needed a teacher who was able to not only foster but also keep that system working smoothly, and I must say that the teaching environment there was quite optimal to achieve great results. First of all, the classrooms were very comfortable with nice, ergonomic, cushioned chairs for everyone. There were many posters

on the walls to show off the students' works and pieces of art, a comfortable desk for the teachers to use along with an overhead projector to work with digital media. The classrooms were air-conditioned and they even had water dispensers so that both students and teachers could drink as much water as we needed to help the students stay active because drinking water helps students be active, focused, and energized since it can improve brain functions up to a fourteen percent (Akpan, 2013). In general, the school facilities were outstanding; they had a big bilingual library with tons of reading material of all kinds for all the subjects they taught along with two Internet laboratories. It is worth mentioning that the authorities there were very open-minded when it came to trying new methodologies or new activities in general. When a teacher is able to teach in such environment, good learning outcomes happen almost naturally and I must say that my students learned a lot and I could see great improvements in the development of their English language skills.

The school where I am currently teaching is putting a great deal of emphasis on having all of its students certified by Cambridge which means the authorities here are doing everything they can to help the English department and as a consequence of such thing, the teaching environment here is excellent in all aspects. We have classrooms only for English classes where students sit either in groups of four or in a U shape. They are well equipped with air conditioners, comfortable furniture, overhead projectors and a computer per classroom to work with digital media. There is also a small library with plenty of reading material for the students to check out whenever they want or need. The authorities here are very helpful and open to any suggestions that could potentially help improve the English department to the point that they signed an agreement with Cambridge to certify our students who are very receptive and eager to keep learning English and parents, in general, are supportive too. Teaching in this kind of environment is actually inspiring because you can see everyone pushing to a common learning goal.

I have been a substitute teacher a couple of times in public schools and they share by no means the same features their private peers do. One may argue that a fast Internet connection or the latest gadgets in a classroom may not be that necessary in a public school and that may even be true. However, in my short experiences in those schools, I had to teach in overcrowded classes with up to fifty students per classroom, with literally decaying furnishing and no air conditioners. Besides those physical conditions, they had some very poorly chosen textbooks that were neither helpful nor updated. Those students felt totally left behind and that was a reason why they do not even care about learning English. I would like to state that I do not believe that a class will automatically be better because of some fancy facilities, but if we have to talk about learning environments from the perspective of a teacher, class size is very important

to get the best possible scores because the lower the number of students in a classroom, the better the students' performance will be (Jenkins, 2014).

Analyzing all of the above mentioned, we must state that experience is a key factor when it comes to thinking about the systematization process. To understand this, we have to understand that systematization is the logical rebuilding of an experience to interpret it in order to comprehend it. Systematization allows sharing knowledge from realities to compare them with other realities to ultimately contribute with knowledge from practice (ActionAid, 2006).

Additionally, we can also mention an interesting point about experience. It may be seen as a creature pregnant with knowledge and its offspring will only see the light as proper knowledge after a deep and honest analysis through critical reflection (ActionAid, 2006).

The aim of systematization is to clearly explain and organize experiences in order to turn them into something communicable, into something derived from experience that takes the shape of knowledge that emerged from a critical analysis of some previous experiences (Barnechea & Morgan, 2007).

Therefore, we can state that experiences are the core, the heart of a systematization process. They do not directly produce any theory, but they may function as a bridge to a deeper analysis that may end up in conclusions to help create new or improved knowledge on any subject matter and in our particular case, it may help us to find better ways to perform as language teachers. Based on the previous ideas, we can say that systematization is a way to produce, to create knowledge that has emerged from practice. If we start from that premise, we can say that systematization can help educators achieve better teaching practices.

The mere fact of being able to reflect on our teaching experiences is already some sort of progress in itself because there is no better way to solve a problem than analyzing it in the first place. It is this initial analysis what is going to force educators to improve their teaching procedures because the only one who can systematize these teaching experiences is the one who lived these experiences, the teacher.

To close this chapter, I would like to mention some benefits and advantages that can emerge from systematizing our teaching experiences. It can help educators to build up a wider, better and more holistic vision of the teaching world so that they can be fully aware of their strengths, mistakes and also of that which they can truly achieve without being a naive dreamer, thus strengthening educators' overall teaching skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Teaching in private schools all these years have taught me that having better facilities or the latest gadgets and devices to help you with the flow of your class does not, by any means, make you a better teacher.

Teaching in public schools is not an easy task when you have students who just do not see the imperative necessity of learning English, let alone the fact that even other teachers and authorities in such schools deem it as something of not a vital importance.

Carrying out a student-teaching internship was very useful for me because it gave me the opportunity to work with children. I have been a teacher for many years, but I had never worked with elementary school students until that moment. It was honestly a very refreshing activity because everything was different to me from the teaching pace to the activities, materials and teaching techniques.

There seems to be a persisting problem in both public and private schools, which is the use and abuse of mother tongue in the English classroom. Allowing Spanish in the English classroom is not necessarily a bad thing. However, we do not want our students to see English as a platform to say a few words here and there, but as a fully functional linguistic tool that will enable them to communicate successfully in another language.

After having reflected my own personal teaching experience through a systematization process, I can assert without a doubt that it is extremely useful and necessary to carry it out in order to become a better teacher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stay always up-to-date with the latest methodologies, techniques and strategies available to teach English. We have to remember that our society is constantly changing and if we get stuck with old teaching ways, our classes will be boring, our students will not feel motivated at all and a non-motivated student will not learn anything, and you will not have a good time teaching. If you do not enjoy what you are doing, then you should not do it anymore.

English teachers have to be very sensible about how much Spanish they will allow in their classes. It is a not a good idea to be completely radical and ban it entirely from your classes simply because of our national reality, but I do not think it is a good idea to be too lenient either. Take a decision on this tricky and controversial topic based on the reality around you. Consider your students' level of English, their social background and the teaching environment that surrounds you. If you think about all these aspects, you will have a better perspective on how to deal with the amount of L1 that you may allow in your classes.

Carry out a systematization process along with teaching internships because these processes will help you honestly analyze all your strengths and weaknesses from a positive yet critical point of view.

Do your best regardless of the location or situation where you find yourself teaching and never give up on students with poor academic performance. If you need to change the methodology, strategies or techniques you use in your classes, just do it because if you keep working hard and passionately, good results will eventually come.

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ANNEXES

Journal format for teaching assistants

CLASS #:_____ Grade: _____

Activities performed as a teaching assistant

_____
_____
_____

_____

Positive aspects

_____
_____
_____

_____

Negative aspects:

_____
_____
_____

_____

Lesson plan positive aspects

_____
_____
_____

_____

Lesson plan negative aspects:

_____
_____
_____

_____

Lesson plan format used in "Pasantías Pre-profesionales 2"

LESSON PLAN # ___

1. Informative data:

School's name: _____

Theme: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

Class length: _____

Proficiency Level: _____

Lesson plan designer: _____

2. TEFL Objectives

Throughout this lesson, students will be able to

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Methods and strategies

3.1. Methods: _____

3.2. Strategies: _____

4. Anticipatory set: _____

5. Main teaching input:

_____

_____

_____

6. Modeling:

_____

_____

_____

7. Guided practice:

_____

_____

_____

8. Independent practice:

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Assessment:

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Closing review and follow up:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Student's signature:

_____

Journal format for teachers

CLASS # _____ : Grade: _____

Activities performed as a main teacher

_____
_____
_____
_____**Main teacher positive aspects**

_____
_____
_____
_____

Main teacher negative aspects:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Lesson plan and didactic material positive aspects

_____
_____
_____
_____

Lesson plan and didactic material negative aspects

_____
_____
_____
_____