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# FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER'S COMPETENCIES —BELIEFS AMONG THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY. A BOOK REVIEW

*COMPETENCIAS DEL PROFESOR DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS: CREENCIAS DE LA COMUNIDAD EDUCATIVA. RESEÑA*

*DES COMPÉTENCES DU PROFESSEUR DE LANGUES ÉTRANGÈRES : DES AVIS ENTRE LA COMMUNAUTÉ D'ENSEIGNEMENT. UNE COMPTE-RENDU*

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**Title:** *Competencias del profesor de  
lenguas extranjeras: creencias de la  
comunidad educativa*

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Doing research is, largely, similar to quilting a bedcover. Patches are sewn and interwoven to get a final result. With that metaphor in mind, I will review one of the latest books written by Cortés Cárdenas, Cárdenas Beltrán and Nieto Cruz entitled *Competencias del profesor de lenguas extranjeras: creencias de la comunidad educativa*. In the preface and introduction to their book, the authors briefly recall what beliefs are, how meaningful they are in social relations, and most importantly how (un)aware some teachers are of their own beliefs. On the one hand, beliefs are, bearing in mind the metaphor above, the needles the authors will use throughout the book to intertwine the threads that will eventually turn into the holistic panorama of what a good teacher is. On the other hand, the threads to be used are the stances from parents, alumni and administrative staff about which are the required teaching competences and domains every foreign language teacher should have.

The conception of beliefs among practitioners and in-service teachers is permanently embedded in the construction of the book by these prolific authors from Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Their book comprises five chapters that knit this tapestry about the beliefs, domains and competences that might typify any foreign language teacher in Colombia. The first chapter introduces the problem, the objectives and the research questions. The purpose of their study is to explore the beliefs among the educational community about the competences foreign languages teachers are expected to have. Eventually, their project will also inform other BA's in foreign languages around Colombia about the features that characterise the English teaching profession and English teachers' professional identity.

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After patching the first pieces of the quilt, the three writers make an in-depth job of literature revision. In this second part, they focus their attention on the three axes on which they have based their research work, namely the notion of belief, the educational community, and foreign language teacher competences. Regarding this last issue, the authors draw our attention to teachers' competences in both senses: how "common beliefs" about foreign language affect the teaching/learning process, and how teachers might use their communicative, pedagogic and investigative competences to help students, parents, and educational administrators to match those beliefs to reality. Concerning the educational community, the authors think they can contribute to an understanding of ideology in society, even though it is still under construction. Additionally, in this second part of the book, they revisit the literature about the historical concept of beliefs and introduce which definition will be shaping their work.

The authors continue moving their needles and threads, and softly take us to stitch a new element in this patchwork: their research itself. In this third section, the trio claim they used a qualitative method through which they garnered and examined the data collected. They state participants were pre-service and in-service teachers from various schools, and population were those communities belonging to the participants' place of work. Furthermore, they maintain they analysed the data provided by the participants based upon the grounded theory.

Now, in the fourth segment, they start putting all pieces together and tell their readers about their research findings. Since they are about to finish knitting the colourful pieces of their bedspread, they devote some time and some final lines to the ideal competences and domains any Colombian foreign language teacher might have. Regarding the issue of competences, the entire community expects teachers to perform in the foreign language very well and to have good knowledge of the target language culture. Among other opinions, the community also want teachers to be able to account for the what and the how of their profession, to have a wide knowledge of other topics, to adapt smoothly to the school setting, and to be good at team work. In sum, the educational community expect teachers to develop their communicative, pedagogical and methodological competences fully, to have a broad knowledge in multiple areas, as well as about the Colombian educational system, to know their target population as much as she/he should know herself/himself, and to cultivate their ability to do in-class research.

In the last chapter of their book, Cortés et al. (2013) claim:

Son tantos los dominios que se esperan del docente que, al igual que en el caso de un artista con trayectoria, el público confía en su capacidad para desafiar las adversidades, para actuar de manera eficiente en las situaciones inciertas o inesperadas y para solucionar los problemas que a menudo se presentan en el aula (p. 81).

The quotation above summarizes what this last part of the book is about; the knitters show us their final product with some sense of humility. They beautifully harmonise the expected domains with further considerations about the profile pre-service teachers need to develop. They also ponder the additional components curricula on the different foreign language programmes in Colombia are in need of, and what are the challenges for the initial and ongoing development of teachers. Finally, they highlight the need for developing more studies on the same field.

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