

Delving into Pre-Service Teachers, Cooperating Teachers and University Mentors' Positionings in the Initial English Teaching Practicum

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Abstract

Situated within the context of initial English language teacher education programs (IETEPs) in Colombia, the English language teaching practicum (ELTP), has been considered as a crucial stage in the formation process pre-service teachers go through. Thus, from a decolonizing perspective to education, this paper attempts to contextualize some theoretical and empirical inquiries in order to understand how pre-service teachers (henceforth ELPTs), cooperating teachers (ELCTs) and English university mentors (henceforth EUMs) position themselves pedagogically in the ELTP. Positionings embrace the recognition of individual and collective ELPTs, ELCTs, and ELUMs' views towards the ELTP. Delving into the ways in which these teachers are discursively framed, we might understand and problematize how they assume themselves at the linguistic, pedagogical, socio-cultural and political dimensions embedded in the practices that characterize the ELTP. From the perspective of critical pedagogies, this entails a vision that intends to develop "awareness of the complexities of educational practice and an understanding of and commitment to a socially just, democratic notion of schooling" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 50) that recognizes and works critically on the colonial practices that have normalized English language teaching (ELT) in Latin American contexts. In this respect, De Sousa, (2010a) claims the need for a critical response to colonialism and imperialism, that has deep implications in decentering ways of knowing, being and doing (decolonizing turn).

Keywords: Pre-Service Teachers, Cooperating Teachers, University Mentors, Positionings, Initial English Teacher Education, Decolonizing Turn.

Introduction

This paper emerges as a first attempt to situate some theoretical and empirical concerns that intend to unveil how English language preservice-teachers (ELPTs), English language cooperating teachers (ELCTs), and English language

university mentors (ELUMs) position themselves pedagogically in the English language teaching practicum (ELTP)³⁸. Positionings, in this initial inquiry process, embrace the recognition of individual and collective teachers' standpoints towards the ELTP. Delving into the ways in which these teachers are discursively framed, we might understand and problematize how they locate, the relationships they establish among themselves and their institutions, and how they look and act towards the linguistic, pedagogical, socio-cultural and political dimensions embedded in the *practices and experiences*³⁹ that characterize the ELTP. Analysing this issue, the English language teaching practicum community (ELTPC)⁴⁰ might expand their understandings about English language teaching and learning knowledges⁴¹, as they can be co-constructed along with teachers' their identity, agency and empowerment. From the perspective of critical pedagogies, "educators and others can unravel and comprehend the relationship among schooling, the wider social relations which inform it, and the historically constructed needs and competences that students bring to schools" (Giroux, 1998, p.xi). Therefore, the ELTPC is called to develop "awareness of the complexities of educational practice and an understanding of and commitment to a socially just, democratic notion of schooling" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 50) that recognizes and works critically on the colonial practices that have normalized English language education in Latin American contexts.

This initial research framework considers a decolonial view towards the re-significance of the ELTP, which embraces the need to unveil the ELTPC's positionings in order to understand not only the vertical but horizontal interactions and practices⁴² that take place in the ELTP. When addressing practices, I do not refer exclusively to the development of technical or visible 'doing' in the classroom. I refer to the possibilities to (a) reconsider practices, sometimes determined by static models which teachers are to follow in the school context; (b) enact reflection upon the teacher-self, creating and negotiating relationships among the ELTPC; (c) name visible, hopefully, some

38 The stage in which the IELTPs situated ELPTs in real contexts of teaching.

39 *Practices and experiences* have to do mainly with the instructional dimension of English teaching and learning in the English language classroom (ELC). However, they cannot be reduced to the "instrumental ideologies that emphasize a technocratic approach to both teacher preparation and classroom pedagogy" (Giroux, 1988, p. 122-123). Instead, *these practices and experiences* from a decolonizing perspective (De Sousa, 2010a) can address other forms of thinking, doing and understanding the school contexts where students and teachers are seen as transformative agents. These practices and experiences are based on the interactions between students and teachers. For a problematization on classroom interaction and teacher educator interactional identities see Lucero in this volume.

40 ELTPC is the acronym I will use in this paper to refer to the actors involved in the teaching practicum: pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers, and university mentors.

41 For a deep exploration on Teachers' Knowledge, see Castañeda-Londoño in this volume.

42 That *practice* for Davini (2015) entails that action and thought go hand in hand, and in this process ideas and self- assessment are the result of diverse personal and social experiences.

local pedagogies constructed through the teachers' experiences. From the lenses of the epistemologies of the south (De Sousa, 2010a), the ELTP can be envisioned as emancipation from the hegemonic Western practices that have normalized the English language practices and the teaching profession, as it has been stated in the banking model of education by Shor & Freire (1987). In this respect, De Sousa, (2010a) claims the need for a critical response to colonialism⁴³ and imperialism, that has deep implications in decentering ways of knowing, being and doing (decolonizing turn). What is interesting about this perspective is that there are no unique ways to teach, there are several possibilities to suggest, and, or, create ways of teaching and learning considering the local contexts.

In this paper, I will address the background of this research interest and will explain some gaps and tensions present in the ELTP. Then, I will approach positionings in the ELTP, an initial conceptualization of ELTE, followed by epistemological stances towards the repositioning of the ELTP from the lenses of the Decolonizing turn. Likewise, I will support empirically the need to explore this research interest. Finally, I will explicitly state the research question, objectives and concluding remark.

Background

The field of Initial English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) in Colombia has regarded the ELTP as one of the most important stages to situate the ELPTs in the real contexts of teaching. However, the question of how pre-service teachers, can best be prepared to face the realities of the profession (getting to know the school dynamics, being closer to the needs and expectations students have about English and its teaching and learning process, making decisions about didactic processes, understanding the socio-cultural context of students, among others) has been a concern for this field in the last six decades. Although, it is significant to focus on ELPTs' formation process and the knowledge⁴⁴ they start constructing about their profession, it should also bear in mind that they are not alone in this stage. Both, their ELCTs and ELUMs play a significant influence in the forms the ELTP is conceived and developed within the school context. Understanding these teachers' positionings towards it, through the interactions they establish among themselves has become my major concern.

43 For the initial exploration on what colonial and decolonial perspectives of ELTE, see Castañeda-Trujillo in this volume.

44 For teachers' knowledge see Castañeda-Londoño in this volume.

This interest has emerged from both the experience as a University mentor for about 15 years now and from the literature explored in this area, as it is presented in the following lines: firstly, I have noticed that ELUMs claim that we are involved in transformations that challenge the colonial practices that have framed IELTEPs, however, sometimes, the ELTP remains the same, maintaining a single focus on the didactic dimension of English language teaching (lesson planning and instruction, classroom management, language outcomes, testing, among others). This happens because the purpose of English language teaching (ELT) from the Western thinking has only attempted to achieve what Magrini (2014) calls 'social efficiency': learning as something to be reproduced, demonstrated, and/or controlled, objectifying language, language teaching and our profession as stated in the global tendencies in education.

In the same line of thought, Luke (2004) questions the risk of becoming a profession involved only in technical practices, with instructional frameworks and without critical positionings upon our actions. These realities take several forms, considering the fact, that teachers are exposed to these practices because of the demands of language policies in our context. For instance, one of the central aspects in the bilingualism policy has to do with English level certification⁴⁵. Therefore, It seems to me that some pedagogical practices and experiences at schools have been reduced to this valid but limited vision of English language teaching and learning.

Secondly, an initial revision of the literature at the local and global level has revealed that in the relation theory- practice, from a Western standpoint, the ELTP a) has acknowledged the value and constraints of the discipline, in our case, English (Phillipson, 2003); (b) has highlighted its didactic dimension: learning to become an English teacher: methods, strategies, materials, evaluation, and assessment practices (Hedge, 2000; Harmer, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2005); (c) has addressed a more reflective practice on what the ELTP entails, (Richards & Lochart, 2005).

45 The bilingual policy in Colombia issued the Basic Standards for Competences in foreign languages in 2006, in which the Ministry of Education (MEN) mandated students to achieve an English B1 level (Common European framework of Reference) by the time they finish high school. Although the standards mention 'foreign languages' the policy reduces bilingualism to Spanish-English, excluding other majority and minority languages. For a deep discussion on the dualism on ethnic and mainstream bilingualism, see Arias in this volume. Then, in 2016, the MEN issued the Basic English learning Rights providing some considerations to what the English curriculum should contain, but continuing with the same purpose, English certification. This policy has extended to 'Licenciatura Programs'. In 2016, the resolution 2041 the MEN, demanded from ELTPs to attain a C1 level, and pre-service teachers from other areas different from English to achieve a B2 level.

However, the research in the Colombian Context has delved deeply in understanding the ELTP, and; (d) has documented pedagogical and research experiences on the pedagogical dimension of teaching (Cárdenas, 2004), (e) has attempted to see the relation between the teaching-learning process and the affective dimension embedded there, (e) has addressed a more social view of what the ELTP represents, (f) has voiced the pre-service -teachers or university mentors, separatedly, in relation to their perceptions and beliefs about it, as well as, their attitudes and tensions in this stage (Morales, 2016; Prada & Zuleta, 2015; Bonilla & Samacá, forthcoming), (g) has conceived the school as the scenario in which the practices presented in it are no longer homogenizing realities to reveal how actors move, incorporate or resist the hegemonic visions of the neoliberalist educational framework. (Baquero, 2015; Morales, 2016), (h) has challenged the reflective practice for ELTPs to support their preparation (Viáfara, 2005; Zambrano & Insuasty, 2009; Samacá, 2012), (i) has characterized how the teaching practicum has been developed in IELTPs (Chaves, 2008; Méndez & Bonilla, 2016).

As it has been asserted previously, the attention, in some research studies, has been mostly placed on the one hand, on the pre-service teachers' views, abilities and tensions in the ELTP, and on the other hand, the university mentors, their concerns and worries. Nonetheless, very little has been discussed in regards to the relations and positionings that the ELTPC assume through their discursive and practices in relation to the ELTP. I think that it would be significant to critically analyze how the ELTPC give meaning and co-construct their sense of their practices⁴⁶ in this stage, bearing in mind their diverse ideological perspectives driven into the pedagogical processes for personal, conceptual, social, and political transformations. It is relevant to acknowledge that the process of learning to becoming does not only concern ELTPs and ELUMs, cooperating teachers and, even their school students count.

Based on the above mentioned, I am fully aware of the need to critically understand that the ELTP can not only be a space for ELTPs to develop skills but also to understand how cooperating teachers, and university mentors, along with them, discuss dilemmas and tensions, self -examine assumptions, explore possibilities for new relationships and actions, for constructing and reconstructing the sense of teaching and learning to becoming (Goodson & Gill, 2008).

46 In this regards, Menghini (2008, cited in segovia, 2008) "practices are not abstract, nor exclusively instrumental, nor independent of the objects, but refer to the doing of their subjects/agents" (p. 37).

Positionings, rooted in discursive social psychology, social constructivism and discourse, refers to the “assumptions and values that people carry out when interacting with others in different institutions and societies” (Davies & Harré, 2007)⁴⁷. This internal process is exteriorized through discourse and entails dynamic aspects of encounters of the self with other individuals, the self with social groups and the self with contexts. This means that people locate in one or multiple positions depending on the reflexive and interactional situations they encounter. Thus, a person can position himself/herself, but also positions others from the point of view given by the position.

Consequently, Harré and Moghaddam (2003) establish two factors that might contribute to individuals positioning. The first are the motivational orientations. Motivation is a necessary element of positioning since the ways in which a person interacts with others, and positions each other will depend somehow on their orientations, their motives. The second factor contributing to people positionings are emotions. One way of positioning oneself is to put on view the emotions that are characteristic of one’s position. In the same way, to position an interlocutor is to state what emotions he/she ought to be feeling and to characterize the emotions they are feeling. Emotions are also situated in another aspect of positioning: its strategic aspect. Analyses of positioning depict actors as trying to establish a favorable position for them within the social act. Emotions contribute to the strategic aspect of positioning.

Since adopting a position will define the relation between self and other, when people position themselves in a social encounter certain aspect emerge during the process. Ling (1998, as cited by Boxer, 2001) suggest that people negotiate positions for themselves and others; in this process they try to establish a balance between parity and power. Those who achieve power through their positions can influence outcomes and define their relationships. According to Boxer (2001) power can result from forced positioning of self and others; and forced positioning of others. Forced positioning of self and others occurs as a reaction of being positioned by another.

Thus, when people position themselves while interacting, relations are defined giving way to the appearance of power, since each of the participants will try to dominate or take control of the situation, actions and relationship

47 The concept of positioning was introduced by Smith, 1988. He distinguished between ‘a person’ as an individual agent and the ‘subject’. Considering the latter, he means “ the series or conglomerate of positions, subject-positions, provisional and not necessarily indefeasible, in which a person is momentarily called by the discourses and the word he/she inhabits” (xxxv).

that might arise from this interaction; and not only dominate but refuse the position given or taken during the communication act for example.

The ELTP, on the other hand, can not only be viewed as a period of transfer of knowledge and skills in the ELC, but as a process of understanding teaching and learning, a time of formation, but also, a time of transformation. ELPTs come to this stage with several expectations, in which, they make connections with their previous experiences as English language learners, the relations they make between the university courses and the schools, as well as the kind of teachers they would like to become⁴⁸. The literature has placed attention to these processes, but from my point of view, the lack of concerns about positionings from the ELTPC have somehow lessened the manner ELTE has been conceived and, in consequence the ELTP. Then, through the exploration of how the ELTPC recognize their individual and collective standpoints, we might understand and problematize their locations, relationships, and actions towards the ELTP and how that sense of positionings can be established, maintained or transformed. This is what I am interested to delve into. Therefore, the relation between the ELTPC and their practices can constitute a fertile ground to personal interpretive frameworks or approaches for the ELTP.

CONCEPTUALIZING the teaching practicum in initial English language teacher education

The teaching practicum in IELTEPs has become a crucial pedagogical stage that has an impact on ELPTs' formation processes, and the development of their professional knowings⁴⁹. This idea of knowings comes out from a threefold relationship that lies on *practice*, *reflection* and *the job's tradition*, which is constituted in the everyday encounters with the profession (De Tezanos, 2007).

Undoubtedly, the ELTP is the stage of initiation and first professional socialization (Menghini & Negrin 2008, cited in Segovia, 2008) that has been framed within the pedagogical knowledge ELPTs start elaborating from their experiences in learning to teach. De Tezanos (2007) argues that "the idea of the teaching practicum emerges as the contemporary expression to name the teachers' work"⁵⁰ (p. 11). Nevertheless, Davini (2015) questions that vision of the ELTP as something that only "represents the *doing*, as the activity in the

48 For exploring ELTPs imagined identities, see Posada in this volume.

49 Knowings have to do with the knowledge construction associated to the works by Foucault in the 1980's that emerges as a key concept that names what is outside of the forms through which the scientific models have conceived.

50 The translation is mine.

real and visible world. It's simple, but it's also simplistic: practices are limited to what people do" (p. 24). Davini (2015), then, argues that this restricted view of the ELTP obscures the meaning of "no doing without thinking, and that the practices are the result of the subjects, who always involve the thought and valuation, as well as diverse notions or images of the world" (p. 24).

Thus, the ELTP plays a key but challenging role depending on the conceptions and meanings we assign to it, for instance: the technical, the practical and critical-emancipatory (Mendoza, *et al.*, 2002, cited in Baquero, 2007, p. 10). The first one proposed learning by apprenticeship of observation. This entails imitating the ELCTs practices in the classroom. However, this conception clearly entails an instrumentalized view with the tendency to replicate models and practices that deal with the teaching dimension. The second one suggested a more reflective and critical dimension of teaching considering the social and educative reality. This encompasses ELPTs to comprehend the classroom and school situations from a more holistic perspective, where the ELUMs play a key role. The third one conceived an emancipatory view "though which teachers are conceived as intellectuals that along with other educational actors generate resistance relationships, change and social reproduction, mainly through knowledges and doings in community and the articulation of the school in the public nets" (Mendoza, 2002, cited in Baquero, 2007, p. 11).⁵¹In Mejia's (2012) words, this last view "might entail constructing a project that makes sense for every agent involved in the pedagogical experience. It has significance for everyone and his/her context and everyone is able to control and transform" (p. 131).

It is worth noting that the ELTP for its nature, configures the actors involved in it. Accordingly, teachers are social, cultural and political beings who accept or resist the homogenizing visions of teaching. The ELTP also provides teachers the possibility to experience, and critically reflect upon the issues concerning the experience of teaching in tandem with their own understanding of educational theories⁵², even if at the core of the ELTP are the pre-service teachers, they are not alone, their ELCTs and ELUMs mentors also share a co-responsibility in this formation process. Therefore, Dove (1986) affirms that ideally the practicum should be an opportunity for teacher educators and experienced school teachers to *partner*⁵³ with each other in supporting

51 For emancipatory practices in the ELTP see Castañeda-Trujillo in this volumen.

52 For Davini (2015) the ELTP has to do with "practices not exclusively referred to the development of operative, technical or doing skills, but to the capacity for intervention and teaching in complex real contexts, in situations that involve different dimensions and, often, to the contextualized treatment of challenges or ethical dilemmas in social and institutional environments" (p. 29).

53 Partner entails a horizontal relationship between student-teachers and their mentors.

ELPTs, going from the instructional to reflective and emancipatory ways of envisioning the pedagogical experience.

This implies that the ELTP should no longer be understood as merely putting theory into practice, rather it should be seen as a learning opportunity in which pre-service teachers engage along with cooperating teachers and university mentors in the process of thinking *What, what for, and how* they are doing in the ELTP, “making explicit their needs and concerns for teaching” (Nilsson, 2008 cited in Kourieos, 2012, p. 57).

Towards An initial conceptualization Of ELT Models In ENGLISH LANGUAGE Teacher Education

For years, English language teacher education has been fundamentally concerned with preparing teachers, it has become a dynamic field through which teachers have developed skills, expertise, knowledge, and preparation for teaching. However, the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has recently undergone dramatic changes in its conceptualization with a move towards addressing critical, social, and educational issues. These changes, influenced by socio-cultural and critical theories, have altered the focus of language teacher education. In this section, I will focus on some conceptions of language teaching and models of ELT, considering the importance of context, based on Crandall’s (2000) and Phillipson’s (2003) insights about the construction of the ELT field.

To start with, Phillipson (2003) states that the two main pillars on which ELT was built were the unanalyzed experience of teaching English as a foreign language and the theoretical principles to language teaching. It was in the 1920’s that the Institute of education at the University of London, with a very strong phonetics tradition, offered teacher training in ELT, drawing on fragmentary principles for language teaching; but it was in the early 1950’s that language teaching and learning became a scientific base to be studied. Then, in the late 1950’s, the school of Applied Linguistics at Edinburgh University, oversaw the graduate courses with the primary aim to provide the theoretical basis for English language teaching.

Thus, the emphasis placed only on Linguistics was challenged, and it was the members of the International Association of Applied Linguistics who questioned that the ELT field required the application of other disciplines such as cognitive, and educational psychology, sociology, anthropology, among others. Nonetheless, in the 1960’s the tendency just considered effective language teaching, dealing with, on the one hand, the language learning

itself, and on the other hand, the use of the language through opportunities for learners and teachers to communicate and interact within and outside classroom settings, a technical perspective in ELT. This embraced first, teachers' preparation in terms of language, through exposure to the language (Subject-matter knowledge). Then, the technical interest in effective teaching and learning sought the development of an appropriate classroom environment to promote communication and interaction.

In the 1980's and 1990's, an approach to reflection to ELT was considered. This practical interest encompassed thinking about language learning theories, about what really happened in ELT. Teachers reflected on what they constantly observed in their actions and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals or aims. In doing so, teachers made sense about the close relationship between language and pedagogical practice. This position became evident through the reflection, analysis, and discussion of experts in the field making the connection between theory and practice. So, the method perspective had a tremendous influence in the field (Richards and Rodgers, 2005; Brown, 2001, Zeichner, & Liston, 1996, among others).

In this regards, Crandall (2000) highlights that even though ELT programs have historically provided knowledge base for both pre-service teachers and experienced teachers following the grounds of applied linguistics, it is in the 90's that general educational theory has exerted influence on the direction of the education of both pre-service and in-service language teacher education in three dimensions that embrace four major shifts: The first one deals with "practical experiences such as observations, practice teaching and opportunities for curriculum and materials development" (Crandall, 2000, p. 34). This dimension entails a shift from transmission, top-down approaches and product-oriented theories to "constructivist process-oriented theories of learning, teaching and teacher learning" (Crandall, 2000, p.34). The former encompasses that best practices were just regarded as teachers' imitation. Therefore, teachers were viewed as passive recipients. The latter embraces teachers as primary source of knowledge about teaching, focusing on teacher cognition, the role of reflection in teacher development and the importance of teacher inquiry and research through professional development programs.

The second one has to do with classroom centered or teacher research. This dimension considers the need to transform teaching to a situated teacher cognition and practice. This requires analyzing how the gap between theory and practice can bridge through ELTEPs that contextualize and integrate preservice and in-service teachers to learn together. The third one copes with teachers' beliefs and teacher cognition in ELT. This dimension comprises the recognition that teachers' prior learning experiences play a key role in

shaping their views of “effective teaching and learning” (Crandall, 2000, p.35), because self-reflection and observation might contribute to understanding the language learning and teaching as a dynamic process. It is also pertinent to mention the growing concern of teaching to be viewed as a profession that conceives, as Crandall, (2000) highlights “the role of teachers in developing theory and directing their own professional development through collaborative observation, teacher research and inquiry, and sustained in-service programs” (p. 35).

I have found this general panorama thought-provoking, because these dimensions and shifts take us to reflect on our pedagogical practices and recall certain experiences that as learners or teachers might deserve a deeper discussion. These dimensions are still present in our forms of understanding second language teacher education, but to what extent these dimensions still address a technical view of education for the purpose of *social efficiency* (Magrini, 2014) and what does it mean to become language teachers and teacher educators under this perspective? How can ELTPC address this challenge? How can the ELTPC problematize what language teaching entails in a country like Colombia, where homogenization and standardized practices have become the goal of language policies?

In the 90s, the works of some scholars like Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001, 2003) and Canagarajah (2006) nourished and shed light on alternatives to second language teaching and learning (SLTL), mainly for their contributions for what they have called a post-method and context-sensitive pedagogies, based on the premise that the traditional literature on ‘L2 methods’ perspective have tied the SLTL field moved to more situated and local practices. These alternative pedagogies cope with the understanding of how “the relationship among theory, research and practice, and how the nature of language pedagogy should be “socially-realistic and contextually-sensitive” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Canagarajah, 2006).

These thought-provoking ideas make us reflect not only on our pedagogical practices or experiences, but also on the views we have constructed towards learning, teaching, the language itself, the language in context and in contact with others, the view of the classroom and, to what extent we have ended up perpetuating these conceptions of ELT in the views of teaching, identified by Freeman (1991, cited in Crandall, 2000): a. Teaching as doing, b. teaching as thinking and doing and c. teaching as knowing what to do, that somehow correspond to the three major models of LTE that Wallace (1991, cited in Crandall, 2000) has underlined: a. a craft or apprenticeship model, b. an applied science or theory-to-practice and c. a reflective model on teachers’ practice.

These three models can illustrate for example, how in Colombia, the access to teacher's professional development programs, or academic events, in a very technical or instrumental view of education, sometimes seems to be more attractive than the one or ones that imply reflection and action. This is perhaps, why, we might end up replicating those models above mentioned, because the lack of institutional support we sometimes face, and what it has been labeled as teacher development, it seems to me, that has just focused on standardized practices that only favor a technical view of ESLTL. Consequently, as mentioned previously, we can destabilize those practices and models that sometimes favor a more technical than an emancipatory dimension in our initial second language teacher education programs with the purpose of devising new contextual alternatives in SLTL.

It is not often clear whether SLTL processes contained in the TP intend to lead to subsequent changes in the educational practices pre-service teachers undertake, I know there are individual efforts that attempt to challenge these views but are not visible enough to the academic community. The point is not to identify only one type of ELTL model or ELTP that works best, but to construct understandings about the nature of the ELTP in real contexts with real people.

From the lenses of the decolonizing turn: towards the re-positioning of the teaching practicum in initial English language teacher education

The 'decolonizing turn' in the view of the Epistemologies of the South, relates to broader understandings of the world. This means that the progressive change of the world may also occur in ways not foreseen by Western thinking⁵⁴. In this regard, De Sousa (2010) claims the need for a critical response to colonialism and imperialism that has deep implications in decentering ways of knowing, being and doing. This might entail an emancipation from the hegemonic Western practices that have objectified the language, English language practices and our profession, as it has been stated in the banking model of education by Freire (1987).

Decolonizing knowledge, as the epistemological stance underpinning this research interest, encompasses that the diversity of the world is infinite, that there are multiple ways of being, thinking, feeling, ways of conceiving time and the relation among human beings, ways of facing the past, present and future, all valid, although they are not visible or acknowledged by the hegemonic

54 Also called the 'abyssal thinking'.

forces in the Western thinking. This sheds light on the idea of keeping distance⁵⁵ from the global North that does not identify such alternatives; we can assume our time, placing ourselves simultaneously inside and outside of what we critique. In this respect, De Sousa (2012b) declares that “Although the global North claims the right to be the dominant view of the world. On the other hand, the global South is entitled to have its own view of the world and of the global north” (p. 45).

The decolonial thought from the perspective of the epistemologies of the south, brings to life what De Sousa(2010a) calls the doubly transgressive sociology of absences and emerges, opposing the plurality of knowledges in the global south to the dominant epistemologies of the global north. The decolonial perspective also takes me to think about decolonial pedagogies that challenge and transform the views we have assumed in regard to the ELTP, to start digging into our pedagogies that have do to with the devices used to realize the educational meaning of the action breaking that universal idea of pedagogy. From a decolonial perspective, the TP practicum “might entail constructing a project that makes sense for every agent involved in the educational experience. It has significance for everyone and his/her context and everyone is able to control and transform” (Mejía, 2012, p. 131).

Assuming a decolonial view towards the re-significance of the ELTP embraces the need to unveil the ELTPC’s positionings in order to understand not only the vertical but horizontal interactions and practices⁵⁶ take place in the ELTP. When we speak about practices, we do not refer exclusively to the development of technical or visible ‘doing’ in the classroom. We refer to the possibilities for intervening and teaching in real contexts, in situations that include different dimensions, decision making and, often, challenges the dilemmas in social and institutional environments. In other words, practices are treated with genuine situations and problems (Davini, 2015), without considering the learners and learning. In the light of this initial conceptualization towards ‘decolonizing turn’ in the pedagogical scenario, some questions arise: What are the limits and possibilities of the ELTPC’s positionings in the pedagogical practices both in the universities and schools? How do the ELTPC’s positionings can reconstitute the sense of the pedagogical knowledge? What epistemological stances for the ELTP in IELTE are we accounting for? It is worth noting that teachers’ pedagogical practices cannot be fully understood without considering their socio-cultural contexts.

55 De Sousa (2010) clarifies that keeping distance does not mean to discard the historical traditions and much less ignore the historical possibilities of social emancipation of the Western thinking.

56 That Practice for Davini (2015) entails that action and thought go hand in hand, and in this process ideas and self- assessment are the result of diverse personal and social experiences.

Towards The Support Of The Research Interest From Two Local Experiences

Two local studies related to the ELTP and the analysis of the pedagogical component an IELTEP become the initial support for the purpose of framing this research concern.

The first study was conducted by Bonilla & Samacá (forthcoming). The researchers considered that in this century modern and postmodern generations are meeting and ELUMs, and ELPTs are very diverse generations with diverse beliefs and values. This complexity creates tensions in the way these actors envision education. This fact is reflected on the exercise of mentoring when ELUMS and ELPTs negotiate their views of pedagogical action.

Therefore, this study attempted to identify modern and postmodern views of education in the mentoring exercise of student-teachers. Two university mentors and two of their student-teachers participated in this qualitative case study. Data was collected through oral narratives. Findings revealed existing tensions between ELUMs and ELPTs in the descriptions of interactions taken place in the teaching practicum. Their views of education lead them to transform teaching practices in order to mediate with crucial moments of decision making. Categories considered the place and ownership of knowledge, the shape of pedagogical action and the dialogue as an intercultural relationship between ELUMs and ELPTs.

The tensions found in the STs and TEs' descriptions of interactions had to do with the question of the place of knowledge which has been claimed as one of the transformations from the postmodern generation (Lyotard & Rato 1989). TEs as well as STs showed consciousness in thinking that knowledge is now considered to be constructed in social interaction instead of believing it could be found in a specific place as it was understood in the modern times (Crotty, 1998). Both, STs and TEs, understood that when assuming education from this traditional perspective, the mentoring exercise could be more addressed to find the teaching formulas that neither theory or TEs' academic experience could provide.

In the analysis, Bonilla & Samacá (forthcoming) also found that the conflict in the dialogue between ELUMs and ELPTs shaped pedagogical action. They have struggled to find the best way to attain the goals of pedagogical action in the mentoring and the classroom. In order to mediate with the ideas of pedagogy, ELPTs sometimes express that pedagogical action should be more practical than theoretical to make learning enjoyable.

The second study conducted by Samacá & Barón (2013) involved the participation of ELPTs from early semesters in two public universities in a virtual community. The research experience analyzed key influences upon the way in which prospective teachers constructed their identity as future teachers, through their own perceptions. It also revealed how the interplay between contextual, cultural and biographical aspects affected their initial construction of teacher identity as well as determines the kinds of teachers they would like to become. Student-teachers have shared their ideas and views about the topics addressed in two university courses: Pedagogical and Research Project II that makes emphasis on Education Policy and Management⁵⁷, and Interdisciplinary Research seminar III⁵⁸. Both courses underlined in a socio-critical perspective to education (Shor & Freire 1987; McLaren, 2003 and Wink 2005) among others.

Findings revealed that future language teachers start constructing their identity as teachers bearing in mind their understanding of the reasons why they want to become teachers, and the kind of teachers they would like to become. Similarly, interventions highlighted the importance the sense of education has for social language teacher education. The analysis showed remarkable pleasure for learning a foreign language; in this case, English; it was a tool to knowledge of new cultures and the status this language has in the social context. In other cases, the teacher vocation, either by the fact of teaching, or the pleasure of working especially with children noted a great influence when choosing this profession.

These dimensions related to the knowledge of the self and his/her role as a teacher. In this regard, Ball & Goodson (1985, cited in Samacá & Barón, 2013) state that teacher identity is determined by the personal experience and role of teachers in a society. In this study, the participants did not have the chance to teach; they just had the experience as students, their encounters in the context of seeing the teaching process were when they had the chance to observe English classes and interviews done to in-service teachers.

ELPTS questioned the instructional roles of teaching. Although there was a great desire to become good and innovative teachers, they felt “fear” to failure and they illustrate this through their concerns when not reaching their students’ expectations, how to influence the second language learning process when there is disinterest to learn it and the traditional practice of a teacher-centered

57 The Pedagogical and research Project II of the Foreign Languages Program at UPTC outlines the themes of educational policies, teacher challenges, teachers’ knowledge that a foreign language teacher should have as an educational administrator.

58 The Interdisciplinary Research Seminar III of the English Language Teacher Education Program at Universidad Distrital Francisco José Caldas, addresses the in-service English teachers’ imaginaries.

pedagogy. It is worth noting that teaching goes beyond the language lessons. For student teachers, the changing role of the teacher defies the instructional roles we are to play in the language classroom, therefore identity relates to a more situated and dynamic process of individuals developing conceptions of themselves as teachers.

The analysis of a pedagogical component of an English initial teacher education program at Universidad Distrital suggests a practical and emancipatory curriculum that is present since the first semester until ninth semester. Starting with theoretical seminars, and then, being prepared through specific pedagogical areas for them to start their teaching practicums that take place from sixth to nine semesters, both in primary and secondary schools. The purposes in this pedagogical component suggest a need for a continuous process through which student teachers can discuss different dimensions of what teaching entails, and the theoretical and practical foundation to articulate prospective teachers' research proposals. It is worth highlighting that the courses seek to help student- teachers consciously analyze the implications of being not only pre-service teachers, but also researchers.

Thus, the courses have been designed to analyze issues that deal with teaching and learning processes, as well as social, cultural, political aspects embedded in these processes because they believe that the concept of education is supposed to evolve into a reflective approach where the student teacher role divest a passive and repetitive attitude and assumes an active, participative and critical attitude towards change, contributing to the school communities and the educational field in general.

From the experiences narrated above, I can infer a situated need to reconceptualize and reposition what the ELTP should entail in IELTPs in the local context, what the school contexts expect from them, what cooperating teachers and university mentors consider relevant in their process of accompanying them. This implies going beyond the instrumental view of ELT, neglecting issues that tackle "a wide range of historical, political, and sociocultural experiences that directly or indirectly influence L2 education" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538).

Bearing in mind the initial exploration of the ELTP in IELTE, we cannot reduce the concept of the teaching practicum as the merely 'doing'-visible activity in the English language classroom. Instead, we might start looking at the 'doing' that entices the practices of the ELTPC, analyzing their views and actions that represent who they are and how they assume ELTE. Such intriguing panorama brings the basis for the research question and objectives underlying this study

which could possibly tackle the interest from a contextualized perspective and a more decolonizing perspective of education:

How do pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university mentors position themselves pedagogically in the 'teaching practicum' in English language teacher education?

Objectives:

1. To unveil how pre-service, cooperating teachers, as well as university mentors position themselves pedagogically in the 'teaching practicum' in English language teacher education.
2. To describe and analyse how pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and university mentors conceive the 'teaching practicum'.
3. To analyse how their views of the 'teaching practicum' influence their positionings in the school context.

Remark

In this chapter, I have started to frame my research interest on the ELTPC positionings in the ELTP. In the light of the decolonizing turn, I will have the possibility to delve into the teachers' plurality of knowledges in this South that will contribute to situate the teaching practicum in our contexts.

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