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Re-Signifying Teacher Epistemologies Through Lesson Planning: A Study on Language Student Teachers

Resignificar la epistemología docente mediante la planificación de clases: un estudio sobre profesores de idiomas en formación

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This paper reports the findings of a narrative study on language student teachers' epistemological reconfigurations through lesson planning in a private university in Bogota, Colombia. The study aimed at exploring the possible forms of professional yet personal–local knowledge two language student teachers encounter and produce when they plan language lessons. We employed the life story interviewing to gather information on the subjective essence of the participant's experiences in their teacher practicum. Findings suggest that through lesson planning, language student teachers manage to re-signify certain methodological yet hegemonic constructions of teaching and learning. Furthermore, their knowledge of themselves as teachers in relation to their practicum is shaped by circumstances they face in the process of planning and teaching lessons.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, lesson planning, student teachers, teacher epistemology, teacher identity, teaching practicum

Este artículo reporta los resultados de una investigación narrativa con docentes de lenguas en formación de una universidad privada en Bogotá, Colombia, sobre cómo reconfiguran las epistemologías mediante la planeación de clases. Nos propusimos explorar las posibles formas de conocimiento profesional —local y personal— que docentes de lenguas en formación producen cuando planean sus clases de inglés. Empleamos la entrevista de la historia de vida para recopilar información sobre la esencia subjetiva de las experiencias de los participantes en su práctica docente. Los resultados sugieren que la planeación de clases permite a los docentes en formación resignificar ciertas construcciones metodológicas hegemónicas de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, así como dar forma al conocimiento de sí mismos como docentes en relación con su práctica.

Palabras clave: docentes en formación, enseñanza de la lengua extranjera, epistemología docente, identidad docente, planeación de clases, práctica docente

Introduction

Teacher education programs are expected to foster teaching knowledge and abilities important for prospective language teachers to develop as professionals in educational contexts. To illustrate this, teacher education and development programs attend to areas such as language proficiency, pedagogical skills, and teaching approaches (Buendia & Macías, 2019) that can lead English language teaching (ELT) student teachers to absorb lots of theoretical knowledge which they tend to utilize to make sense of their teaching. Nevertheless, when student teachers begin their teaching practicum, they are influenced by overly technical and rational paradigms which seem to be largely acquired or "borrowed" from their teacher education programs (McDonough, 2012).

Regarding ELT student teachers in language education programs in Latin America, there has been a Western domination over language teaching theories that have existed as colonial remnants of teaching knowledge (De Laurentis & Siccardi, 2015). At the local level, most teacher education programs in Colombia continue, to this day, schooling language student teachers on the importance of knowing methods to grasp what language education *is*. In this regard, Kumaravadivelu (2003) warns about the marginalizing effect of methods in peripheral contexts as Eurocentric idealizations of teaching a language. Despite this overgeneralized vision of instruction, some have started to question these logics by suggesting the need to move away from existing colonial paradigms (Granados-Beltrán, 2018) as "ELT theories and practices that emanate from the former colonial powers still carry traces of those colonial histories" (Pennycook, 1998, p. 19).

Accordingly, teaching education programs in Colombia have maintained epistemological domination over paradigms of language teaching. In this sense, as teacher educators and language teachers, we have witnessed unchanged instruction of contents over the years. For instance, we have beheld how some teacher education programs still train language student teachers to make use of the communicative approach and task-based learning (see Richards & Rodgers, 2001), among others, to track the evolution of language teaching methodologies. This argument is supported by the inventory of BA graduate projects where "featured causality, technicality, and language instrumentality" (Granados-Beltrán, 2018, p. 189) are common approaches to research.

Paradoxically, we believe this tendency could have made some student teachers static and unwitting in their own epistemic beliefs. However, we argue that if epistemological beliefs are often unconscious (Schommer-Aikins, 2004), student teachers' beliefs regarding teaching can be made accessible for examination. One way of achieving this is by decolonizing "the principles and practices of planning, learning, and teaching English" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 540). In this fashion, decentering of Western episteme would be the means to an end.

As far as this study is concerned, we want to foster the conception of epistemic reflexivity (Brownlee et al., 2017) to guide student teachers towards epistemic, liberatory, and transformative teaching practices. We hold the view that such practices originate from the scenario of thinking about planning a lesson. As such, some scholars have argued that the way student teachers construct knowledge is by using lesson planning (Rusznyak & Walton, 2011). As a result, instead of exploring lesson planning and its universal impact (Midha, 2012), we propose to approach it as an epistemological space where student teachers can "think about instructional decisions" (Young & Luttenegger, 2014, p. 25) and voice their own epistemic endeavors to become language teachers in Colombia.

In this vein, this study assumes that teaching knowledges are a fragmented subject and a dynamic category of teacher epistemology. We argue this conception can serve to mobilize an epistemic liberation from the paradigm imposed in language education

programs by (a) attempting to provide some reflective ground to teacher education programs and open room for new alternatives that regard student teachers as knowledge producers and not just as consumers of pedagogic knowledge and materials (Kumaravadivelu, 2016); and (b) assuming an epistemological position towards contesting the "complicity in the relationship between colonizers and colonized and on the possibility of imagining relationships beyond coercion, subjugation, and epistemic violences" (Andreotti, 2011, p. 17).

Theoretical Considerations

Teacher Epistemologies: A Decolonial Viewpoint

Teacher epistemology in this study draws from the dimensions of knowledge presented by Walsh (2005). Walsh (as cited in Granados-Beltrán, 2018) asserts that "the coloniality of knowledge entails the repression of other ways of producing knowledge different from the white European *scientific* one" (p. 178). Consequently, we agree with Castañeda-Londoño's (2019) stance that explores teacher epistemologies as a plural and not singular construct that embraces all *knowledges* that language student teachers construct by re-configuring teaching in the practicum. The main characteristic of these *knowledges* is that they have been made invisible by hegemonic logics that have tried to explain unsuccessfully all the experiences of teaching languages around the world.

We argue that for student teachers to make sense of their becoming English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers they can hold certain assumptions to be true and in turn those assumptions shape who they are and how they teach. Additionally, we also take on the idea that those "true" assumptions can be contested through a process of critical exploration since most of the knowledge student teachers have when they begin their teaching practicum seems to be a colonial remnant of Western notions about teaching.

Equally important, Ferrara (2012) contends that teachers are influenced by epistemologies about teaching and learning. Alternatively, we argue that student teachers' epistemologies include a view of acquired fixed knowledge that is learned during teaching preparation courses; such view is imbued with several beliefs that are either dynamic or fixed depending on the experience they live. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, due to the focus on language teaching methodologies, we assume rationalist teacher education as a "colonial construct of marginality" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 541). As a result, advocating for a decolonization of ELT episteme requires positioning local *knowledges* over the Western model for the use of the language.

The Teaching Practicum in Language Teacher Education Programs in Colombia

In teacher education, the teaching practicum constitutes one of the most influential stages in the initial process of becoming a teacher (Trent, 2013). The term has been defined as the process where pedagogical knowledge is applied in classrooms, seen as meaningful contexts (Roland & Beckford, 2010). Other authors such as Halverson (2004) contend that during the teaching practicum, practitioners adjust knowledge to the context where they will use it. Notwithstanding these vertical, Western understandings of teaching practicum, we advocate for recognizing more localized configurations of the practicum as a complex social practice in which students engage when becoming teachers.

In Colombia's teacher education programs, the pedagogical practicum has been characterized in terms of knowing and doing and the relating experiences emerging from teaching contexts (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018; Lucero & Roncancio-Castellanos, 2019). Nevertheless, concerning the quantity and quality of teaching practicum presence in language teacher education, a compelling study carried out by Castañeda-Trujillo (2017), that examined

the syllabi of 22 different public and private Colombian universities' English teaching programs, revealed that there is a staggering high amount of content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1987) in those education programs. Conversely, the evidence of weight in research and teaching practicum was overly low (less than 10% in each). In this regard, Pinzón Capador and Guerrero Nieto (2018) concluded on those results that "pre-service teacher preparation programs are still located within the passive technician and reflexive practitioner models" (p. 72).

In general terms, it would appear that local studies have made headway in understanding the experiences of student teachers related to the knowledge developed in their contexts. Nevertheless, it seems that hegemonic Western paradigms, traditionally used to explain language teaching planning and practices, seem to fall short in understanding other realities that student teachers interact with in their teaching practicum and that contribute to reconfiguring practice through lesson planning. Seemingly, there is still some sort of instrumentalization teacher practitioners face in their teaching practicum regarding procedures, methodologies, and theoretical concepts that make them see language teaching as a rationalized profession (Granados-Beltrán, 2018). Despite this emphasis on maintaining knowledge of the subject matter, teacher education programs in Colombia have started to open paths to expose student teachers to more textured insights of teaching languages in the country. Such exposure has also been schemed to open room for students to develop a fine-grained understanding of what occurs in classrooms (Fajardo & Miranda, 2015). This *epistemic turn* can constitute initiatives to move language teacher education away from the subaltern place that has established most of the teaching practicum as a mechanism for having student teachers test what has been already said by others in the global North (Mignolo, 2009).

Identities in Language Student Teachers

We share the idea that "teachers are agents who actively construct their own roles" (Mingren & Shiquan, 2018, p. 91). As such, their identities are the result of the integration of past, present, and future experiences (Giddens, 1991) that shape knowledge (Franzak, 2002). In this respect, Rogers and Scott (2008) argue that teacher identity is a relational process of constant construction connected to lived experiences in the professional life. It follows that teacher identity, undoubtedly, is "constructed in interaction with society" (Mingren & Shiquan, 2018, p. 94).

From this standpoint, student teachers' identities become a dynamic process that is constantly shaped and re-shaped along the teaching practicum. Thus, some teacher education programs hinder student teachers from shaping their own self since they are subjected to systematic examination of their teaching (Freese, 2006) as they must comply with a pedagogical practicum curriculum that is often aimed at knowing, doing, and relating to the "teaching context" (Lucero, 2015).

As far as this study is concerned, student teachers' identities are conceived within a continuum where they are constructed from a social, political, and personal perspective (Johnston, 2012). Consequently, by positioning identity as a dynamic construct, we hope to detach from onto-colonial notions of identity in which it is barely in need of negotiation of meaning (Wenger, 1998) and transformation (Monrouxe, 2010).

Lesson Planning and Teacher Knowledge

Lesson planning is definitely important to know how one can best teach. Bailey and Nunan (1996) state that a lesson plan is "like a road map which describes where the teacher hopes to go in the lesson, presumably taking the students along" (p. 18). Similarly, Farrell (2002) conceives a lesson plan as "a written description of how students will move toward attaining specific

objectives" (p. 30). In order to achieve this, it is important for teacher practitioners to scrutinize a set of elements that constitute a lesson plan, as well as develop adequate skills on how to elaborate learning outcomes and related teaching activities.

In addressing the teacher knowledge issue derived from the practice of lesson planning, some research has focused on the idea of the universality of lesson planning application (Midha, 2012). Another study that delves into lesson planning as a source to efficient classroom practice is the study by Rusznyak and Walton (2011) in which they highlight the potential of lesson planning to develop pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and suggest a set of guidelines for students to follow so as to gain confidence in teaching and spur their PCK. Similarly, Causton-Theoharis et al. (2008) problematize lesson planning from an inclusive perspective to teaching by proposing a lesson planning template for the students to promote creative and active learning alternatives for inclusive practices. Locally, though, there exists initiatives to decenter the understanding of lesson planning only as a technical prerequisite to teaching (Carreño & Hernandez, 2017).

Some research has promoted the idea that lesson planning helps "to organize content, materials, learning objectives, strategies, instructional procedures, assessment, and time allotted for each activity" (Solís Hernández, 2007, p. 229). Nevertheless, in this paper, we purport to extend the conversation from instrumental assumptions about lesson planning as only an "instructional improvement strategy" (Lewis et al., 2006, p. 3), to a space for epistemological (re) construction where student teachers can (re)configure personal and disciplinary knowledge(s). We contend those other *knowledges* can shape student teachers' professional identities as well as their teaching. In this vein, we hope to open room for a more ecological vision of lesson planning that coexists with alternatives to conceive it as a place to being and knowing in situated milieus.

Method

Due to the decolonial outlook underpinning this study, we hold the view that a narrative methodology fits its purpose as it focuses on the voice of the participants (Gilligan et al., 2003). Therefore, we consider that beyond assuming a vision based on sociocultural theory in which an interconnection between individual and its context is promoted (Moen, 2006), we propose to make experiences a pedagogically thinkable exercise to deepen the experience in teacher education. In doing so, we propose to move away from tendencies of the social sciences that divide and distance the subject and the object of knowledge (Castro-Gómez, 2007). Narrative research entails exercising our own epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) and thus detaching our realities from a methodology, which by its very nature is disobedient (Ramalho & Porta, 2019).

To document participants' experiences, we made use of a single data collection instrument. We opted to employ *life story interviewing* to gather information on the subjective essence of the participants' experiences (Atkinson, 1998). Since approaching knowledge construction from the narrative lens implied for us to assume that narrative is a tool to create and contest dilemmas language student teachers face regarding their teaching practicum, life story interviewing assisted us in making explicit (Atkinson, 1998) those practices regarding lesson planning.

Having that in mind, we administered the participants a series of interviews on a monthly basis over a period of two semesters. The question protocols were based on the nature of their stories in the teaching practicum in relation to the process of planning lessons. These interviews were recorded and transcribed as verbatim as possible to proceed to the analysis.

Context and Participants

This study was conducted during the second academic term of 2017 and the first of 2018 at a private university in Bogota, Colombia. The investigation was set

within the language teacher education program, which promotes pedagogical education of student teachers in teaching practice contexts (teaching practicum) in private schools of the city.

The participants were two female EFL student teachers from sixth semester. Both participants, Andrea, 21 years old, and Camila, 20 (names changed by the researchers), were doing their teaching practicum in two different schools of the city during the study. These students were chosen using Creswell's (2007) homogeneous and convenience sampling criteria, as they were requested to make sense of their teaching practicum by analyzing classroom practices and realities to propose a pedagogical intervention. In this respect, the interventions the language student teachers proposed were mediated through the conception of lesson planning activities.

Data Management and Coding

Data analysis in this qualitative narrative study accounts for the transformation of data into findings (Patton, 2002). Since the aim was not to diminish or misinterpret the nature of the life stories collected but to use them as units of analysis to unveil colonial practices in lesson planning events, this study attempted to install a decolonial sense/spirit in the analysis of the stories collected by not just interpreting what the participant said but by listening to what was shared. Therefore, we believe narratives serve as a step by step methodology to move away from the typical narrative analysis that in most cases ends up in epistemological extractivism. We think it was needed to "attend to individuals' lives remaining attentive to the larger contexts and relationships within which lives are nested" (Clandinin et al., 2017, p. 91). From that gaze, the narrative research analysis employed intended to unveil unraveling normative understandings of language, lesson design, and teaching, entangled in macro hegemonic narratives of the colonial project. Ultimately, the analysis can put forward *knowledges*, experiences, and traditions rendered invisible by such project (Shell-Weiss, 2019).

Findings

Andrea's Experience

Andrea has a particular understanding of her experience of becoming an EFL teacher. For her, becoming a teacher is linked to lesson planning inasmuch as it is part of her performance as an English language teacher. She argues that one of the very first problems she encountered was the use of Spanish when trying to plan a lesson that included a pedagogical intervention.

> The use of Spanish is a problem because I think that, if you do not know something, you can teach with an image, with a synonym or something so that you do not have to use Spanish, or at least I do when I plan my classes. Where I work, I was told from the very first moment something like "you must have students speak English at all times". When you travel nobody speaks to you in Spanish and then you will face a real speaking context and you have to have to speak just English. Then you must have students do it. I told myself "hey, that is true!" I lived in Canada for a year, and I knew no English or French . . . either you speak it, or you will not be able to defend for yourself. Then, as a teacher if I plan my class, I have to think a lot about how is that we learn and be very careful about how my students to [*sic*] learn. In addition, at university, the professors tell us "do not use or allow Spanish usage" since it is not that good for the class, the rational [*sic*] is that one teaches English not Spanish. Yet, to be honest, sometimes one has to resort to Spanish as a teacher or student, you know, it is part of us, one just does it and that is it.

For Andrea, using Spanish seems to be troublesome. This belief is rooted in (a) her boss's comments regarding the use of L1, (b) her own positioning regarding language teaching, and (c) her learning of the disciplinary knowledge imbued by her university teachers. With respect to Andrea's professional identity as a student teacher, the process of learning to teach is a very complex matter (McLean, 1999); as such, she develops a sense

of professional identity where she incorporates her personal epistemologies regarding teaching and learning.

We consider that Andrea narrates a conflicting view in relation to teaching and learning. This view may emerge as a tensioning dilemma between what is said to be right and what seems to emerge in the practice. Aligned to this posture, Andrea's idea of teaching a language is grounded on her personal experience as a student of languages. For instance, Andrea presents her personal view on teaching by stating that when planning a lesson, she must be careful about what to teach as she might end up using Spanish (L1), depending on the topic.

> Once, in one private lesson I was teaching grammar and the person did not understand the use of some idiomatic expressions. Then, I just found one in Spanish that could hold the same meaning. I used "*Aunque la mona se vista de seda, mona se queda*", because in English, you say "The leopard cannot change its spots", you see? I think I unconsciously did it but because I did not think as that Andrea living in Canada but as Andrea the teacher who was trying to make a student understand something. I have to be honest, I never thought about doing that in my lesson plan; I just made the decision right there 'cause I thought it was needed.

For Solís Hernández (2007), "experienced teachers sometimes reduce their lesson plans to an outline, but most novice teachers need very detailed lesson plans and notes to guide their performance and to feel more confident" (p. 229). However, Andrea appears to consider others' needs when learning a language. Learning to teach, then, is learning to use what we know to configure new ideas about teaching and learning. Andrea seems to connect her ongoing experience with her way of teaching. She reinforces this notion in her narrative:

> For me, teaching is complex. In teaching courses, one sees that language can be a system of codes and that makes you teach your classes in a very grammatical way. That is, your approach to planning a class and how it is

taught is reflected...influenced by what you believe and that makes your classes not be grammatical. As I said before, when you travel, you do not talk about grammars but about contexts. Then the same should happen when you teach. However, I believe when lesson planning sometimes it allows us to make decisions for ourselves. In my classes I think first of the student and then of the grammar; before, it was not like that.

By assuming that teaching implies adopting an approach to teaching, Andrea refers to a theoretical stance a student teacher can take on in order to shape his or her own conception of teaching. Then, it is important here to say that although any approach to teaching can also be just the reflection of colonial ways of teaching, it can also be the realization of a personal reconfiguration regarding teaching. In fact, L2 has been described as depending on different methods and approaches to teach it (Brooks-Lewis, 2009). One instance could be the direct method in which the idea of lessons being conducted only in the target language was introduced (Lindsay & Knight, 2006, p. 16). Consequently, we argue that any personal philosophy to teaching is influenced by dualistic ways of knowing, where knowledge is conceptualized in terms of right and wrong (Green & Hood, 2013).

In conjunction to the aforementioned, Andrea also refers to lesson planning as a pivotal component to decision making. For Andrea, lesson planning allows her to analyze her teaching priorities when designing a class. Then, Andrea's self-engagement to ponder over her own lesson planning brings forward new understandings of this activity.

Nonetheless, beyond lesson planning serving as a road map (Bailey & Nunan, 1996) for novice and experienced teachers, we suggest this practice can be conceived also as a place for epistemological re-construction. Moreover, Andrea's process of epistemological reconstruction began when she reflected upon the theoretical knowledge acquired in the BA courses (Dinç & Üztemur, 2017), by moving away from

positivistic views of language to situate learners as the hub of her practice.

Andrea's story also carries an important element in teacher epistemology. Even though student teachers may not be aware of the personal epistemological assumptions, they certainly make knowledge claims that appear as theories-in-action (Kuhn & Weinstock, 2002). Andrea makes these claims more concrete by arguing that learning happens in praxis.

> I believe one learns more in practice. The truth is that university classes are very theoretical. One doesn't know why it is useful to know that in English one must have a method or a theory of learning and so on. Nevertheless, when I started teaching, I used to teach math in English and in practice, I knew what CLIL is. However, I didn't know until I looked into what I was planning. I had a format that they had given me and in it, I planned my classes, but I just described what addition and subtraction was and that was when I realized that I was doing maths in English, I added in my classes learning things and then I thought more about the person who was learning and that made me change everything. I think, one discovers many things along the way.

In closing her experience, we find it relevant to mention that although we depart from the assumption that teachers' epistemologies and practices "can be shaped and developed during the teacher education process" (Lawson et al., 2015, p. 2), there is still room to contest them along the way. Andrea's questioning and taking position against certain imposed beliefs regarding teaching and learning posits "conflicting visions, disparaging considerations, and contesting interpretations" (Britzman, 2003, p. 26) of what it means to be a teacher. That phenomenon is the beginning of a realignment of the experience of becoming a teacher.

By inspecting Andrea's life experience, different ways of knowing about teaching which sometimes challenge assumed intellectual traditions are emerging by making sense of planning a lesson as a situated practice. We believe that although we did not intend to elucidate the varied forms in which dominant knowledge, unreflectively instructed in teacher education programs, eclipses diverse alternative expressions of knowing in local ELT, we unveiled views of privileging Western forms of knowledge as universal and applicable to any context (Dussel, 2011).

However, this is the opportunity to delve more into the conversation proposed by Almeida et al. (2019) who claim that "gathering knowledge about the lived experiences of those who reside at the intersection of the colonial wound, requires a deep understanding of the powerful structures that create such relegation to form pathways for emancipation and liberation" (p. 149). This indeed could be the route to the task of decolonizing the sphere of education (Cortina et al., 2019).

Camila's Experience

Camila's participation in this study was, for her, a way to make sense of her initial teaching experience. During her practicum, Camila was expected to identify a problem in the classes for further pedagogical intervention which, as she narrates, proved difficult for her. Following this matter, it is known that student teachers experience a "praxis shock" (Flores & Day, 2006) when contextual variables in the classroom contest or shape their set of beliefs (Farrell, 2008).

Camila expressed there was a certain clash when lesson planning. This epistemological collision took place when negotiating her own ideas about what a class should be, and the ones given by her head teacher.

> For me, to do a lesson plan was very hard but it helped me to go beyond the grammar visions that one always has because that is how they shape us, to know grammar. For example, I identified in my class problems of intervention that was about children's behavior. They are very smart, but they shout and do not respect each other. There are no values for communication. Then I tried to teach grammar at the beginning, as the head teacher told me, and that did not help, it was my job to think about how

to make them be more sensitive upon the classroom and other in it. However, the head teacher did not like that; but when planning and teaching a class where grammar is a tool, a means and not a whole; the boys achieved many things. I think that one learns more in practice; I mean, the things of the University are useful, but the truth is that a real class is not how professors say it is.

Based on the above, we claim that lesson planning is also a meaning making activity. As far as lesson planning requiring student teachers to think of different dimensions regarding English language teaching, Camila seems to have widened her knowledge by reasoning about her own teaching practice from alternative shores. This reasoning seems to portray "the complex ways in which teachers conceptualize, construct explanations for, and respond to the social interactions and shared meanings" (Johnson, 1999, p. 1) they encounter in their practice. This would entail as well a "deeper understanding of the practice in terms of who they are as teachers, their students and the context" (Aguirre-Garzón & Castañeda-Peña, 2017, p. 89). As a result, Camila was able to fracture traditional practices and build up an alternative vision of herself as a teacher and her practice.

In inspecting her narrative, Camila also shed light upon her own epistemic stance regarding teaching. She claimed to be aware of what she thinks has to be taught. In fact, Camila expresses that it is hard to stand for a position where grammar, as content, is a major priority. Certainly, the way to get to this understanding is through personal inquiry as to the classroom practices. In this respect, Camila's self-initiated inquiry led her to contest the assumptions that student teachers are immersed in during their walk through university life.

By decentralizing hegemonic ways of doing, Camila is on the way to reconfiguring personal theories or notions regarding teaching and that, in turn, will be seen as epistemological foundations of new knowledge. We contend this personal reasoning about teaching

implies becoming aware of what teaching entails. Consequently, Camila's reasoning and thinking about teaching is a process of personal construction where she re-signifies her role as a student teacher and what she thinks knowledge about teaching is about. Therefore, Camila's experience seems to challenge the dynamics of "procedural knowledge that has to do with opportunities to construct theory related to the way teachers think" (Aguirre-Garzón & Castañeda-Peña, 2017, p. 86). Thus, Camila thinks beyond canonical views of teaching and other alternatives to do teaching.

In closing our reference to Camila's experience, we wanted to display an excerpt of her narrative where she concludes by stating what she learned from her practice. Camila refers to lesson planning as a means to identify what needs to be done.

> I think that something that I could understand planning my classes was that many times I focused too much on grammar. I used to think that it was the most important thing, now I think that the grammar is relevant, but the context is more important. You cannot teach someone without knowing who the person is. One day, I tried to teach the uses of *can* and *could*, modal verbs, and it was chaotic! The kids spat, they bothered each other, and I felt somewhat frustrated because in my idea of teaching I thought that teaching was to transmit grammar. I would say that planning classes helped a lot, it let me see what is important to me, I would just like to not be forced to follow those class planning formats, they are a bit confusing and sometimes you do not understand them.

Arguably, Camila realized that to teach a successful lesson, lesson planning opens a path to discern personal epistemologies regarding teaching. As a matter of fact, Camila was able to move away from instrumental practices and has now become more interested in undertaking the exploration of a more personal epistemology whereby "experience is fundamental to understanding life as it is lived" (Ubaque & Pinilla, 2018, p. 130). Seemingly, the premise that "teaching is a complex task that

requires qualified teachers" (Mousapour & Beiranvand, 2015, p. 776) might appear to be valid. Nonetheless, this well-known "expertise" needs to be grounded not just on theoretical or linguistic knowledge, but especially on the potential of contesting imported and imposed paradigms that have marginalized teachers as transformative practitioners.

Final Thoughts

Teachers' knowledge construction is a never-ending experience. Becoming a teacher is a fragmented and dynamic process where those involved get to change their perceptions about what they do and know. Yet it is true that a number of language student teachers understand language pedagogy as being "focused on the meeting of standards which represent a certain level of acquisition of a skill" (Granados-Beltrán, 2018, p. 175). Nowadays, ELT student teachers are beginning to question certain methodological yet hegemonic constructions of teaching and learning that have, for years, been reproduced and remain uncontested within paradigms of teaching. Regarding this, we could resort to Andrea's experience using L1 to plan and teach. We believe that in her questioning of the verticality of certain paradigms, there is an evident attempt, consciously or not, to find meaning in her transition as a teacher.

This alternative stance towards learning and teaching shows a change in student teachers' epistemology. By this token, it is worth saying that this study was interested in documenting and analyzing student teachers' epistemologies about teaching and their construction of teaching *knowledges* in and through lesson planning events. Arguably, data collected and inspected in this study support the idea that teachers' epistemological beliefs are subjected to different colonial tools of what teachers are and how they should teach. Nonetheless, data also made evident that this coloniality of knowledge (Walsh, 2005) is not a repression of their knowledge(s); instead, it has become a source to conceive language teaching from a more personal alternative position.

Ultimately, following Alvarado (2015), decolonial thinking inquires the acknowledging of these knowledges, "subsuming them in only one claim: the acceptance of ways of knowing which are alternative to occidental hegemony" (p. 110).

As for the aforementioned discussion, the process of lesson planning emerged as an analytical tool to unpack the ideologies and discourses that student teachers confront inside and outside the classroom (Kincheloe, 2008). These discourses emerged from students' experiences in the process of becoming teachers. Following the same line of thought, we could claim that lesson planning helped student teachers to gain awareness of the role they play in schools. This study fosters the idea that student teachers must learn how to question and discern all the dimensions that are involved when planning a lesson, since not only is lesson planning about instrumental notions of language, but also about how certain personal views may get to interplay with the aforementioned notions.

The above-stated information implies that student teachers become aware of their own *knowledges* about teaching and learning as well as their own dynamics concerning their critical consciousness of what teaching should imply and entail for them. Thus, it cannot be denied that lesson planning either "helps all teachers, especially novice ones, to organize content, materials, learning objectives, strategies, instructional procedures, assessment, or time allotted for each activity" (Solís Hernández, 2007, p. 229), or helps them to inquire into their teaching experience to make sense of their process of becoming teachers.

Therefore, we consider that these conclusions bring forth two fundamental opportunities for language teacher educators and teacher education programs. Firstly, as student teachers can claim ownership of their teaching practices to delink from fixed, universal, and Cartesian notions of conceiving teaching and being a teacher, it is key that teacher educators propose more horizontal relations between student teachers and

knowledge foundations. In this way, student teachers would not have imposed upon them neo-colonial agendas in which being a teacher has to do with complying with the Common European Framework or with mere instrumental dimensions of teaching, but they would act as inquiry initiators to truly take steps towards the immanence of the critique of knowledge. This, as we see it, would restore students' agency in the local and global field.

Second, since we consider it is necessary to boost teachers' process of research, it seems pivotal to explore more the bonds between student teachers' epistemological-political stances and their experiences as prospective teachers. This would strengthen student teachers' understanding of contexts allowing them to make more informed decisions in their practicum. Lastly, we consider teacher education programs should urge the enactment of a decolonial option (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). By this, we mean to advocate for the need of discussing the constant training on hegemonic methods, materials, and rationalized notions about lessons and lesson planning. Then, since academic colonialism will be present in Colombian ELT, teacher education programs should help student teachers and educators foster local knowledges and, in so doing, stop perceiving our knowledge as subaltern but more as a collective consciousness upon which to think and act.

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