In-service english teacher's beliefs about culture and language methodology an exploratory research in Montería

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RESUMEN

Este artículo reporta los resultados de una investigación cualitativa de estudio de caso, cuya finalidad fue identificar las creencias de los profesores de inglés sobre la enseñanza del inglés y cómo están relacionadas con su quehacer pedagógico en las escuelas públicas de Montería (Colombia). Este estudio incluyó a cinco profesores de inglés de instituciones públicas de la ciudad de Montería. Los instrumentos usados en esta investigación fueron entrevistas y observaciones. Los resultados revelaron que los docentes de inglés tienen diferentes creencias relacionadas con su metodología, sobre el contexto cultural y también la forma de evaluar. Algunos orígenes de estas creencias fueron confirmados con la teoría y en la misma forma se contrastó la coherencia entre lo que los profesores decían creer y lo que hacían en su práctica diaria.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Creencias, escuela, cultura, experiencia, subyacer, práctica pedagógica

ABSTRACT

This article reports the results of a qualitative case study research design whose aim was to identify in service English teachers' beliefs about language teaching and how these are related with their teaching practice at public schools in Montería.
This study involved five in service English teachers from five different public high schools in Monteria (Colombia).
The data collection procedures used were: interviews and recorded observations.
Results revealed that in service English teachers have different beliefs related to their methodology, the cultural context, and the way they evaluate. Some sources of those beliefs were confirmed with the theory and in the same way the coherence between what teachers said to believe and their teaching practice was contrasted.

KEY WORDS: Beliefs, schooling, culture, experience, underlying, teaching practice

Introduction

In the last decade, there has been a change of research interest in teacher education from studying teachers' classroom behaviour and teaching skills to examining teachers' thoughts and beliefs.(Freeman & Richards (1996), Pajares, (1992), Richards & Lockhart (1996), Richardson (1996). This concern is based on the expectation to find answers to complex issues involved in the teaching learning process such as teachers' classroom decision-making and practice, since Beliefs have been pointed out as responsible for influencing teachers' consciousness, teachers' attitude, teaching methods, teachers' behaviours and their actions in the classroom.

Having this clear in mind, the research team began to question on those underlying conceptions language teachers have about their teaching practice which have eventually led them to continue using the same traditional methodology for language teaching in spite of their acquaintance with the new trends in this area.

Uncovering teacher's beliefs about Language teaching may help us to increase our understanding about their performance and practice in the classroom and will give us some traces of how to tackle effective ways to improve teachers' teaching practice.

In this paper, we examine definitions about teacher's beliefs and their possible sources; the analysis of different teacher's conceptions about language teaching and its implication for the teaching practice.

Beliefs

There are several definitions of beliefs. Abelson (1979:356) defined " beliefs in terms of people manipulating knowledge for a particular purpose or under a necessary circumstance." Also, Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding and Cuthbert (1988:53) stated that "a belief is a way to describe a relationship between a task, an action, an event or another person and an attitude of a person towards it". Virginia Richarsond said : "Beliefs are also defined as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (Richardson, 1996:102). As it can be seen there are a variety of conceptions about this issue which mainly focus on the attitudes and orientations people give to what they know about the surrounding world. In this connection Pajares (1992:309) pointed out a most complete concept about beliefs : "[…] attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions,conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy […]".

Teachers' beliefs

Exploring teachers' beliefs is a complex task to carry out due to the fact that every single teacher is a world, all of them have different experiences, ideas and points of view concerning the same teaching issues, and this difficulty has been caused by "definitional problems, poor conceptualization and differing understanding of beliefs and beliefs structures" (Pajares, 1992:307). That is why it is relevant to determine which are some of the most common beliefs English teachers hold.

Concerning learning, Brindley (1984) (Cited in Richards and Lockhart, 1996: 34) says that some teachers think that learning consists of acquiring, organizing principles through encountering experience. While, Williams and Burden (1999:60) argue that learning is a complex process; which produces personal changes of some kind and it involves the creation of new understandings which are personal relevant. Therefore, teachers' beliefs about what learning really is, affect teachers' actions regarding planning, class development, evaluation and in general the entire process of teaching.

In terms of teaching, Karavas (1996:187) supports that teachers educational attitudes and theories although in many cases unconsciously held, have an effect on their classroom behavior, influence what students actually learn and are a potent determinant of teachers' teaching style.

It means that what teachers believe is reflected in their attitudes and therefore this affects their classroom practice.

Concerning teachers' beliefs about learners, Meighan y Meighan (1990:61-77) suggest that learners may be construed metaphorically as: resisters, receptacles, raw material, and partners. The first group of learners is resisters. For teachers this kind of students learn because they are forced to do it, and in that way ¨force or punishment is the most appropriate way of overcoming such resistance in the classroom¨(Meighan & Meighan, 1990). This view can affect the learning process because learners may see the teacher not as a model to be followed but as a father who punishes them because they do not act in a correct way. The other group of learners is the receptacles. In this case, the teacher sees learners as a large box that needs to be filled with things. In other words, what language teachers who have this conception probably will do is to transmit what they know without caring the way their learners receive it. Another teachers' view of learners is to see them as raw material, they believe that they can mold students in the way they want. And finally, the learner seen as a partner is an alternative for teachers who want a good atmosphere in their classrooms. ¨the assumption here is not of equality but one of a sharing relationship within which teachers recognize that they are also learners¨ (Williams & Burden 1999:59). In this way, teachers are

not seen as the only ones who know everything; learners can also teach them.

Possible sources of teachers` beliefs

Virginia Richardson (1996:105) explained that there are three possible sources for teachers' beliefs which are: personal experience, experience with schooling and formal knowledge, and enculturation.

The experience as students as a possible source of teachers' beliefs, Lortie (1975) (cited in Freeman and Richards,1996:11) states that teachers are also influenced by their own teacher's beliefs, he calls this situation "apprenticeship of observation." This means that they try to repeat the behavior of their own teachers because they have been exposed to their beliefs, values and behaviors when they were students. Therefore, when they become teachers, they tend to imitate their teachers instead of applying what they have learnt about what makes a good teaching.

The next source of teachers' beliefs might be **"the experience with schooling and instruction"** (Richardson 1996:105). It means that the experiences they lived at schools as learners may influence the way they conceive teaching in their current practice.

And the last source that this author presents for teachers' beliefs is **"the experience with formal knowledge"** Virginia Richardson says that the formal

knowledge is understandings that have been agreed on within a community of scholars as worthwhile and valid. This formal knowledge is closely related with "the practice of teaching and includes classroom management, models of teaching, and classroom environment" (Richardson, 1996:106).

Concerning the enculturation, Pajares (1992) explains that "it involves the incidental learning process individuals undergo throughout their lives assimilating the cultural elements present in their personal world".

"Education is directed and purposeful learning; either formal or informal that has its main task at bringing behavior in line with cultural requirements" (316). And "schooling is the specific process of teaching and learning that takes place outside the home".

As it can be observed, those theories stated by Pajares have culture as the main source of beliefs. He says that "those beliefs are incorporated into a belief structure and this strongly influence the processing of new information" (317).

Methodology

The aim of this research was to identify some in service teacher's beliefs and how these are related with their teaching practice in some public secondary schools in Monteria.

In order to undertake this research and according to the topic characteristics, the most suitable type

of research method was the qualitative one, since beliefs are not measurable, they can be uncovered, described and also explained.

Among the qualitative research methods, the ethnographic approach was chosen for this research study, due to the fact that the main purpose of educational ethnography is to describe classroom process, involving interpretation, analysis, and explanation, not just description of the phenomena under study, as Berg, (2001:134) points out "Clearly ethnography is primarily a process that attempts to describe and interpret social expressions between people and groups".

This study was carried out in five public schools of Monteria which were: Santa Maria Goretti, Rancho Grande, La Rivera, Camilo Torres and Cecilia De Lleras specifically in secondary education. These schools are located in neighborhoods of the south area of Monteria. These communities are characterized by having low and middle socioeconomical conditions.

The research group decided to select these schools because they were more accessible to the researchers, also because the administrators were willing to contribute with this study. These schools register around 40 students per classrooms who attend three English classes per week. According to the report given by ICFES (2000-2006) about the students' level of English in Monteria, it ranged between 41-44, which means they have a low proficiency level with a decreasing tendency, taking into consideration that the expected level is 50 which represents an acceptable level for high school students.

Referring to English teachers in these schools, whose ages range between 26 to 54 years of age, they have professional training in English language teaching ; most of them have been trained in other areas, studying for a graduate degree in order improve their teaching. According to a language diagnosis done to English teachers in Monteria at public schools by Herrera, S. et al. (unpublished results) the level of English of most of the teachers is A2, which represents the basic level.

Data collection procedures

In order to collect data, two instruments were used: interviews and observations. Two interviews were applied to the five teachers involved in the study. These interviews were in Spanish to make teachers feel comfortable when responding, they were also tape recorded and some notes were taken by the interviewers. The purpose of these interviews was to gather very personal information about teachers' lives and experiences for finding some possible sources of their beliefs. Additionally teachers explained how they carried out their classes, the activities they performed, the material they used, and also identified their teaching methods.

The second instrument used was Observation. Each teacher was observed in two opportunities. These observations were used to make a contrast between respondents' answers and their teaching practice.

Research questions
The main question

Which are the main in- service English teachers' beliefs about language teaching and how are these related with their teaching practice at public schools in Monteria?

Sub questions

1. Which are the main teachers' beliefs about language teaching?
2. Which are the sources of teachers' beliefs?
3. Are teachers' beliefs coherent with their teaching practice?

Findings

This section presents the analysis of teacher's data by describing first their beliefs about teaching, second, some of the sources of those beliefs and third it is described how coherent their beliefs are in regard to what they express and what they do in the classroom.

Beliefs about teaching

The most common teachers' beliefs about what teaching is and involves will be explained.

Every single teacher has his/her own way to teach, that is why there are many beliefs concerning this topic. Through a personal interview to the teachers involved in this study, researchers found that most of them hold beliefs strongly linked with a method of teaching, because the actions they perform in the classroom may be affected by their beliefs, therefore the activities, the material and all the elements they use in class would be mediated by their beliefs .

Grammar is the key

The Grammar translation Method is a widely used method to teach English; this method focuses on teaching grammar structures, translating and memorizing sentences and repetition drills. It was noticed trough the teachers' responses that some of them believe in the efficacy of this method. For instance, most of the activities they assigned to the students were related to translation of sentences, vocabulary and expressions from Spanish to English and vice versa. They also expressed they used memorizing of vocabulary and repetition, giving explanation of grammar rules and asking the students to write sentences on the board using those structures. For instance, teacher number 1 says ***"les explico la parte gramatical, hacemos ejercicios y salimos al tablero"*** and teacher number 5 also says: ***"dictando la gramática, porque enseñar estructuras gramaticales hace parte del inglés".***

These comments show that they see grammar as one of the main aspects when teaching English, even when they do not recognize openly that they are using the grammar translation method. On the contrary, they assume the way they teach is something different to the grammar translation method, since they apply some activities which make them think that their teaching method is something new, what one of them called "The Practical Method" , which will be explained in the following section.

The practical method works

In a big effort to change what is done in the classroom, some teachers have tried to incorporate games, dynamics, role plays and presentations in order to succeed in the teaching process naming this kind of activities as the "Practical Method". Games can be used to teach English but they have to be well selected and meaningful, Andrew Wright, David Betteridge and Michael Buckby, (1984:1) express that "If it is accepted that games can provide intense and meaningful practice of language, then, they must be regarded as central to a teacher's repertoire. They are thus not for use solely on wet days and at the end of term". So the teaching of English can be interesting if classes are well planned. For the teachers interviewed dynamic classes are important at the moment of teaching a second language. For

example, teacher number2 points out that *"realmente la enseñanza del inglés debe ser dinámica".* And also teacher number 5 says *"el método práctico… donde hay repetición, pronunciación, hay lúdica y mucho juego."* As it can be observed what they have called "practical" seems to be just a traditional class with elements such as repetition, memorization, use of grammar structures, but this teachers try to incorporate games like: "word plays," "dominoes in English," and "parquets". Then, it could be inferred from the rest of responses teachers provided in the interview that what they call practical method seems to be the same Grammar Translation Method they have been using for years. So, they believe that including games in their classes they are using a different method that eventually would become a better way to teach. What these teachers think is that they are making the difference when using this "method" because students participate more.

Participation means learning

Participation is considered a useful strategy for teaching English which contributes to the teaching learning process. It has been defined as "the active engagement of organizations, communities and individuals in decision-making and action that affects them. (Tom Watson, 2008:1). It means that this is a process that involves students and allows them to

carry out certain activities that make them interact with others and learn. Participation is also seen as "the informed, autonomous and meaningful involvement of a community in influencing decision making and action." (Tim Davies, 2007:2).

Teachers interviewed see participation as an important element at the moment of developing the class because for some of them it is like a tool to know if students understood a topic, also because if students participate they are concentrated in the class, and participation helps teachers to evaluate student's progress.

Teacher number 1 believes that if students participate it means that they are learning. This is reflected in his own words: *"si los pones a participar Te rinden",* when this teacher expresses the phrase "te rinden" it means that learners understand what he is trying to teach. According to Pretty, Jules; Guijt, Irene; Scoones, Lan and John Thompson (1995:1) "passive participation is where people are involved merely by being told what is to happen, and active participation where people take initiatives independently of official cooperative policy or external institution."

Cultural and socio economical aspects influence learning

When talking about the different aspects of the teaching of English, these teachers have different beliefs concerning the external factors that influence learning. One of the most influencing aspects is the culture due to the fact that the context in which they live do not contribute to facilitate second language learning. The term culture refers to "the patterns of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individual communicate with one and other and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs". (Thomson, 1990:132, cited in Eli Hinkel, 1999:77). It means that people are immersed in their culture and this influence somehow the way they think and behave.

One of the teachers argues that the difficulty lies on the fact that there is no relation between what is taught at school and what students really live and even when they try to include the second language in the students real life situations, the context does not facilitate the learning. Furthermore, they express that parents are not aware of the importance of learning a second language, so they do not encourage their children to practice what they learn at school, and that situation makes teachers feel frustrated and this may affect their teaching in a negative way as teacher number4 says: *"culturalmente tenemos una dificultad cuando el estudiante por ejemplo hace un diálogo ¿cuándo lo vuelve a repetir en su contexto familiar? Escasamente lo hace en el colegio y si llega a la casa hablando inglés, la mamá le va a*

decir ¿bueno y tú por qué vienes hablando así? This opinion shows that for some teachers, culture can be an obstacle to teach English.

This can be interpreted as a matter of teachers' attitude towards teaching, something that can be related with their convinctions regarding the strategies they use to improve their teaching.. However, in a different view Teacher number 2 in the first interview states that culture can be used for teaching: *"la cultura no la podemos desligar de nosotros, es algo que está inherente en el ser humano y uno toma de esa cultura para trabajarla"* So, while culture can be seen as a difficult aspect to work with for some teachers, it can be taken as an advantage to teach English establishing relationship between what students know and what students should learn. Claire Kramsch (1993:8) express: "if, however, language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching."

Referring to the socio- economical aspects that influence learning, some teachers mentioned that depending on the low or high incomes students have, their learning will succeed or not. They also expressed that students in private schools are more interested in learning English than students in public schools because the first ones are more in contact with the second language outside the classroom, for example, when they watch English channels, use the internet, and listen to music; while in public school students rarely can have the English textbook or even the copy to work in class.

As it can be seen, these teachers consider that economic difficulties and the quality of life of students affect their learning in a negative way.

Material, the key for learning

Mostly, material is associated with a textbook but it refers also to "anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language" (Tomlinson, 1988:xi). Related to this issue all of the teachers interviewed agreed that materials are necessary, important, interesting and can influence students' learning. Taking this into account, one of teachers involved in the study considers that materials must be graded depending on students' level as it is reflected in her own words: *"Hay que mirar si los materiales están adaptados a las características de los estudiantes, no porque el texto diga que es para grado 6, 9 y 11 yo lo voy a coger tal cual como está sin tener en cuenta el nivel que ellos tienen o si los alumnos están en condiciones de hacerlo, o si el nivel que ellos tienen da para hacer el trabajo".* While another teacher argues that the same materials can be implemented in all grades no matter the students' level or their needs, as it is reflected in his own words: *¨"yo digo que el inglés no tiene grado, porque algunos dicen este material de tal tema es*

de grado 6º o 7º, Para mí el inglés es general tú utilizas expresiones en grado 6º que también usas en otros grados. Yo no especifico temas y uso las mismas actividades lúdicas para todos, son juegos que tú puedes usar aquí, en tu casa y con quien quieras".

Another advantage highlighted by the teacher was that materials call students attention, but it is important to say that most of the time when they refer to materials they think of the English textbook, they say that the pictures it contains help learners to understand the second language better as it is reflected in teacher Number 4 words *"Hay que utilizarlos, las copias, los libros, porque un muchachito con un libro tiene la ventaja de que busca, ve los dibujos entonces él trata de que eso que ve allí y no sabe qué es entonces le pregunta a uno, y yo les digo miren esto ya lo vimos así ellos se acercan al texto qué bueno sería que se tuvieran materiales didácticos."* In fact, as Cunningsworth (1995:1) says "textbooks are a key component in most language programs." But also he points out that "no matter what form of materials teachers make use of, whether they teach from textbooks, institutional materials, or teacher-prepared materials, they represent plans for teaching. They do not represent the process of teaching itself." This comment shows a high grade of certainty because whatever material teachers use should be

modified and adapted taking into account students' needs, context, and level of English. Some of the materials mentioned by the teachers were: flash cards, copies and pictures as other necessary resources to use in the English class. Apart from this, these teachers believe that there are some specific material such as videos, laboratory, tape recorders and English music which contribute to develop an English class in a better way. But, unfortunately, those materials are not available at schools.

Evaluation as a verifier

According to Pauline Rea- Dickens and Kevin Germaine (1992:3) "evaluation is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning. It is important for the teacher because it can provide useful information to use for the future direction of classroom practice, for planning of courses and for the management of learning tasks and students."

The teachers interviewed have different views of what evaluation is. For example, some teachers see evaluation as a measurement by which they can confirm if students learned or not what they teach. The evaluations they describe include oral and written tests, participation and comprehension of texts. This shows they hold the following strong belief: if student pass a test it means that they have learnt. For instance, teacher number1 declares: *"en las evaluaciones que*

hago y a la hora de medir hay unos que rinden y otros que no." It seems that for these teachers the important part of the evaluation is the students' results.

Evaluation as an integral process

According to Pauline Rea- Dickens and Kevin Germaine (1992:7) the process of learning is more relevant when evaluating the extent to which a particular course of instruction is effective and efficient, "knowing merely that a learner has passed or failed a test does not help us to understand what worked well, or what did not work well". This means that the evaluation involves more than testing, it is a natural process that takes into account not just the product but the whole process, the students' attitude, the students' progress, also their values.

In this line of thought teacher number 2 says *"hablamos de mirar a la persona en todos los aspectos, no solo en la parte cognitiva sino en la de los valores… y la actitud de esa persona si es positiva o no hacia la materia".*

One specific teacher believes that evaluation should be an ongoing process and it should be objective. That is to say not influenced by emotion or personal feelings. So, it can be said that these teachers have different beliefs about what evaluation is and involves but "evaluation is not always something that we do

in a principled and systematic way because the criteria we use in making judgments may sometimes be vague and ill-defined."(Rea- Dickens & Germaine, 1992:4).

Sources of Teachers Beliefs

In this category will be mentioned some of the sources of teachers' beliefs found through the interviews where they talk about their personal experiences when studying and teaching English. This category is divided into three main sources of beliefs which are the experience as students, experience with schooling and experience with training.

The experience as students

This source refers to the situations teachers lived when they were studying, their motivation to study the second language, the difficulties they had and how those situations influenced and shaped the way they are teaching now. As Kennedy (1990:17) points out "teachers acquire seemingly indelible imprints from their own experiences as students and these imprints are tremendously difficult to shake." For example, some teachers said they learned English studying Grammar and they believe that this method also works for their teaching. As teacher number 1 says: *"a nosotros nos enseñaron la parte gramatical… para mí funcionó, yo les explico la parte gramatical"*

also teacher number 5 says *"yo aprendí así, a mí me funcionó y me funciona en algunos grados".* From these viewpoints it can be inferred that they teach in the same way they were taught when they were students, identifying that only learning vocabulary and grammar was enough for them to learn another language, therefore, when they became teachers, they tried to use the same way their teachers did when they were learners.

The experience with schooling

Another source of teacher belief is the one related with the school they work or have worked in. It has to do with the influence teachers receive from them. Many schools have their particularities in terms of teaching methods and teachers have to adapt their teaching to those requirements which sometimes mark their teaching style and shape their practice profile, consequently that gained experience can be an influential element involved in the current teacher's teaching practice and they try to keep in mind that it is the way they should teach. This is what is reflected in teacher number one's words: *"yo trabajé en instituciones privadas en el área de inglés y lo que se ve en estos colegios ayuda mucho a uno en el desarrollo profesional como docente"* in the same line teacher number 3 also says that *"en primer lugar la experiencia que he tenido en colegios donde la disciplina es*

bastante grande, yo creo que eso ha ido moldeándolo a uno."

The experience with training

Concerning the education English teachers have received, they mentioned that improving their knowledge about the new tendencies in teaching has influenced the way they teach now, because they are able to use these new tendencies in applying strategies and activities in their classes. Additionally, they expressed that after receiving this professional training their teaching has improved as can be noticed in their comments. Teacher number 5 : *"lo que ha influenciado mi forma de enseñar actualmente, ha sido la experiencia que tuve con un profesor del consulado de Gran Bretaña tres semanas intensivas"* and teacher number 2 says *"a comienzos del año pasado tenía una visión de las cosas, después que hice el diplomado en la universidad las cosas cambiaron porque ya uno se fija mucho en las necesidades"* It can be seen that these teachers have been positively influenced by being in contact with other experiences, instructions that in some way have traced a mark in their teaching practice.

Coherence between teachers´ expressed beliefs and their actions in the classroom

After analyzing the results and uncovering some of the beliefs teachers have, the research group decided to observe what they carry out in their classrooms in order to see the coherence between what they expressed in the interviews and what they actually do. Following are presented the findings in the ten classes observed.

Concerning their beliefs in terms of the methods used in their teaching practice, it seems that teachers use the grammar translation method, as it is shown in this excerpts from observations.

T:	Miren lo que hemos hecho, ahora viene la creación de nosotros, que hicimos en el juego, eso lo vamos a escribir en inglés, piense la idea en general la piensa en español, escríbalo en español, y lo traslada al inglés.

Observation number 2, teacher number 5 (appendix # 24)

T:	En otra situación donde le colocan el verbo que no es To Be ¿qué deben colocar? Abran bien los ojos, debe ir en pasado, en pasado, no en presente. Debe ir I porque son ustedes, were y el verbo en pasado, después el complemento. Miren que son dos frases que necesita de la otra después de la primera frase debe ir coma (,) después de esto I.

Observation number 2, teacher number 2 (appendix # 22)

Concerning what we have seen above, we can say that some of the activities teachers did were basically focused on translating sentences, memorizing vocabulary, repeating it, and explanations of grammar structures. It is important to highlight that some teachers in the interviews openly accepted they use grammar as the key for teaching English. In these cases there is coherence between what they said and what they do in their practice. However, there were teachers who expressed they used the communicative approach to teach but when they were observed, it was discovered that there was not consistence between what they claimed and their practice because they made use of activities oriented to the grammar translation method. Besides that, some teachers in the interview argued that they use the "practical method" to teach English, this method is described as active classes in which there are games, as it is shown in the following extract from teacher number 5 (interview number 1)

¿Qué método cree usted que se debe usar para enseñar inglés? ¿Por qué?
R*: El método práctico digo yo, donde hay repetición, pronunciación, hay lúdica, mucho juego.*

Nevertheless, in the observations we saw that the teacher did not

implement activities different to translation, grammar exercises, substitution drills, repetition among others. He just used games as a warm up activity but the rest of the class was as it was described. Therefore, he continues using the grammar translation method.

Thus, there is not coherence between teachers' responses and activities carried out in the classroom.

In terms of the cultural aspect, some teachers expressed that they included or used it in their teaching. Teacher number 3 said:

La cultura definitivamente, no la podemos desligar de nosotros, es algo que está inherente en el ser humano y uno toma de esa cultura para trabajarla, cómo acercarlos a las cosas que son conocidas, yo no les voy a hablar de una música que no sea conocida por ellos.

However, the research group observed that they do not make use of their context to teach the language, instead, they incorporate situations, places and items students are not familiarized with.

So, there is not coherence in the teacher's expressed beliefs and what she really does.

Related to materials, teachers pointed out that they are important and useful to call students attention as teacher number 5 stated in interview number 2:

Es importantísimo porque llama la atención del estudiante, yo hago dibujos, flash cards o pictures.

According to what they said, they use a variety of materials to teach English including tape recorders, pictures, flash cards, magazines and others. However, in the observations made, we noticed that the materials used the most are just copies from textbooks and most of the time this photocopies were lent to the students.

As it can be seen, there is no coherence between what teachers said about the materials they use to teach, and what they really use. Besides, even though they expressed that they see material as an important element to teach, in the observations made, we noted that they do not demand the material as a requirement for the class based on the economical conditions students come from. So, no coherence was seen between what they said they think about the material and what they ask from their students.

Dealing with the evaluation, we can see that there is consistency between teachers' expressed beliefs concerning the evaluation as verifier; that is to assess students to check their progress, and the way they effectively evaluate them.

On the other hand, some teachers said that the evaluation should be an integral process, it means evaluating not only through exams but the whole process, taking into account students' values, efforts, and participation. But, after observing, it was discovered

that they are not evaluating students that way, instead, they tend to assess students' achievement doing activities for getting a grade.

Then, teachers' actions show evaluation not as an integral process, as they mentioned, but as a verifier to assess students. In this case once again there is no correspondence between their expressed words and their actions. Furthermore, teachers argued that they take into account students' participation in order to evaluate them and to value students' efforts at the moment of taking the risk. This is supported by teacher number 3 when saying: "*hay que tratar de que al menos las situaciones que uno le plantea, por las historias, por los trabajos se les llegue de alguna manera que les guste, a través de eso se logra que el muchacho intente expresarse así sea que lo intente.*"

In the same line of thought teacher number 4 reported: "*si es un diálogo entonces les digo salga aunque lo haga mal.*" By contrast, when observing them, it could be noticed that there is a low degree of correspondence between teachers' expressed beliefs and their classrooms practices. As the following excerpt refers:

T:	Así que por favor para la próxima clase el que me diga mi compañero se quedó le pongo D porque usted debe estar preparado y una insuficiente si sale y lo hace mal.

Observation number 2, teacher number 3 (appendix # 23)

In this case, the teacher restricts their students, giving them no opportunities to learn from their mistakes.

However there is just one teacher who praises her students when they take the risk to participate even when they are not right as can be seen in the excerpt:

T:	Responda, no tenga miedo. Tranquilo que no va a perder inglés, le voy a poner A, porque se atrevió. Tenías una I, ahora tienes una A.

Observation number2, teacher number 4 (appendix # 24)

Particularly, there is coherence between what this teacher stated and what they carry out in the classrooms because she is creating a confident environment in which students may feel motivated to participate without any restriction as the first step of a real and meaningful participation.

Conclusions

This study was developed to identify some teachers' beliefs about language teaching, the sources of those beliefs and the coherence between teachers' beliefs and their actions. This research raises a number of issues with regard to teachers' beliefs which provides answer to the research questions at the beginning of the project. We conclude that there is a variety of

beliefs teachers hold concerning the teachers' process. First, teachers believe that the Grammar Translation Method is the most appropriate way to teach English. Even though they try to implement "new activities" such as games and role plays they are still using the Grammar Translation Method. Therefore, the learning of the second language is being affected due to the fact that teachers omit developing other abilities that are necessary for students to be competent in English.

Second, teachers believe that culture and socio economical aspects influence learning in a negative or positive way depending on the context where it is given. This belief influence teaching due to the fact that teachers who see these aspects as positive elements try to use them to develop their classes and the ones who see them as negative elements tend to teach the second language as something isolated from students' real life and this becomes an obstacle for a meaningful learning.

Third, teachers believe that evaluation is a verifier. In this way what matters for them is not the student's progress but their results. This is a narrow view of what evaluation really is and involves because evaluation is a wide concept that implies integrating not just abilities and knowledge but also values, attitudes and progress.

Furthermore, teachers believe that if students participate that means they are learning. Thus, learning is then

limited because teachers should not only verify the progress of students through participation. There are cases in which some students do not like to talk or participate and this not necessarily means they are not learning. Also, every single student has his/her own learning style and therefore they show their progress in different ways, as declared by Willing (1988:142) "learners are different and learn in different ways". When teachers have the belief that learning can be assessed by participation maybe they are making exclusion with those students who show their progress in a different way, and it is clear that not every time a person participates means they are understanding or learning something.

As we can see the beliefs teachers hold influence what they do in their classrooms. We could identify three main sources of teachers' beliefs which are: their experience as students, their experience with schooling and their experiences with training. These sources enabled the research group to understand the reasons why they think as they do and to understand that experiences play an important role when constructing beliefs.

We also realized that beliefs can be changed: Virginia Richardson (1998:2) says "in my work with teachers I noticed that they undertake changes voluntarily, following their sense of what their students need and what is working. They try out new ideas". We could notice that teachers involved

in our study changed their minds after receiving a specific training. In this case, they changed because they wanted to do it perceiving the necessity to do so in order to improve their teaching.

Moreover we can sum up that the majority of teachers' expressed beliefs are not coherent with their teaching practice. This issue affects their teaching because even when they know the aspects to carry out an effective teaching, they persist doing the same they have done for years.

Pedagogical Implications

Exploring teachers' beliefs is a relevant issue that covers several aspects in the educational field because teachers as one of the main actors in the classroom are responsible for improving their teaching in such a way that the learning process has sense.

To improve teaching, reflection should be an inherent aspect in the process since teaching success depends on how much teachers evaluate themselves, their actions and the decisions they make in the classroom.

As future teachers, we have to be aware of our own beliefs because they can be influencing us in a positive way or on the contrary, they can be an obstacle to carry out an effective teaching.

Bearing in mind that beliefs can be detrimental, it is necessary for us to be open to change in order to modify the wrong actions we make in our classrooms. This way, we can begin to develop teaching beliefs based on choice. That is to say, we know that we have control over our actions and beliefs.

Before doing this study, we as pre service teachers ignored the magnitude of the role played by beliefs in our lives, we did not know the impact beliefs could have in the teaching process, in the decisions we make and how this affects others, in this case learners. Being inside the classroom as researchers allowed us to appreciate beliefs teachers have and also it helped us to identify our own beliefs, the ones we did not know we held. It is important to analyze these beliefs deeply in order to change the ones not contributing positively to the development of a successful English class.

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