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TEACHER KNOWLEDGE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE WESTERN CENTRAL REGION OF COSTA RICA

SABER DOCENTE EN PROFESORES DE INGLÉS: UN ANÁLISIS SOBRE SU CONSTRUCCIÓN SOCIO-HISTÓRICA EN LA REGIÓN CENTRAL OCCIDENTAL DE COSTA RICA

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Abstract: This article results from a research project developed in Costa Rica, specifically, in the central western region. Its main objective is of findings that shed light on the socio-historical principles and construction of teacher knowledge of English language teaching. Teacher knowledge is approached as a discursive and everyday life construction whose historical antecedents influence its constitution and perception. Therefore, an analysis of the historical situations that justified the English language teaching in Costa Rica is provided. Also, it is analyzed the way(s) national institutions like the "Ministerio de Educación Pública" as well as the English language teaching major from "Sede de Occidente, Universidad de Costa Rica" have historically assumed and set the principles of teacher knowledge. This study concludes that there have been four main domains regulating the English language teacher knowledge. They are the technical, the institutional, the content and the economic domains.

Key Words: TEACHER KNOWLEDGE, EVERYDAY LIFE, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING-LEARNING, COSTA RICAN NATIONAL ENGLISH SYLLABUS, UNIVERSIDAD DE COSTA RICA, SEDE DE OCCIDENTE.

Resumen: Este artículo es el resultado de un proyecto de investigación realizado en la Región de Occidente de Costa Rica. El principal objetivo es presentar los principios socio-históricos que han constituido el saber docente en la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa. Desde el punto de vista teórico, se aborda (como propuesta) el saber docente como una construcción discursiva y cotidiana donde sus antecedentes históricos determinan su configuración e interpretación. Consecuentemente, se desarrolla un análisis discursivo de las condiciones históricas que justificaron la enseñanza del inglés en Costa Rica así como la forma en que el Ministerio de Educación Pública y la carrera del bachillerato en la enseñanza del inglés –Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente- han percibido y desarrollado el tema del saber docente. Finalmente, se concluye que, en Costa Rica, el saber docente en la enseñanza del inglés esta principalmente construida bajo cuatro aspectos aquí denominados como: dominio técnico, dominio institucional, dominio de contenido y el dominio económico.

Palabras Claves: SABER DOCENTE, SABER COTIDIANO, ENSEÑANZA-APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS, PROGRAMAS DE ESTUDIO COSTARRICENSE DE INGLÉS, UNIVERSIDAD DE COSTA RICA, SEDE DE OCCIDENTE

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1. Introduction

In Costa Rica, English language teaching-learning has been first considered a national priority in the economical field, and late, in the educational arena. Because English Language has constituted the main means of communication between Costa Rican and foreign entrepreneurs and companies, governments have demanded the academic and technical preparation on English language learning. Therefore, the national curriculum has been adapted to satisfy the needs of a global economical system. According to "Ministerio Educación Pública" (MEP: Ministry of Education)

"The English Syllabus", was written within the principles stated both in our Constitution, The Educational Law and in the Educational Policy "Towards the 21st Century" in order to help the students face life and work situations which require an average command of English, with the desire that this preparation will allow them to participate actively into the challenges of the global economy for the benefit of the country. (2005, p. 13)

From this perspective, teaching-learning English is not only a right but also a duty that language teachers and students have to accomplish in order to activate the national economy. English is evidently perceived as the "business language" which demands Costa Rican English speakers to be part of a job market highly determined by the foreign capital investment. In this sense, English language teaching-learning is developed as a process of adaptation of the individual needs to the challenges of the global economic demands.

Little by little, English language teaching has covered the whole educational cycles of the Costa Rican curricula. It has to be taught from preschool to high school. A clear action that shows the importance of this language is the fact that both rural and urban educational institutions have to provide access to English learning because it was declared as one of the mandatory subjects students have to take to complete their academic programs.

According to MEP, the study of English has to be based on three main language-components related to the formal, functional and cultural aspects. By the formal component, the intention is the teaching and mastering of the English grammar. In order to do so, *"the structures of the language have been graded, selected and chosen according to different functions of the language and the topics to be studied. Lexics, syntax and morphology are part of this component"* (MEP, 2005, p. 17). Nevertheless, MEP has warned that this component should be studied as an integral part of communication. In reference to the functional aspect, it is understood as speech acts –e.g. expressing opinions, asking for

information and stating doubts-. Regarding the cultural aspect, MEP has stated that

Knowing the features of the target culture makes it easier to understand the language itself. Some of the features that should be taken into account are: values, attitudes, behavior, patterns, points of view, ways of thinking, appreciation, etc.

The cultural component should always be present in the other components. Language and culture go together in order to communicate social meanings. This means that language must be presented in meaningful situations according to the appropriate cultural contexts. (2005, p. 18)

In other words, English language teaching-learning is conceived from a linguistic and sociolinguistic perspective that enables students to perform and accomplish certain functions.

In this teaching-learning process, teachers are perceived as facilitators whose main tasks become very complex. They have to be able to

expose the learner to a considerable amount of meaningful language input...; provide a variety of opportunities for the students, in order to bring about the necessary models or language input...; offer a variety of texts and also remember that students in the same class may read at very different levels of difficulty in English, just as they do in their native language...; be aware of the students' reading interesting order to design the appropriate reading comprehension exercises...; facilitate the writing process by providing the necessary guidance for the learner to be able to express her/his knowledge of the topic...; pay attention to the rhetorical devices, logical, grammatical and lexical: appropriate to different types of texts, spelling, punctuation and other organizational features. (MEP, 2005, pp. 21-24)

At this point, teachers need to take into consideration many different aspects -at the same time- to develop skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In terms of administrative and technical regulations, teachers also have to take into consideration the certain formal aspects related to the presentation of the lesson plan. According to MEP,

Whenever a teacher is ready to introduce an activity focusing on one of the four basic skills describe above [listening, speaking, reading and writing], he/she should take into account five steps: a) preparation, b) demonstration, c) time to introduce the skill, d) correction, e) follow-up.

In order to follow these steps, the teacher should provide: "Pre-activities" to help the students think about what they already know and find a reason for listening, speaking, reading or writing; "While-activities" to exploit oral or written speech. These exercise different skills to carry out the tasks assigned and "Post-activities" to link the new information and skills the students own experience and other skills. (2005, p. 25)

Along with these aspects, teachers have to take into account students' different learning styles; prepare and apply the required curricular adaptations of the syllabus for those students with special needs; present (for *approval*) daily, weekly or monthly -according to each institutional policy- lesson plans; prepare meetings with parents to inform about students' performances and records on all disciples; adapt the syllabus to work with the transversal topics: education in and for values, education in and for human rights, democracy and peace, education for conservation (use, management and environmental protection), education for personal and social health and education for prevention on natural disasters; prepare students for national reading-comprehension tests –in the case of ninth and tenth graders- among other administrative works.

Therefore, dealing with all these "shoulds" demands from teachers special aptitudes, attitudes and "knowledges". This means, English teachers need to learn how to do their job in different contexts with particular populations and educational institutions. English teachers are immersed in a very complex teaching scenario where different "knowledges" converge in their daily life. They adapt –or resist- to the advice and regulations stated by MEP as well as to all those concrete and particular situations that configure their contexts. At this point, it becomes necessary to analyze the historical privileged aspects of English teacher knowledge because they are the ontological and axiological bases of teachers' practices and beliefs about English teaching and learning.

2. Theoretical Approximations on Teacher Knowledge

Most of the time, the analysis and study of educational processes that refer to language teaching-learning are carried in terms of the specialized knowledge students and teachers internalized of a language. In the case of English language teachers, the main expectation is to master the grammatical, phonetic, syntactical, phonological and morphological aspects as well as to use appropriate methodologies – e.g. audio-lingual approach, non-restrictive, content-based and task-based approaches among others- when dealing with the linguistic

component.

Consequently, the academic preparation of teachers has been mainly associated to the linguistic knowledge of structuralist and formalist principles. This particular way of organizing the teaching practice and establishing priorities has been called the content knowledge. According to Cunningham, *"traditionally, the concern in teacher education has been that beginning teachers have a strong grasp of content knowledge. It was (and still is) important that beginning teachers know as much as possible about their area of specialization, application of technical skills, and theories of teaching and learning"* (1995, p. 6). Although Cunningham's main worry is related to beginner-teachers' education, the reference to content knowledge as part of a professional identity can be observed in experienced English language teachers too. In this regard, Schön has stated that *"for a long time, professionals have been using a teaching model based on a technical rationality. This model evidences that the professional practice is the product of the application of academic sciences; however, the professional teaching practice is in fact a different knowledge: knowledge in action"* (in Salgueiro 1983, p. 17, Authors' translation). This opinion is also shared by Schulman (1987) who has considered that teacher knowledge has been perceived as a kind of subject-matter content with a pedagogical principle. In other words, language teacher knowledge has been traditionally considered and approached as the sum of an academic process that refers to a specialized discipline –in this case, English language- rather than to an everyday construction and interpretation of contexts.

On the other hand, more postmodern perspectives about language teaching-learning processes approach teacher knowledge as everyday affective and performative practices. That is to say that teacher knowledge is a very particular way of feeling and doing things. In this sense, Rockwell and Mercado have pointed out that *"teacher knowledge implies not only learning content and pedagogical theory but learning the very subtle and implicit aspects of those circumstances in which the affective and social components converge with the intellectual ones"* (1988, p. 70) Authors' translation. Those converging situations produce database information for teachers, who later, will use those background experiences to do their teaching. In doing so, they re-de-construct any other previous knowledge they had. That is why Salgueiro considers that *"teacher knowledge is constituted by scientific and everyday life knowledge"* (1998, p. 36) Authors' translation.

For an English language teacher –as for any other professional-, everyday knowledge *"conform[s] a set of representations that teachers use to interpret, understand and orient their*

professional activity and daily life in all dimensions. These representations make up the teacher culture" (Tardif et al. in Salgueiro 1998, p. 39) Authors' translation. This is to say that English teachers' expertise in their discipline goes beyond the knowledge and application of theories, principles, concepts, technical skills and methodologies. Teachers need to develop and construct knowledge from their social and institutional contexts because everyday life affects the ways teachers perceive the world. Such perception definitely influences teachers' practices and beliefs as well as the ideological implications of their teaching. If a teacher is not able to take into account the teaching context variables, his or her mastery of the technical aspects of language would not transcend students' lives. Cunningham have pondered that "teacher is messy, complex, and difficult to learn. Teacher knowledge requires flexibility of application potential for juxtaposition of seemingly disparate knowledge, and the ability to analyze critically and decide a course purposeful action [...] Linear, closed-ended, overgeneralized thinking is not appropriate for the domain of teaching" (1995, p. 6). In this regard, Clemente and Higgins have also argued that

the construction of language learning cultures requires the representation of two coexisting domains of socio-cultural activities and practices: first, the social/cognitive domain of language learning, that is, the activities and practices of language learning; secondly, the overall cultural context of the social locations of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, age, and ableness. These to domains engender each other to produce and reproduce the particularities of learning cultures. (2005, p. 6)

Therefore, teacher knowledge is configured in these socio-cultural domains. It is involved in particular contextual systems of interaction which maps particular predispositions on teachers' ontological and axiological philosophy of their discipline and their world.

3. Antecedents of Teacher Knowledge in Costa Rica: A General Review

In the specific case of Costa Rica, English language teacher knowledge has been mostly studied from the academic perspective of the discipline—mastering rules, norms, and mechanics of the language— and from the technical application of language principles in methodology. A general review of the investigations in this area demonstrates that there is a strong concern on the content knowledge of the English language in linguistic terms. For instance, most of these works are related to the *"Acquisition of Twenty Grammatical Structures in Children Learning English as a Foreign Language in a Costa Rican Bilingual*

Elementary School" (1991), *"Análisis de estructuras completivas del inglés en la producción lingüística de alumnos hispanohablantes costarricenses"* (1981), *"La fluidez, ¿meta estática o dinámica en la adquisición del inglés como segunda lengua?"* (1985) and *"An exploratory study of the morphology and syntax of the English of the province of Limon, Costa Rica"* (1970) among other studies.

In reference to the pedagogical content knowledge, studies have mostly focused on the *"Development of Materials for the Preparation of Eleventh Graders for the English Bachillerato Exam"* (2001), *"English for the University of Costa Rica Librarians: Teaching Portfolio"* (2002), *"English for the Vice-Chancellor's Office Research – E.V.O.R. ESP"* (2003), *"Incidencia del uso de programas de inglés en video-tape de televisión sobre el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes de sétimo año en la asignatura de inglés, en el instituto Dr. Clodomiro Picado Twilight"* (1989), *"Oral Activities Used in Ten Third Grade Classrooms in Public Schools of the Metropolitan Area in Costa Rica"* (1999), *"Self-correction: a Key to Autonomous Learning"* (1999).

In the case of Sede de Occidente, the study and analysis of aspects associated to teacher knowledge evidence an emphasis on the methodological knowledge (use and application of techniques to teach vocabulary and writing mainly) of teachers, management of students' discipline and the curricular evaluation of textbooks. Some works that illustrate this situation are *"Analysis of Five Techniques to Teach English Composition to Tenth Graders in High Schools"* (1996), *"Analysis of three of the Textbooks and Audio-Visual Material Used in the Teaching of English in High Schools in Costa Rica"* (1986), *"An Investigation of the High School Students' Attitude Toward the English Language"* (1998) and the *"Application of managing actions stated by Debruyn and Larson (1984) to improve six inappropriate behaviors in English classes in public schools of San Ramón, Palmares, and Naranjo"* (2002). These works reveal that most investigations have theoretically assumed teacher knowledge from the linguistic and methodological perception of a foreign language teaching.

Even though these researches are very significant to understand part of what has been called teacher knowledge, there is a need to go beyond the technical and academic perceptions of the English language discipline. From an every day life perspective, there is an urgent obligation to understand the socio-ideological implications of the discourses and practices generated from that pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge of teachers. This situation becomes particularly important because teacher knowledge has a political dimension that transcends the classroom; it also affects aspects related to cultural values,

identity, sensibilities, social interaction and positions about national and global conflicts. Understanding teacher knowledge as a everyday life construction of the Costa Rican contexts and realities has important implications because, as Heller has stated, *"on the plane of the person, our everyday life depicts the reproduction of a current society in general; it depicts the socialization of nature on one hand, and on the other, the degree and manner of its socialization"*. (1984, p. 4)

4. Teacher Knowledge: An Everyday Life Construction

During the 70's, the scholar Ágnes Heller started to develop a theoretical construction of knowledge that recognizes everyday life as the scenario in which individuals, their practices and particularities are legitimated. In this process of self and social recognition, people perform certain behaviors, aptitudes and attitudes that shape themselves as particular individuals. In doing so, their backgrounds are also re-de-constructed making socialization possible. Heller has pointed out that *"if individuals are to reproduce society, they must reproduce themselves as individuals. We may define 'everyday life' as the aggregate of those individual reproduction factors which, part passu, make social reproduction possible"* (1984, p. 3). Everyday life is, then, a unique –not universal- social practice that embodies particular ways of knowing, interpreting and handling contexts and previous experiences.

In this sense, the de-re-construction of any knowledge is determined by the background conditions in which individuals are immersed. As particular beings, they reproduce their self and interpret their environment by developing particular functions in the social sphere. Therefore, Heller has pondered that

No society can exist without individual reproduction, and no individual can exist without self-reproduction. Everyday life exists, then, in every society; indeed, every human being, whatever his place in the social division of labour, has his own everyday life. But this is not to say that the content and structure of everyday life are the same for all individuals in all societies. Reproduction of the person is always of the concrete person: the concrete person occupying a given place in a given society. (1984, p. 3)

People act according to the different social functions they accomplish as fathers, mothers, students, teachers, doctors, farmers, cooks among others. These family, social and labor performances are undeniably determined by the contexts where they interact with other individuals. In other words, a person is transgressed as an individual by the technical

knowledge of his/her profession or job, and by the ontological as well as the axiological knowledge generated from his/her everyday life circumstances.

According to Heller (1984), everyday life is developed by a "relative continuity" shared among certain social groups rather than by the aspects they have in common. This is to say, that daily-life is a continuous process that reconstructs people's particularities in a given context where context is something already preconceived –but not completely finished or constituted-. As a result, people reproduce their existence in their pre-given worlds through their particular nature. As part of a relative continuity, some "knowledges" and practices are maintained, changed and/or eradicated from everyday life because there is a historical reference that affects the way people interpret their world. In this regard, Heller has stated that

Man is born into a world which exists independently of him. This world presents itself to him as a ready-made datum; but it is in this world that he must support himself, and put his viability to the test. He is born into concrete social conditions, concrete sets of postulates and demands, concrete things and concrete institutions. First and foremost, he must learn to "use" things, to acquire the costumes and meet the demands of his society, so that he may bear himself in a way that is both expected and possible in the given circumstances of that society. Thus reproduction of the person is always of a historical person existing in a concrete world. In general, we can say that –within certain degrees of tolerance- man must learn to "use" the concrete things and customs patterns of the world into which he is born, however great their variety and their complexity. (1984, p. 5)

In other words, a particular being is a concrete historical individual who reproduces him/herself into a specific socio-historical context. He or she has to be able to behave and to interact -throughout his/her whole existence- by learning (and re-learning) how to use what he/she has been given.

As natural beings, there are some circumstances that a person has to adapt due to the fact that there is no way any human can avoid them. This is to say that there is a natural knowledge used to satisfy people natural necessities of the body such sleeping, eating and defecating. However, it is up to every individual the way(s) he or she gratifies those physiological needs. His/her contexts affect that particular way of doing things which determines the process of individual adaptation. In this sense, Heller has proposed that

Very few types of activity are invariant, and even these are invariant only as abstractions in the lives of all persons. We must all sleep (if not in identical circumstances, and not in the same way) and we must all eat (though not the same things and again not in the same way); and, if we take a social cross-section of populations, we must all reproduce our own kind, that is to say, engender offspring. Such common activities are, then, those we share with the animals; they are, in so far as we can abstract them from their concrete content, the activities which serve to sustain man as a natural being. (1984, p. 3)

This situation requires of everyday knowledge to face family life, social life and labor life. That knowledge emerges from daily-life interaction and from a process of adaptation (or subversion –a different way to adapt oneself-) to everyday life circumstances.

Taking to into consideration that everyday life embraces concrete ways to face the world, contextual particularities mark differences in every productive and affective domain. Everyday life, as a socio-historical construction, organizes attitudes, emotions, thinking and behaviors into particular ways of interaction demanding from individuals certain knowledge to be applied in all domains of the human action.

One of the contexts strongly re-de-configured by everyday life is the educational field. Teachers' training is mainly developed in classrooms; scenarios that start shaping their worldviews and contexts. They are told about the possible situations they may face in the educational field and how they could deal with them. But no explanation can offer life experiences in axiological terms. In this regard, it is important to consider that teacher knowledge is shaped by an ontological perception and attitude about the disciplines they are trained on. Once teachers face their professions from the real life circumstances of their work, they are provided with particular realities that organize the institutional dynamics according to the concrete social contexts in which teaching is developed. Even though the teacher technical knowledge is traditionally regulated by the mastery of particular components of their disciplines, the ways and emphasis teachers give to those linguistic and pedagogical aspects are influenced by their life experiences.

In the teaching background, language teachers -in this case English teachers- become particularly important subjects (and objects) of everyday life. Because language is one of the main means used to interact, communicate, construct and decode reality, teachers deal not only with a concrete everyday life working situation but also they reproduce and develop

particular knowledge of the language in study. Language teachers, specifically English language teachers, help –and sometimes force- students to picture and create socio-linguistic worlds that are going to influence attitudes towards the self and the others whose native or target language is English.

At this point, the recognition –not necessarily the acceptance- of the historical aspects that have shaped teacher knowledge becomes “a must” to understand and to work on the implications history has on the English discipline and teachers’ everyday life. The study of the historical construction of everyday life knowledge permits to evidence the rituals and worldviews that are legitimated in any subject of study as the English language.

It is through rituals that disciplines generate common sense assumptions conditioning and limiting certain practices. Such rituals embody particular “desires to know” constructing particular realities, and then, daily-life situations. According to Foucault

Una disciplina no es la suma de todo lo que puede ser dicho de cierto a propósito de alguna cosa y no es ni siquiera el conjunto de todo lo que puede ser, a propósito de un mismo tema, aceptado en virtud de un principio de coherencia o de sistematicidad... Y esto por dos razones: ... [las disciplinas], están construidas tanto sobre errores como sobre verdades, errores que no son residuos o cuerpos extraños, sino que ejercen funciones positivas y tienen una eficacia histórica y un papel frecuentemente inseparable del de las verdades. (2002, pp. 33-34)

In this sense, the percepts that constitute the “truth” of a discipline are determined by the historical conditions that organize such discipline through the acceptance and rejection of certain teaching practices –rituals-. Foucault has pondered the transformations of approach in linguistic studies by stating that

para pertenecer a una disciplina, una proposición debe poder inscribirse en cierto horizonte teórico: baste con recordar que la investigación de la lengua primitiva, que fue un tema perfectamente admitido hasta el siglo XVIII, era suficiente, en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, para caer no importa que discurso no digo en el error, pero sí en la quimera, en la ensoñación, en la pura y simple monstruosidad lingüística. (Foucault, 2002, p. 35)

In other words, disciplines are not static constructions; instead, they are in constant change adopting and refusing “truths” and “desires to know” according to contextual situations.

Taking into consideration the nature of disciplines and the modern and postmodern historical conditions in which English language teaching-learning has been immersed, a

review of the discursive construction of English teacher knowledge is necessary for the sake of a re-de-codification of this term at the light of the local, national and global conflicts teachers face every day in their socio-cultural backgrounds. In other words, teachers' knowledge implies a socio-historical-cultural-political construction each professional creates through his/her discourses and practices. It works as a "heterogenic" guide with ideological implications to develop teaching procedures, activities, perceptions, sensibilities and believes.

Because of the fact that teacher knowledge has a socio-cultural and political foundation, it determines the "what", "how" and "why" of actions and duties of the teaching and learning process. This knowledge is identifiable in topics of conversation when teachers talk about their or other people's work, in the Costa Rican English Language curriculum provided by the "Ministerio de Educación Pública", in the institutional dynamics of schools, among others. That is why English teacher knowledge deals with the historical conditions that justify its existence in a country whose official language is not English but Spanish.

5. The Historical Construction of English Teacher Knowledge in Costa Rica

It has been said that the knowledge of any discipline is re-de-constructed according to the people, situations, institutional dynamics and contexts in which an individual is immersed. In the case of Costa Rican rural contexts, language teacher knowledge converges with the socio-cultural world of rural schools and communities. Thus, teacher knowledge is understood as the result of the human activity in which individuals are provided with specific knowledge to face everyday situations -in this case- related to the field of language teaching in Costa Rican rural public high schools (CRRPHS). This knowledge works into more elaborated systems of thought and of social reality and in the teaching activity of teachers.

Since 1825, the English language has been academically taught in Costa Rica as a response to the new and increasing agricultural economy of that time: coffee exportation to England mainly (Marín, 2000, p. 48). This economical activity generated new challenges among Costa Rican entrepreneurs; they needed to communicate with foreigners whose native language was English.

The efforts to reach the communicative gabs between Costa Ricans and native English speakers transcended the field of exportation to the educational arena. The needs of this Costa Rican group influenced the educational policies of that time. According to Edwin Marín, *"teaching English in Costa Rica is [and was] instituted as a consequence of the economical*

interests of the hegemonic groups from the XIX Century" (2000, pp. 48-49, Authors' translation). To satisfy the demands of an increasing economical movement based on exportations, the high educational institution, Casa de Santo Tomás, started to teach English as an academic subject in 1825. At that time, this educational institution was the only university in Costa Rica *"where only high class sons had the opportunity to study in order to get their majors in philosophy, theology, law, and medicine"* (Quesada, 1997, p. 27, Authors' translation).

Little by little, other products like banana and sugar expanded the coverage of exportations shaping the economy not only of the XIX century but also of the first half of the XX century. English became more than a tool to communicate with foreign entrepreneurs; it was the language of international businesses because it opened the access to new markets. English language gave new economical opportunities for a privileged exporting-class. Through this language, business with English native speakers from European countries like England as well as in The United States became possible.

From the second half of the XX century to nowadays, the role of the English language has also influenced other economical activities like tourism (FLACSO, 2006, p. 155-182) increasing the communicative relations among Costa Rican entrepreneurs, labor communities and foreign English speakers. For instance, during the decade 1870 – 1880, the different demands in business and commerce set the bases for courses in foreign language instruction at the university level. Quesada C. has stated that along with *"Commercial Instruction, Book Keeping, and Commercial Geography, languages became one of the four mandatory subjects of study in public education"* (1997, p. 11, Authors' translation). In this sense, English became an institutionalized subject in the national educational system.

By the first half of the XX century, English was part of high schools' curriculum of Costa Rica's most important cities such as San José, Cartago, Alajuela and Heredia where mainly high and high-middle class citizens had access to high school education. According to Quesada C. *"until 1940, secondary education was an elite matter. English language learning and usage, then, was out of reach for the majority of common people"* (1997, p. 53, Authors' translation). Learning English was a privilege determined by people's social and economical status because only rich people had the opportunity to do business with entrepreneurs from English speaking countries.

But during the second half of the XX century, new educational policies were implemented. Declaring high school education as free and mandatory for all Costa Ricans

brought English teaching-learning to the majority of social classes. This policy was crucial to de-centralize the access to school from the hands of hegemonic social groups. In this sense, the educational policy of the second half of the XX century stimulated the understanding of the social and economic development under the principle of inclusion of a more "educated" work force. Then the democratization of institutions and services had to offer free access to the whole population of that time. Francisco Pacheco underpinned that *"the development of public education continued in a giant quantitative effort for spreading throughout the country. The process of democratization that it brought and its intensifying role as a social-mobility agent was accelerated"* (1996, p. 39) Authors' translation. Consequently, education was conceived as a right rather than as a condition of exclusion.

However, the quality and the real opportunities to access high school education were deficient. Pacheco (1996) argued that the quality of public education decreased due to the political influence of some groups whose real interest was using the public budget assigned to education for some other political aims. Those politicians believed that *"it was enough just to offer some education to the poor"* (Pacheco, 1996, p. 4) Authors' translation.

The politicized view of the educational role promoted a *"system formed by two types of schools: those for rich people having all indispensable equipments, and those for the poor or public schools"* (Pacheco, 1996, p. 42) Authors' translation. Teaching English was a clear example of the polarizing education most habitants from poor and rural communities were victims of. At first instance, they did not really have access to English language teaching.

In 1968, the central western area of Costa Rica, specifically, San Ramón took part of a dramatic change in the educational development of the region with the opening of the first campus –out of the capital- of Universidad de Costa Rica. At that time, this public university started offering the first two years of some careers such as "profesorado en enseñanza media" in three different disciples: social studies, general sciences and Spanish and Literature. In 1975, these professional studies become bachelor programs in teaching social studies, general sciences and Spanish and Literature.

By the year 1976, Sede de Occidente began to offer the second year of the bachelor degree in English language teaching. However, it became an insufficient action because students have to move to the main campus in San José in order to complete the four years of the bachelor program. Most students did not have the economical means to carry out with the expenses of their tuition which forced them to start working with incomplete majors, or to abandon their careers to work in other fields.

Therefore, in 1977, the students had the opportunity to take the third year of the career in Sede de Occidente. Finally, after many negotiations between Sede Rodrigo Facio and Sede de Occidente, in 1978 the complete program in English language teaching is offered to students. However, this career still depended of the administrative decisions taken in main campus, Rodrigo Facio, which limited the local actions to satisfy the contextual demands of rural areas.

The opening of the full program in English language teaching as well as the declaration of this career as a bachelor program of Sede de Occidente was justified on five main reasons. First, students were only offered with the first year of the career. When they finished this part of the program, they had to move to San José which caused high levels of dropping out. Some of them preferred to change their English career for other academic programs that were completely offered by Sede de Occidente. As a result, there were many students expecting the opening of the whole program. Also, there was a lack of English teachers in the rural educational institutions of the region. There were few teachers and a huge demand of them in high schools. But most of the few existing English teachers did not have the bachelor degree. They just had completed the first and/or second year of the career. So these teachers did not have a degree. There was a need to give them the change to finish the whole program.²

It is until 1994 that the bachelor degree in English language teaching was declared an autonomous career of Sede de Occidente. Consequently, those courses having the Spanish signatures "LM" (which meant that the Department of Modern languages from Sede Rodrigo Facio was in charge of the administration of those courses) were changed to the acronyms IO" (meaning: English courses from Sede de Occidente). This change was implemented in order to solve some administrative problems

The change in curricular and institutional administration brought many opportunities to re-arrange the program according to contexts' needs, teachers' experiences, practices and "knowledges". The English language teaching department from Sede de Occidente (1992)³

² For more information, check the document "Plan de Estudios Bachillerato en la enseñanza del inglés 1992, Sede de Occidente-Departamento de Docencia". This is not a formal edited document but it is the only source of information about the curricular design for the Plan de Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del inglés.

³ This information was obtained from a series of documents like letters related to the bachelor degree in English Language teaching from the English Language Teaching Department, Sede de Occidente, Universidad de Costa Rica. These documents were elaborated in 1992; and they have not been edited.

proposed a re-organization of the major's courses and their acronyms by orienting the principles of this "new" program on the training of English language teachers who could face the different aspects proposed in the National English Syllabus. To do so, formal grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary became the fundamental knowledge of English language teaching and learning. Also, the study of the British and North American literature played an important role in terms of their internal structures, co-relations and extra-literary situations.

The principles upon which the English language teaching career was re-organized evidence a huge concern on aspects related to the content knowledge of mechanical aspects. Teacher knowledge was mainly understood as the mastery of the linguistic components and functioning of language where knowing rules about grammatical structures, syntax, punctuation, pronunciation, word choice and word formation were considered as the core of "the fundamental knowledge" an English language teacher should have.

There is an attempt to normalize English into a standard. Traditionally, linguistics has associated the knowledge of a language with a mentally construction of grammar. According to Radford et al., *"this grammar constitutes the native speaker's **competence** in that language, and on this view, the key to understanding what it means to know a language is to understand the nature of such grammar"* (1999, p. 3). In this regard, it is through the systemic grammatical understanding of language that teacher knowledge is legitimated.

The reference to the literary component as a second important domain of the teacher's fundamental knowledge is also based on the traditional formalist approach. Bressler has stated that

Criticism's function, many believed, was to discover the historical context of the text's meaning and to ascertain how the authors' lives influenced their writing. Such extrinsic analysis (examining elements outside the text to uncover the text's meaning) became the norm in the English Departments of many American universities and colleges [and also of the Costa Rican ones]. Other forms of criticism and interpretation were often intermingled with this emphasis on history and biography. (1999, pp. 38-39)

In this sense, history is conceived as a series of chronological events co-related to the literary text, and then, to the author who is considered the text's main authority. By establishing such correlations, it is expected that teachers reach a high knowledge and understanding of cultures of The United States and England.

In reference to the ontological principles that were proposed as indispensable for the constitution of the teacher's content knowledge, an English language teacher should:

1. know the basic principles of researching.
2. do research in his/her in areas related to his/her disciple.
3. have mastered the necessary writing techniques to teach the different grades from high school.
4. plan, guide, implement and evaluate classes according to the different grades.
5. be competent in the use of pedagogical techniques and methodologies that could help students to reach the stated learning objectives.
6. be competent enough to write in English reports and short publications.
7. know, value and transmit the national culture.
8. know how to use computers to teach English. (English Language Teaching Department, 1992)

In terms of abilities, teachers were (and are still) excepted to do some academic research related to their disciplines, apply the basic principles and rules for writing, planning, evaluating as well as being sensible toward national realities.

In order to accomplish the proposed ontological premises associated to "the ideal" teacher knowledge, the English language teaching department (1992) re-structured the program into four general curricular branches: the humanistic, the pedagogical, the complementary and the specialized areas. The humanistic study is constituted by courses related to national and global history and conflicts, seminars on national reality and cultural heritage among others. On the other hand, the pedagogical area aims at the study of methodologies and techniques on language teaching-learning, evaluation techniques and procedures, professional teaching practices, elaboration of teaching materials, curricular design and psychological processes on children and adolescences' development. In reference to the complementary area, there were courses related to the use of computers and music, and body language. The specific area is divided into four sub-areas: listening comprehension, oral and written communication; linguistics; research and literature

6. Conclusions: English Language Teacher Knowledge, its Domains

There are four main domains identified as elemental aspects of teacher knowledge of English language teaching. These domains are the Technical, the Content, the Institutional and the Economic fields. They work as regulatory principles of teachers' practices and beliefs. In discursive and ideological terms, these domains are the result of the historical facts associated to economic reasons. Educational institutions as the "Ministerio de Educación

Pública" have introduced the teaching of English as a "need" to satisfy the economic demands. In the case of Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente, the principles and objectives of the Bachelor program in English language teaching reflect a formal and structural view of Teacher Knowledge. These domains present the following particular constitution.

6.1 The Technical Domain

Teacher knowledge requires the mastery of teaching and learning techniques, methodologies and strategies that can help to develop students' different skills such as listening, reading, writing and speaking. This domain is mostly regulated by foreign and second language learning and teaching, pedagogical and psychological theories on cognitive development, learning styles and intelligences.

6.2 The Content Domain

This is perhaps the strongest domain. It is characterized by the structuralist and formalist perspective of language function and constitution. The study and mastery of grammatical and syntactical rules, phonetics, vocabulary, all aspects related to mechanics of writing are considered as the basic and the most important components of teacher knowledge.

In this domain, culture and sociolinguistic aspects are perceived and treated as subject matters –content targets- to study. In other words, there are materialized in topics of conversation or "cultural notes" and the "values" to deal with in classes. This situation is mostly evident in the content knowledge required by the MEP.

6.3 The Institutional Domain

This knowledge relates to all the institutional regulations associated to planning presentation as well as the MEP's requirements stated in the national curriculum for English Language Teaching, national tests and national policies.

6.4 The Economic Domain

The nature and purpose of the knowledge stimulated and regulated by this domain are based on the satisfaction of the job-market's demands. The teaching-learning process is

exclusively oriented to accomplish the required command in English stated by economical activities like tourism and customer service mainly. In this sense, the economic domain reduces the socio-historical aspects of English language teaching-learning to the global needs stated by transnational markets.

All these domains are affected by the particular circumstances in which each teacher is immersed. The everyday life situations re-de-configure the teaching scenarios, and then, the teaching practices, perceptions, worldviews, values, attitudes and abilities related to the English language teaching-learning. In this process of re-de-configuration, some principles of each domain are re-legitimated and others are de-legitimated. At the same time, this situation re-de-constructs teacher knowledge.

Therefore, English teacher knowledge has been mostly addressed from the technical rationality of a discipline. It means that most investigations, English language teaching programs and national policies have aimed teacher knowledge as a content and pedagogical construction referred to methodological aspects and the mastery of linguistic components mainly.

However, at the light of today's economical, political and socio-cultural conflicts, it is necessary to think of teacher knowledge as an everyday life construction conditioned by the historical nature that made –and makes- its existence possible; as a set of daily life experiences which ontological and axiological references need to be consciously examined to re-orient educational processes more critical and aware of the discursive and socio-political implications English language teaching-learning has in countries like Costa Rica.

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