

Voices from the south: English Language Pre-Service Teachers contributions to ELTE

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Abstract

This chapter aims at depicting the role and contributions of English Language Pre-Service Teachers (ELPT) to the field of English Language Teacher Education (ELTE). To achieve this, it is necessary to start picturing the current situation of ELTE, and then, setting the ground to foster an understanding of the current needs in English language teaching practicum (ELTP). I consider important to start analyzing what happens with pre-service teachers in their pedagogical practicum since they are not just passive learners; they have different ways of understanding the world, language teaching, and education, and those understandings could become a source of improving ELTE in Colombia. According to Correa and Usma (2013), it is urgent to come about a change of paradigm in ELTE that implies a reformulation of the way teaching practicum is constituted.

In this chapter, I examine different standpoints related to ELPTs' education. The first section presents my personal view regarding ELPTs' education, based on my own experience and a revision of articles written by some Colombian scholars. The second section reveals the epistemological stances there are regarding ELTE, and along with it, I will be unveiling my own epistemological stance. The third section of this chapter states the aspects related to ELTE and how they have a direct repercussion on ELPTs' current practices. Finally, the last section portrays some working conclusions that shed light on the problem stated.

Introduction

According to Freeman, teacher education is "the sum of experiences and activities through which individuals learn to be language teachers" (2001, p. 72). This learning can be taught or acquired by means of the experience, thus, teacher education can refer to ELPT or ELIT (English language in-service teachers). For this specific, the focus is on ELPT.

ELPT education has implied the transmission of a series of knowledges that have been assumed as necessary: content knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, and sociocultural knowledge (Lucero, 2016); the focus has been, then, on what teachers should know and how they should teach what they have learnt. However, ELPT education requires a deeper analysis and reflection. It is necessary to understand the different epistemological stances, from which ELPT develop their practices, and how these relate to their understanding of language teaching and learning.

So far, in Colombia there have been some scholars who have investigated about ELPT education. Some of those studies, which are oriented towards researching on ELPT, have focused on their beliefs (Aguirre I., 2014; Castellanos, 2013; Fajardo A., 2013; Gutiérrez, 2015; Higueta & Díaz, 2015), perceptions about ideological influence (Cárdenas & Suárez, 2009; Viafara, 2016), the development of their research skills (Cárdenas, Nieto, & Martin, 2005; Posada & Garzón, 2014), the improvement of linguistic or intercultural competencies (Castro & López, 2014; Fajardo A., 2013; Franco & Galvis, 2013; Ramos, 2013; Viáfara, 2008), their reflections about language teaching (Camacho, *et al.*, 2012; Castillo & Diaz, 2012; Cote, 2012; Morales, 2016), and some others propose changes for the curriculum in the ELTP (Aguirre & Ramos, 2011; Bonilla X., 2012; Bonilla & Méndez, 2008; Fandiño, 2013; Granados-Beltran, 2016; Mendez & Bonilla, 2016; Samacá, 2012).

Some of the researchers above have developed their investigations from a poststructural stance, and some of them have provided alternatives to help pre-service English language teachers to face the teaching practicum by improving their skills or by learning how to deal with the context, but apparently few of them have listened to ELPTs' voices and examined the possible contributions they could give to ELTEP (English language teacher education programs), especially in the area of ELTP. The former constitutes the first aspect this chapter focuses on; the second one has to do with the epistemological stance I will adopt towards the development of the research.

The first section presents my personal view regarding ELPT education. Based on my personal experience and on some articles written by Colombian scholars who were interested in researching some aspects of pre-service English language teachers, I explain why it is necessary to consider ELPT education and the importance of examining colonial and decolonial practices. The second section reveals the epistemological stances there are on the topic of ELTE. In the third section, I will unveil my own epistemological stance. The fourth section of this chapter states the aspects related to ELT education and how they have a direct repercussion on ELPTs' current practices supported by some evidences gathered throughout a year. Finally, the last section portrays

some conclusions that shed light on the alternative for researching on the topic of ELPT.

The story that brought me to research about English language Teaching Practicum

As a first step in this process of establishing the origin of my research interest, I will start with my personal experience as a teacher, which I consider relevant; after that, I will set some important points related to a theoretical construct that caught my attention in regards to ELTE: decolonization; finally, I will offer a glance of the ELPTs' educational panorama in Colombia.

Personal Experiences

When I started my career as a teacher educator (TE) in an ELTEP, I had the intention to help future language teachers to become effective and efficient in their practices. For that reason, I encouraged my students to read and analyze each one of the methods and strategies for teaching English, emphasizing on reaching a proficiency in English that could provide a model during their English classes. However, when I started my PhD studies, I found that some of my actions were guiding me to spread a colonial thought that intends to standardize all the processes in education according to the doctrine of ELTE (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1998). It was at that point that I realized what my students were going through was exactly the same, being colonized.

Through a systematic observation I did of the ELPTs' classes, during three semesters, I could see ELPTs trying to cover each one of the aspects of teaching that are stated as important in a class: classroom management (focused on discipline), delivery of instructions, preparation of the material, and the phases of the class (warm up, presentation, practice and production). All in all, I used to assume ELPT education as "the sum" of some factors related to academic formation and personal experiences that help them to deal with their teaching practices (Aguirre I., 2014), and I was forgetting the individuality of the self.

Additionally, I could perceive that ELPTs have little or no participation in making decisions related to teaching, perhaps because of the lack of experience, or just because they feel the teacher would not consider their contributions. These behaviors correspond to the vision of having an order and discipline, that implies there is a hierarchy that cannot be contested (Foucault, 1975). This ideology causes discrimination and exclusion of the self, for that reason, ELPTs struggle to have their voices heard when dealing

with their understanding and contributions related to language teaching (Castillo & Díaz, 2012).

The former experiences made me wonder about my own practice. I started by reflecting how my teaching practices were part of a chain that promoted colonial thoughts, exclusion and discrimination; and how these ideologies could have negative consequences for ELPT. In the next part of this section, I will expand more in those concepts that made me think about ELPT, and how I could contribute to their formation from my own practice.

A colonial perspective of ELTE

Imperialism and colonialism are two related terms in language and language teaching. Colonialism is almost always a consequence of imperialism, since the latter is taken as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center, ruling a distant territory”, while the former is “the primary site of cultural production whose products flowed back through the imperial system” (Pennycook, 1998, p. 35). In this order of ideas, and talking about ELT, Phillipson (1992) referred to *linguistic imperialism*, which is no other thing but the “dominance of English asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages.” (p. 47). Linguistic imperialism exercises its dominance in two main fields: the language and culture, and the pedagogy.

Macedo (2000) indicated that some cultures and languages cannot be considered as *native culture* nor *native language*, if these do not have all the characteristics that colonialism imposed. This distinction allows the colonizers to impose their ideologies about language, culture, values and lifestyles, which are part of what they called “nativeness”, and to have them perpetuated as products to be consumed by those who are being colonized (London, 2001).

In the field of pedagogy, things are not different. Curriculum, methodologies and strategies have been designed by the agencies dedicated to spread English around the world, which have sold those formulas as the best to teach English language through textbooks, teaching training programs, standardized tests, international certifications, workshops and conferences (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1998; Canagarajah, 1999; Quintero & Guerrero, 2010). According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), ELTE’s “models of teacher preparation have centered on transferring a set of predetermined, preselected and pre-sequenced body of knowledge from the teacher educator to the Pre-service teacher.” (p. 216). Additionally, these models provide ELPTs all the ingredients (theories of language, language learning, and language teaching) and steps (methods) to prepare the English class. In Kumaravadivelu’s (2008) view, this is part of the

process of colonialism in which the colonizer determines the path to follow in education.

Furthermore, Alvarez (2009), citing Freeman and Johnson, stated that “teacher education has focused more on what teachers need to know and how they could be trained than on what they actually know, how this knowledge shapes what they do, or what the natural course of their professional development is over time.” (p. 76). ELTE is a product of standardized procedures that comes from a colonized way of thinking and that intends to perpetuate theories, methodologies and techniques (Magrini, 2014).

The previous states a general panorama of what ELTE is nowadays. It is evident how language policies in Colombia have been set by a colonial logic that intends to keep the control of the intellectual production in English language, and as a result, neither local practices nor local knowledges are taken into consideration (Ramanathan, 2013). In the case of ELPT, their voices have not been heard locally; the possible knowledges, that have constituted along their major and through their personal and academic experiences, have not been taken into consideration neither in curriculum design nor in understanding ELTP itself. I strongly believe that it is urgent that we start a process of decolonization by seeing ELPTs from a different perspective, not just as passive consumers but as agents, able to construct knowledge and contribute to the ELT field.

Now, what is required for starting a change towards decolonization? In first place, it is important to understand English language and ELT from a different perspective. Recognizing that the influence the Western ideologies have over the way English language and English language education are seen could help us to set a base line. Tollefson (2007), remarked:

“The term *ideology* in language studies refers to a shared body of commonsense notions about the nature of language, the nature and purpose of communication, and appropriate communication behavior, these commonsense notions and assumptions are seen as expressions of a collective order.” (pág. 26)

From this perspective, I consider it important to unveil the ideologies found underneath ELTEP, as part of the background that brought me to my research interest.

Analysis of ELTEPs’ Study Plans

By analyzing some of the ELTEPs’ study plans in Colombia, I intended to trace the ideological foundations these programs have. I strongly believe that by

doing so, it is possible to understand how ELPT are receiving instruction from these ELTEP, and the way they are using this instruction in their own practices. For this analysis I selected twelve study plans from public universities and ten from private universities that offer ELTEPs in Colombia. The information was gathered only from the study plans available on the webpages of each university.

As the only instruments I used were the study plans, I followed the principles of the documentary research from a critical perspective stated by Scott (1990) to choose the sample: authenticity (the evidence is genuine), credibility (the evidence is typical of its kind), representativeness (the documents consulted are representative of the totality of the relevant documents), and meaning (the evidence is clear and comprehensible). Once I had the sample, I proceed to analyze the information based on Fairclough's (1995; 2003) approach to discourse analysis as follows:

- Description: a complete description of each one of the elements the study plans contain: subject-matters' names, components (areas, fields, curricular axes, cycles, etc.), credits.
- Interpretation: with the information obtained in the description, I established relations with other texts related to ideology and hegemony (Apple, 1999; Grundy, 1985); instrumentalization of language teaching education (Crandall, 2000; Kumaravadivelu B., 2003; Reagan, 2004; Usma, 2009), the order of the disciplines (Foucault, 1975), and the relationship between English language and colonial practices and the influence this can have in ELT (González, 2007; Kumaravadivelu B., 2008; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1998).
- Explanation: I analyzed the relationships between the text and the social context, in this case, the ELPTs' education, to explain how these documents have a direct effect on the ideologies in ELT.

Some important issues emerged from the description of the study plans. In first place, the fragmentation or compartmentalization of knowledge is evident in every single study plan, they are divided into components, areas, pedagogical nucleus, formation fields or curricular axes. This distribution seems to be arbitrary, since some of the subject-matters can belong to more than one of the sections designed by the universities. Another proof of this fragmentation of knowledge has to do with the research and ELTP. Research is placed in the last semesters and it is separated from the other components in the study plan; the same happens with the practicum, it is placed at the end of plans of study, and some of them give a maximum of 10% of the credits out of the total, and the rest of the disciplinary subject-matters can vary between 32% and 63%, which shows an imbalance between theoretical and practical subject-matters (figure 1). Additionally, there is a fragmentation of knowledge

in the case of language subject-matters since English is seen as lineal object that can be divided into levels or skills, and that can be separated from the cultural aspect.

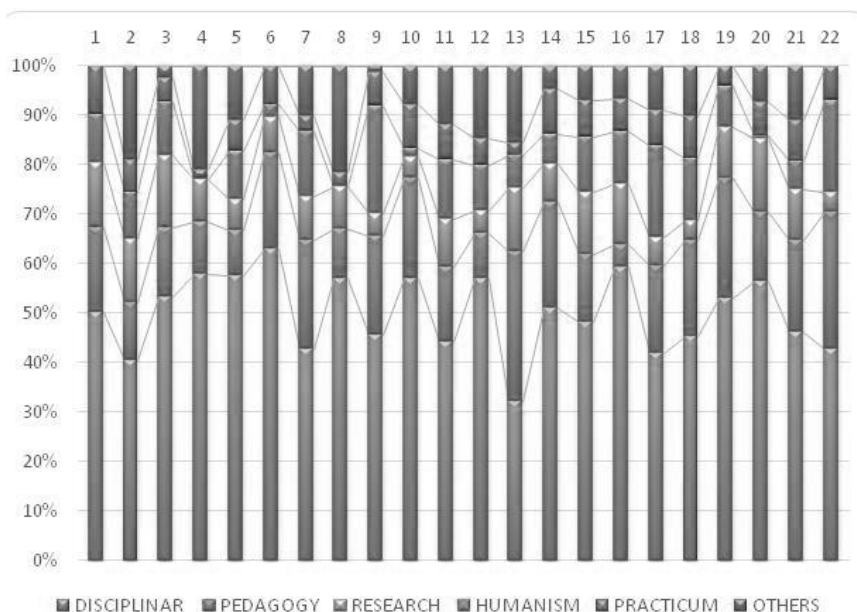


Figure 1. Distribution of credits in the study plans in ELT of public and private universities. Source: own.

In the interpretation of the data, I found that English is presented as a monolithic concept and linked to the Anglo-American paradigm. English is universally enacted by agencies of linguistic coercion, such as the British Council and TESOL as instruments of foreign policies (Bhatt, 2007), which introduce and impose standard language ideology (Tollefson, 2007). That implies an idealized homogeneity of spoken English language. Through this, it is evident how those agencies exerted the domination and legitimated the language monopoly on the means of appropriation (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). Likewise, the analysis showed that English is being objectified; it is being presented as a single entity that fosters reifying not only language itself, but also the components of language and the related skills and concepts about language teaching and learning (Reagan, 2004).

An additional aspect found in this analysis has to do with the lack of presence of the local. Only one of the study plans, out of 22, has a subject-matter that covers local topics specifically. This is insignificant, and makes the local knowledge invisible (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). With this fact, the colonization of English language teaching is even more evident; ELTEP seem

to be designed with the idea of producing passive technicians or reflective practitioner, but not transformative intellectuals (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

From the explanation of study plans, I can argue that the analyzed ELTEP are structured in a rigid and static way; knowledge is shown as lineal, with few possibilities of intersection in different ways (Foucault, 1975), this conduces to the perpetuation of certain attitudes towards languages, e.g. there is only one English (Guerrero, 2008) and the only valid methodologies for teaching are those that are in the books. In this way, ELPTs are taken as consumers, ready to reproduce and multiply all the knowledge they receive in their classrooms, but unable read, understand and respond accordingly to the changes that different contexts demand (Magrini, 2014). The prior also shows that there is an acceptance of the current circumstances as something normal and valid, this is what Grundy (1985) called the unconscious way of dominance and hegemony: commonsense.

As conclusions from this small scale research, I could say that the current ELTEP respond to a positivist and structuralist ideology that favors the colonial and hegemonic perspective that comes from the policies installed by the ministry of education of Colombia (Guerrero, 2008). The organization of the study plans, in which there is not a clear connection between the target language and culture and the Colombian one, that constitutes our own culture; the idea of only one variety of English, instead of Englishes, promotes discrimination and a normalization of teaching practices; the instrumentalization of ELT education by now-established practices that can be summarized into three main groups: 1) seeing language as a single reality that reinforces ideologies and linguistic legitimacies, 2) perceiving teachers as language experts, and 3) doing technical (or instrumental) language teaching (Crandall, 2000; Kumaravadivelu B., 2003; Reagan, 2004).

As final remarks for this section, I could add that it is relevant for ELTE to be aware of the ideologies beneath the ELTEP, which can foster resistances that promote changes in the way language is seen and taught. This fact could also lead to a restructuration of the study plans in the ELTEP that contributes to different aspects: in first place, integrating Englishes, cultures, practices and research can provide a wider vision to ELPT regarding what and how to teach the language; in second place, ELPT can learn how to deal with the difference and the others, which means that they could be able to accept that they are part of a process of constitution of human beings, who are diverse by nature.

Despite the previous findings, I strongly believe that there are local stories, micronarratives that resist what is stated by the control agencies in various ways (Boje, 2001). For that reason, in the next part of this section, I will

examine some Colombian scholars' articles that deal with decolonization in their practices and research, and that could provide possible contributions for the development of ELPT.

Colombian Teachers' Experiences towards Decolonizing ELT

In the last two decades, many changes around language teaching have happened in Colombia. The persistent idea of the Ministry of Education about having a bilingual country that can go towards an augment of economic benefits has brought some colonial thoughts about language and language teaching that are stated in official documents (Correa & González, 2016). Many Colombian scholars have denounced that these language policies are the product of top-down decisions that affect the whole language teaching system in Colombia (Guerrero, 2008; Correa & Usma, 2013), and that these policies are causing discrimination, exclusion and inequalities³³ (Bonilla & Tejada-Sánchez, 2016).

In the search for decolonizing, Colombian scholars have analyzed the language policies and the effects these have in language teaching education in order to propose a series of alternatives that provide a better understanding of language and language teaching in a local context.

One of the main aspects has to do with the consolidation of a stronger English academic community, in which the discourses about colonialism could be deconstructed and challenged, and the local knowledges, values and beliefs could be taken into account to build up a local discourse that fosters the inclusion and equality in language teaching matters (Gonzalez, 2007; Guerrero & Quintero, 2009). The previous could contribute to the proposal Correa and Usma (2013) and Correa and Gonzalez (2016) make in regards to adopt a more critical sociocultural view of making policies in Colombia, in which, again, the local knowledge and expertise are crucial in the designing and implementation of policies, taking into account contextual and historical factors, using responsive materials, and employing accountability measures that go beyond standardized tests, and that contributes to the appropriation of those policies into local contexts.

Another proposal goes towards having language teachers recognize themselves as professionals, who are able to construct rather than to consume knowledge (Granados-Beltran, 2016), this is aligned to what Macias (2010) said about promoting the development of "local methodologies inspired by [teachers'] students' interests and needs and the characteristics of

33 Another example of exclusions and inequalities is presented by Arias-Cepeda in this volume.

their teaching settings.” (p. 188). The previous implies that ELPTs must be in contact with terms as colonization and decolonization from the very beginning of their majors rather than waiting until postgraduate or teaching development programs, which could promote awareness of their roles as public intellectuals. They probably would not change the world, but through the ability of criticizing issues of colonialism and inequality that affect not only their educational context, and also their lives as subjects, create a more critical attitude (Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Ibañez & Sandoval, 2015).

Granados-Beltrán (2016) proposes alternatives in the methodologies in ELT that include bi and multiliteracy process and critical interculturality, in order to develop self-reflection that enhances the recognition of the self in the teaching process and acknowledges a heterogeneous identity that deserves to be taken into consideration³⁴.

Finally, it is evident that many scholars are going towards decolonization of ELT education. All their reflections and proposals intend to provide a glance of how to integrate local knowledges with the ones from the “West”. The main focus is on policy making, few centered on what happens in the classroom, and none developed what occurs with the ELPT and their struggles that can emerge due to the clash of different ideologies in terms of language and language teaching education. Listening to ELPTs’ voices, exploring their struggles, and analyzing what situations they really live in the classroom that contribute to ELTE is the main goal of my research proposal.

Having in mind that some scholars in Colombia have looked for the connection of local knowledges with the ones coming from the “West”, I consider that such connection is possible from the epistemologies of the South and the ecologies of knowledges (De Sousa Santos, 2009; 2010). The next section will explain my epistemological position and will expand the idea of epistemologies of the South.

TOWARDS AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE SOUTH: CLEARING UP THE BLUR OF ELPTs’ PRACTICUM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

After analyzing the common epistemologies in ELT research, I would like to focus on the epistemology, or in words of De Sousa Santos (2009), epistemologies that in which my research will be based on: *the epistemologies of the South*.

34 In this volume, there are other angles of identities in ELT. Davila-Rubio explores identities from the constitution of English teachers as subjects, Lucero-Babativa from the interactional identities in ELTE, and Posada-Ortiz from the imaginary identities of ELPT.

De Sousa Santos explains that the epistemologies of the South have the intention of rescuing those knowledges that are not visible due to an *abyssal line* that separates them from those that are visible and are part of the recognized and accepted knowledge (De Sousa Santos, 2009; 2010). In ELTE, the *visible distinction* is represented by those ideologies that determine what the correct idea of language is, what methodologies are the ones have to be implemented in language teaching, what concept of culture must be present in the classroom, what profile the English teacher must have, what kind of role the teacher must play in the classroom, etc. This distinction is considered as universal theories that are widely accepted and spread. As Phillipson (1992) mentioned, these ideologies have been conceived by the English-speaking countries, and, as Kumaravadivelu (2006) stated, they have been perpetuated in initial education by teachers educators who “transfer a set of predetermined, preselected, pre-sequenced body of knowledge... to the Pre-service teacher.” (p. 216). However, in the real scenario of ELPTs’ practicum, there is a chance of having new and different knowledges emerging; these knowledges are what De Sousa Santos (2010) called invisible distinctions.

These distinctions, the visible and the invisible, which are separated by radical lines, are the cause of discrimination, marginalization, injustice, and overall epistemicide, in other words, the death of other knowledges, in this case, the invisible ones (De Sousa Santos, 2010). In the case of ELT, I could say that this epistemicide occurs when we transmit the idea that there is not any other chance of understanding language or language teaching different from those that scholars from the English-speaking countries write; doing this, we are denying the possibility of other knowledges, local and more contextualized ones, to emerge and prove effectiveness.

In order to prevent the epistemicide and clear out the division there is between the visible and the invisible, it is necessary to recognize the invisible distinctions. This does not mean that the visible distinction, the scientific knowledge accepted and recognized, must be demonized, but, by means of giving the chance to interact with the invisible knowledge, new ways of understanding and knowing come into sight, that is what De Sousa Santos called ecology of knowledges³⁵ (2009).

Once those invisible knowledges, that occur in ELPTs’ practicum and do not belong to the canonical knowledge, are rescued and brought into light, we can call them absences; when these absences are magnified and transformed they become emergencies; these emergencies are part of the new knowledge that must interact with the one that comes from the other side of the abyssal

35 Castañeda-Londoño provides reasons to inquire about English language teachers’ ecologies of knowledges from the epistemologies of the South in this volume.

line, and in this way, we can have real cognitive justice. So, in terms of Canagarajah (1999), a deconstruction and reconstruction of invisible and visible knowledges contributes to the positioning of ELPTs.

As a final remark for this section, it is important to clarify that the final goal of the ecology of knowledges is not to make generalizations, create new theories or formulate standards, nor even to find the final truth, on the contrary, what ecology of knowledges intends is to promote the interrelation of all kinds of knowledges that can contribute to the decolonization, in this particular case, of the ELTE.

Once I have clarified my position towards epistemology, in the next section, I will provide some supportive evidence of invisible knowledge.

SOME INITIAL IDEAS ABOUT ELTP: ELPTs' VOICES

For this section I will display a previous analysis I did related to ELPTs' education. I will display some ELPTs' perceptions about the ELTP, and what these perceptions reveal about colonized or decolonized practices.

Analysis of ELPTs' position towards ELTE³⁶

ELPTs have received certain kind of education that has helped them to become professional English teachers able to deal with a variety of contexts. However, from my perspective as a teacher educator, I have perceived that ELPTs are not considered about the ELTP process. For that reason, I decided to do a small scale research that could take to an initial understanding about ELPTs' comprehension of language teaching, which shed light to my research proposal (Kegan, 2009), with that objective, I collected a series of papers some ELPTs had to write for my class of ELTP.

As a first step, I read 18 papers, written by male and female ELPTs, and I started a content analysis process since I wanted to focus on the contextual meaning of the text. Then, I followed the procedure suggested by the content analysis method, codification and identification of patterns (Kegan, 2009). These are some of the most relevant findings I gathered from this analysis:

One of the findings in this small-scale research has to do with how ELPTs relate theory and practice. Some of the ELPTs mentioned that they found a

36 In this volume, Samacá-Bohórquez intends to unveil how English language preservice-teachers, English language cooperating teachers, and English language university mentors position themselves pedagogically in the English language teaching practicum.

disconnection between the theory they learnt in their major and the practice. One of the students said that:

“When you face 35 girls in one classroom, unexpected things happened, some things that the theory never mentioned, and that we have to learn just through experience.” (Laura³⁷)

Theory is taken as a very important part of education, however, when ELPT face the reality, they feel that there is not a continuity with what they have learnt; everything is ideal from the perspective of theory. Nevertheless, some ELPT find in the ELTP a place of discoveries:

“The pedagogical practicum is one of the most important learning spaces for the professional development of Pre-service teachers. It is there where we can discover, in just one place, different ways of conceiving life, different ways of thinking and expressing, this lets us articulate the theoretical knowledge with the reality of the practicum (sic)” (Miguel)

This Pre-service teacher saw the ELTP from a different angle, he understood that there are differences that can affect what they have planned, but what he had to do was to accept and adapt himself in order to be successful in his class.

The second finding was the role that reflection has in becoming an English language teacher. Some ELPT realized that the lack of reflection on their practices could cause problems in their classes regarding the methodological aspect:

“Students who do not do a self-reflection about the methods, strategies, and tools they use in class, and they are only repeating techniques school teachers have been doing all their lives: transmitting knowledge instead of creating it (sic)” (Felix)

This ELPT caught the attention over the fact of the perpetuation of methodologies in language teaching, and the idea of transmission of knowledges. It is remarkable since I can perceive a glance of decolonial thought. Another ELPT highlighted the importance of being conscious of the reflection as part of a personal process:

“This problem is not easy to solve because is part of the reflection students have to do, it is not part of the program or the education (sic)” (Laura).

37 All the names have been changed for ethical reasons.

She argues that all the responsibility is on them, not on the institutions, and even more, the next quote lets us see that these reflections do not affect only the ELPT but also the students in the classroom:

“The role of the teacher in students’ education is fundamental and important, for that reason teacher reflections are so important and meaningful to me (sic)” (Lina)

The third finding related the expectations ELPT had at the beginning of the major and the realities they found during the ELTP:

“When I started my major, I had some fears, challenges, and ideas about how this profession would be. One of my challenges had to do with showing self confidence in front of the students, since the most authority a teacher shows, the most students will understand (sic)” (Lina)

Although there is a reflection about their inner feelings and initial expectations, by the end of the quote there is an evidence of a normalized thought: the idea of controlling the classroom through the discipline.

As fourth, there is some awareness related to the real situation of education that allows me to catch a glance of critical reflection. The following quote is quite pessimistic; however, it lets me see how important it is for ELPTs not to continue with the educational tradition and that they are waiting for a change:

“It seems that education in our schools is doomed to continue being what it always has been for decades: a place where you have to repeat from the beginning to end.” (Aura)

Another example of the desire for a change is this quote:

“when we go into the university to study this academic program many of us think that our purpose once we get graduated from here was to change education because we were conscious was wrong with it, but now that we have the opportunity to face this ‘monster’ we are not using the tools we are being given (sic)” (Enrique)

The awareness that there is something that does not work correctly in education is visible, as well as the desire of transforming it by using what ELPT have learned, which is a good example of critical reflection toward the profession. In the same fashion, this quote describes how ELPT are conscious of the importance of the profession in the society, and for each one of the learners in the classroom.

“A teacher is a person who construct knowledge with her students, it is not a matter of administer knowledge as an absolute truth. It is necessary to change little by little the paradigm of a traditional education for another that really evolves and thinks of individual needs (sic)” (Isabel)

As conclusion for this small-scale research, ELPTs are aware of the current context of general education. They contest the general assumption that ELPTs are just mere followers that have little, or even nothing to propose about English language education. Additionally, although some of the ELPTs have fallen into the structuralism and the colonized thought, there are some glimpses of decolonial thought, which contribute to my research project in the sense that as De Sousa Santos (2010) mentions, there are some knowledges that have not been taken into account, and those knowledges could produce changes that favor the majority.

Statement of the research interest

All along this chapter I have given an account of how current language teacher education is built on colonizing ideologies derived from the linguistic imperialism (Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992), but I also stated that there is a chance of starting a process for ELPTs' self-recognition, not as mere consumers, but as producers of knowledges that can be taken as contributions for ELTE (see: Castañeda-Londoño in this volume). This process will begin by understanding how to demolish the epistemological barriers that separate what is universally accepted and the local practices.

On the one hand, the universally accepted practices enhance the normalization of learning and teaching approaches, methods, methodologies and even techniques. According to Pennycook (1998), that normalization impacts on the construction of the other, since these colonial practices impose a series of restrictions and conditions about what the teacher must be as a professional, what they think about language, learning and teaching, and what they do in the classroom with the students. Consequently, there is a perpetuation of practices that has a colonizing influence, as for example the conception of language as a static and monolithic concept, or the standardization of language tests.

On the other hand, listening directly to the actors of the education from their experiences in local practices could provide a chance of constructing the self. In this way, we could see that ELPT are not passive learners and that they can contribute to ELTE, since they have different ways of understanding

the world, and that they have a lot of valuable things to say regarding language education in our country.

I do not intend to conduct a cause-effect research, since I expect to document what ELPTs' voices are saying, and from this, layout the contributions to ELTE. However, I consider that some input about decolonial discourses is necessary. In that sense, it is sought to explore:

How do Pre-service teachers make sense of their own teaching practicum within the framework of decolonial discourses?

By answering this question, I hope to contribute to the Colombian language teacher education by acknowledging the presence of an ecology of knowledges (2010) that negotiates among those imposed knowledges and the local ones, and that provides a wider vision of what to teach and how to teach in English language classrooms.

Working conclusions

This chapter aimed to present my personal posture about ELPTs as contributors to ELT education, not only from what they do, but from the knowledges they construct along their practices. Although many scholars in Colombia have done research about ELPTs, little has been investigated on the synergies that the coexistence of the visible and the invisible distinction generate in an ecology of knowledges, and how these synergies contribute to ELT education.

From the data obtained from the study plans, I identify that current ELTEP lie on ideologies that go towards colonialism and imperialism. But at the same time, this fact represents an opportunity to foster resistances that promote changes in the local practices in ELT. As contribution for my research proposal, the results of this small case study showed me that there is a gap between what programs offer and what students expect. This gap could be bridged in the direction of emancipation and decolonization by the emergence of ELPTs' knowledges.

Through the analysis of the epistemologies of the south, I could comprehend that knowledge cannot be taken as a monolithic concept; there are multiple knowledges, from multiple sources, that deserve to be heard and taken into account. The final goal of the epistemologies of the south is to stop the epistemicide, which means that the recognition of local knowledges does not denote the discrimination of other knowledges; on the contrary, with the epistemologies of the south, there is a possibility of attaining a wider comprehension of the world from different angles (De Sousa Santos, 2010).

Finally, I strongly believe that this research project can contribute, not only to ELT education, but to the general educational system, since by means of the epistemologies of the south desirable states, such as social justice, equality, and a more complete understanding of the world can be reached.

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