

PEDAGOGICAL ENGLISH PRACTICES THROUGH THE PANDEMIC.

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RESUMEN

La pandemia del COVID-19 tuvo un gran impacto a escala mundial el cual uno de los campos que causó gran cambio fue la educación universitaria, llevándonos a la educación mediada por la virtualidad cambiando así las prácticas pedagógicas y la visión que se tenían de estas. En este artículo se analizaron las posturas y estrategias que tres (3) de los docentes de la universidad Luis Amigó adaptaron frente a esta contingencia y los resultados y análisis que se obtuvieron a través de sus respuestas por medio de sus experiencias y discusiones frente a estas.

Palabras clave: Apropiación de políticas lingüísticas, B-Learning, prácticas pedagógicas.

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic had a great impact on a global scale and one of the fields that caused great change was university education, leading us to education mediated by virtuality, thus changing pedagogical practices and the vision of these practices. In this article we analyze the positions and strategies that 3 of the teachers of the Luis Amigó University adapted to this contingency and the results and analysis obtained through their answers by means of their experiences and discussions.

Key words: B-Learning, language policy appropriation, pedagogical practices

Introduction

English language teaching has always been a controversial topic in our context especially in regards to the policies that promote its teaching and learning., and it was affected by the new context of the current pandemic. Due to this, all standards and strategies tried to adapt as much as possible to new modalities and methodologies to continue with the process of teaching and learning of students from a distance modality, since the confinement teachers seek for different ways to diversify and find which strategy provides effective and authentic results. However, since the pandemic that was an unprecedented event , is still in the continuous process of improving pedagogical practices to provide better teaching of English language.

However, the impact that this new modality has had is not yet measurable, but there has been evidence of both problems and advantages related to virtual teaching as it is widely explained in the book of virtual teaching at the education centers by Soltani, M., & Aliyev, A. (2011, October), which provides a deeper understanding on the previously mentioned issues, and this has affected the perspective we are used to teaching and the results we are looking for, among many factors such as mental health, the context of confinement, the economic crisis, and others. It affects the veracity and quality of the classes, however, as a result of this, methods and approaches were found that also facilitated the teaching process through information and communication technologies which arouses the question, what measures or strategies would be suitable for an efficient and high-quality pedagogical practices?

This project seeks to show how pedagogical practices from different approaches have adapted to this crisis and how teachers have applied different teaching strategies, how their beliefs and methods have changed as a result of this pandemic starting with the language policies currently working.

Before Covid-19, face-to-face teaching was the predominant way for schools and universities to approach the educational process and online or blended learning was always seen as a second option, one that could be done from anywhere as it had access to online classes. It is with the arrival of the Coronavirus pandemic that teaching would be exposed to a very drastic change, in which education was going to depend on online and blended learning in its entirety, the challenges and commitments that this implies for each teacher, student, and parent, changed the way virtual mediation for learning was perceived, however, it also unveiled that schooling is a crucial tool in the students lives, and exposed several problems in the educational system of our country, such as poor connectivity availability, and an old fashioned teaching process. But it was the teachers and pre-service teachers who were most affected as they had to change their practices with not much time to do so, forcing most of them to take quick answers to the problems virtuality started bringing to them, making some of them look for new ways to effectively engage students into this new model of learning.

Through these problems of the pandemic situation, education has been involved in a series of significant changes, as mentioned before in both, at a structural level and a pedagogical and academic level. Based on these factors, we will identify how foreign language teachers have modified their teaching practices from a methodological, didactic, and practical point of view.

Context

The pedagogical practices in the country, in relation to the English, have always been subject to the language policies. This is why in the last years they had been working under some guidelines in order to accomplish the politics. These practices were forced to change or adapt as a result of the pandemic by the Covid-19.

In March 6th the first case of coronavirus in Colombia was announced by the MINSALUD (Ministerio de salud , 2020) causing the lockdown in the whole country, leading to a new way of teaching and learning, forcing the closure of the universities making them use the modality of blended learning.

Taking into account that educational institutions began to implement Blended Learning by obligation and not by conviction, but the situation of the country is not the most suitable for this type of education mediated by technology, because unfortunately many students do not have the necessary resources to attend a virtual class; either by not having internet connection or not having a computer or a cell phone and this shows the strong social difference. This is why this situation produced by the pandemic took us by surprise and it was reflected that most teachers were not prepared to enter into this new way of developing their teaching practices, making them change their beliefs and methodologies about the learning and teaching process; without any prior announcement or preparation and with very few tools to cope with the situation.

During this time, educational institutions, managers, teachers and students have tried to adapt to the new reality, but this has not been an easy process, since due to the lack of preparation and resources the process has evidenced failures in the development of the teachers' pedagogical practices and consequently the students' performance has been affected by not understanding these new dynamics and this has generated concern in the educational institutions in relation to language policies, because the objectives for the time being have not been met or were partially met.

Statement of the problem

Through the previously mentioned problems of the pandemic, education has been involved in a series of significant changes both at a structural level and at a pedagogical and academic level. Based on these factors, we will identify how foreign language teachers have modified their pedagogical practices from a methodological, didactic and practical point of view in order to align with the policies decreed by the ministry and the university.

Literature review

In order to accomplish our study, we believe that it is important to highlight and conceptualize the main categories that will give rationale to this project. These will help to understand the research in a more investigative approach. The first concept is language policies. According to Shohamy (2006) language policies is the primary mechanism for organizing, managing, and manipulating language behaviors as it consists of decisions made about languages and their uses in society. It is through LP that decisions are made with regard to the preferred languages that should be legitimized, used, learned and taught in terms of where, when and in which contexts. Even though policies are formulated at large by government, our study draws on cultural socio-critical approaches of language policy that define the critical and crucial role of teachers as policy makers (Peláez & Usma, 2017; Roldan & Peláez Henao, 2017; Usma & Peláez, 2017). Other authors (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Levinson & Sutton, 2001), also point out that this perspective acknowledges the multiple layers of governance and agents that interplay in policymaking processes, and looks at how different educational actors inside and outside schools play an active role in the final enactment of initial stated s policies. From this standpoint, the entire policymaking process is conceptualized as social and situated practice . The second concept is blended education, which according to Mendieta (2012) seeks to generate a coherent and harmonious balance between online access to knowledge and face-to-face human interaction by taking into account learners' and teachers' aptitudes and attitudes. The third concept is pedagogical practices, according to Bruner, (1997, p. 81.) In view of the prospect of changes presented by today's society and the influence they have on the mind, culture, and education of young people, it becomes necessary to rethink pedagogical practices, "all choices of pedagogical practices involve a conception of the learner and over time can be adapted by him or her as the appropriate way of thinking about the learning process". The fourth concept is distance

education which according to Frank (2008) is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology, and instructional systems design that is effectively incorporated in delivering education to students who are not physically “on site” to receive their education. Instead, teachers and students may communicate asynchronously.

Having those concepts clarified, we wanted to know how the field of pedagogical practices has been explored so far in the local context, to have a better understanding on how, or if the Covid-19 pandemic changed that process.

The first study that we found was a local research made in 2006, it shows that teachers even without the context of the pandemic, that teachers share different visions regarding their pedagogical principles, strategies and ideals that have been changing over the years since we are characters who adapt to the context in which they live and these ideals gaps with the subject are still evident in the pandemic.

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Peñaranda-Correa, F., Bastidas-Acevedo, M., Escobar-Paucar, G., Nicolás Torres-Ospina, J., & Arango-Córdoba, A. (2006).

The second study was located in Manizales, Caldas in 2013. This research was about pedagogical practices and its relationship with academic performance. We can see how this research was made in a year when the pandemic situation had not been presented to the world, and even at that time, presenciality and interaction played a significant role in the teaching and learning process, that is why we decided to look on how the absence of both factors, changed the way In-service teachers had been doing their work so far.

“En la práctica pedagógica universitaria, la interacción es el medio para la construcción de conocimiento y desempeña un papel central”, Gómez, L. (2005). Por lo que se esperaba que las clases tuvieran un alto grado de interacciones entre estudiantes y docentes, es claro que en todas las clases hay interacciones, pero la expectativa es que se realice objetivamente, para la construcción de pensamiento crítico y reflexivo, entre estudiantes y docentes.”

We can see how this research was made in a year when the pandemic situation had not been presented to the world, and even at that time, presenciality and interaction played a significant role in the teaching and learning process, that is why we decided to look on how the absence of both factors, changed the way In-service teachers had been doing their work so far. Duque, P. A., Vallejo, S. L., & Rodriguez, J. C. (2016).

And the third study that we discovered was from 2020 and it was precisely the most recent of all and perhaps the most important since it points directly to Covid-19 and the challenges it brought with it. Covid-19 not only affected educational practices in our geographical circle, it also affected the rest of the world, some were more affected than others, some knew how to adapt and advance in this new reality that is becoming part of us, that was the case of many pre-service students in schools and universities in England. This study provides us a global point of view on how some pre-services students adapt and develop their strategies into the new modality. Although educational practices changed drastically, many principles and ‘intentionalities’ of practice remained unchanged, as did the teacher educators’ orientation values. This research has a global impact when considering possible learning spaces in which authentic teacher training can be carried out. Ian Menter, Maria Assunção Flores. (2021).

Research question

How pedagogical practices in the English teaching program have adapted to the language policies during COVID-19?

Objectives

General objective

To analyze how teachers in the English teaching program have adapted their pedagogical practices to the language policies during COVID-19.

Specific objectives

- To examine the institutional language policies regarding English teaching and its connection with national policies.
- To identify teacher's pedagogical practices that emerge during this contingency.
- To establish the relation between pedagogical practices and language policies.

Method

Research methodology

This research was carried out under a qualitative paradigm and a hermeneutical approach. The research strategy assumed was the narrative, as it allowed recognizing the relationship between the pandemic covid-19 and the pedagogical practices.

Population

In order to conduct this research, the participants selected were three in-service teachers from the English teaching language program from university Luis Amigó

Data collection

The data collection techniques that were privileged in the study were: three semi-structured interviews. One interview to each participant.

Ethical considerations

Before the interviews were performed, the participants received a consent form in which we explained to them the intentions of the research, assured anonymity through the entire process, the possibility of quitting the investigation at the moment they wanted and asked for the permission to use the information that they might gave us to use it only for our research purposes.

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted in three stages in order to structure the research to facilitate the process of analyzing the data collected. First, the codification of the testimonies of the interviewed teachers of the Bachelor's degree program in English at Universidad Luis Amigó; second, the classification by categories of analysis in order to identify the information provided by the interviewees and order it according to the objective and needs of this research; and third, the contrast with the theoretical reference of the research. Then we proceeded to the construction of the analysis by means of discussions and interpretations carried out by the researchers with the advice of our advisor of “*trabajo de grado.*”

Results

After the information analysis process mentioned above, we found different fields or research topics that were commonly referred to by the participants in the interviews conducted, then we conceptualized them in the categories to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the information obtained above and the categories are: virtual resources,

pedagogical practices, social context, beliefs and language policies; these topics will be developed in more depth in the course of the research. After discussing the categories and the findings found throughout the process of data analysis, it became evident how the most affected side according to the testimony of the participants was the human side of the teacher, since the real interaction of the teacher with his students was almost completely lost, because unfortunately education mediated by virtual resources prevents or does not completely allow the interaction to be equal to that of face-to-face classes and this has been reflected in the development of the classes, in the pedagogical practice of teachers and in the relationship between the teacher and the students.

Social context: At the beginning of the health situation, the general outlook was one of unconcern and remoteness regarding Covid, even in some of the interviews we could hear some phrases like "*this is not going to happen to us*", however, time showed that the reality would be different, as one of the participants told us "this happened to Luis Amigo Catholic University, this happened to the whole world".

Many of us thought that this was something transitory, this is reflected in the answer given by one of the participants, which indicates "*I was thinking of returning to the University after 15 days I did not take out the books, nor my spreadsheets, nor my notebooks or notes, nothing*", however, the time has been responsible for demonstrating the opposite. Therefore, the perception as a whole is directed towards the continuity of this teaching method, for example, "So it is here to stay, but I think it is here to energize, to support, but I would hope that it is not for one hundred percent, because if it remains as such, as the only alternative, then we would have to make that discussion, but not only teachers, but a whole country as such, and then how education will fulfill that objective, which is socialization or are we going to change

the educational paradigm, and say that education does not socialize, but simply teaches content? We should ask ourselves this question". From our point of view, this discussion raised by the participant is necessary to adopt blended learning to our daily life. Another element that became clear in the interviews was the fact that almost none of the participants were aware of what was happening in the rest of the world with respect to Covid-19, there was some uncertainty and concern about the issue at that time, as expressed by participant C, "it is starting to generate, it is a tenacious concern, especially because of the abysmal misinformation that existed and still exists regarding how this is managed, how it is irrigated and the whole issue". It can be evidenced that there was a constant lack of disinformation and disconnection regarding the arrival of Covid-19 to the world, likewise, it was not clear what measures should be taken, as expressed by one of the participants, "I remember that I did not have any information about it, nor did I know it biologically, nor did I know it epidemiologically, nor did I know what measures were taken when something like that happened".

In terms of **virtual resources**, we found that most participants were very emphatic on the fact of the social gap that we can find in our context, with a lot of students struggling to connect, as participant B mentioned in the interview: "*There are realities where necessarily there is an affectation, but within that scheme, in our context, we are the privileged ones.*" Besides, teachers facing long hours of work in front of a computer, with no distinction between their personal lives and their professional duties, as an example, participant C exposed to us this concern during the interview process: "*What does sitting in front of a screen for more than 8 hours a day entail?*". It is also remarkable how some of the teachers managed to make the best out of the situation and found new insights on the topics that they had been dealing with in past years, but in a totally different context. Another important

aspect to highlight in this process of technology-mediated education are the difficulties in the use of technological tools by teachers and students, because generally they were used to work and use the same tools, then, the educational community was forced to discover and use new educational tools to continue with the educational process, as evidenced by participant B

"Then it was clear to me that it was not for everyone that some conditions of autonomy were needed, that some conditions of responsibility and discipline were needed that I did not have at least" As many of us know, no one was prepared for this new modality, we did not know the impact or scope it was going to have, so many of us, both students and teachers, had a rejection at the time of the transition from face-to-face to face, nobody was prepared for this new modality, we did not know the impact or the scope it was going to have, so many of us, both students and teachers, had a rejection at the time of the transition from face-to-face to virtual because we were not completely used to it and we did not see this modality as feasible, as evidenced by one of the participants A, *"I had not shown much interest in those processes about those possible virtual mediation processes in virtual environments, right, well, I insist, there was no need and I felt that face-to-face mediation, gave, gave me and worked, right and most of us, well, at that time we all had the possibility of face-to-face classes"*. Considering that one of the bases of this research is **pedagogical practices**, the participants provided very important conceptualizations in the field, something that was very evident, was the lack of preparation to face a new modality of teaching, making the first stages of the blended learning modality so complicated and frustrating for most of the participants, students and teachers, making of the improvisation a very important tool in teachers repertoire, as participant C clarified that the initial process of changing to blended learning was abrupt: *"So what I did was a transfer of what I had in the syllabus which I had already organized, I simply made the transfer to not having it here, but I have it here."* addressing the new reality week by week, until confinement became a certainty, forcing

teachers to consider their methods furthermore their previous conceptions, we found that some teachers started to implement new ways, like participant A, that explained us how the new modality was addressed: *"on some occasions because the class and the subject matter lent itself, what I did was to select videos on YouTube, put them in subgroups, and each group was assigned a video and, based on the video work, there was a mediation work."* and teachers that held strong to their beliefs and methods, the evidence to this was participant C that left clear that: *"I continue to use my strategies, for example, because they are the strategies that I believe in, that respond to my way of teaching and that are appropriate to what the degree requires"*. The participants additionally mentioned how the attitude of the students is affecting the blended learning process, because they tend to cut the expected mediation that virtual resources are supposed to provide by turning their cameras off, or just leaving the device on the meeting and turning their attention in something completely different, making impossible the gesture reading technique that is very useful for a teacher, as in the case of participant A: *"then from a gesture, a reaction, I do things that, otherwise, if I had not seen it, I would not have done it"*. Another element that was affected was the management of teaching time, many of the teachers found it necessary to rethink and change the time they had available for certain content that was available for face-to-face teaching, as expressed by participant A, *"the adjustments we will have to make if we look at the teaching time, we immediately realize that there would have to be some adjustments in content, for example, are necessary"*, emphasizing that we cannot expect the same result as before because there are certain external factors that impede the same.

On the other hand, referring to **language policies**, all the study participants agreed on the fact that, although language policies were not supposed to be modified, either their goals: *"I think that politics as such should not be transformed or adapted, because in any case, what politics proposes are long-term objectives"*. (participant C) the government was supposed to aid

teachers in this new process, and on the contrary, the answer was a complete abandonment, for instance, one of the participants criticized the government actions and stated: *"So there is an issue of abandonment from the academic side, there are problems of corruption from the administrative side, but there is also a zero human and zero social perspective in the way the state is administered.* "forcing teachers to become policymakers, seeking for new ways of managing English as a foreign language in Colombia, participant B mentioned: *"We teachers need tools, in other words, supply teachers with the tools so that they can teach.* One of the participants emphasized that now with this new modality we are facing, the achievements of the language policies will be affected in one way or another, thus harming the educational level, as expressed by one of the participants *"What has been affected is the achievement of the objectives of the language policies, because it will be much more difficult to say that it is no longer 45%, but 60% of the children who present to know 11, effectively finish in B1 in English, and that will be much more difficult to achieve."*

Discussion

We can say that the resource that is missed the most in the blended learning modality is the need for interaction and the way it affects not only the teacher-Students relationship, by making it more difficult to create a deeper interest, but also the impact it might have on the process of the student as such.

Something that also impacted a lot the incursion of this new modality was the abandonment by the State and the lack of resources, which created a considerable increase in desertion and abandonment of the classrooms since the students did not have adequate equipment to be present in their virtual classes and thus continue their educational process. This problem occurred mainly in rural areas of the country where connectivity is scarce and corruption on the part of entities and leaders has impacted these areas of the country, causing

the educational process to become a matter of purchasing power instead of being a priority right in Colombia.

In addition, due to the pandemic, educational institutions were forced to start implementing blended learning to continue with the educational process, but, as language policies were not changed and the same guidelines of face-to-face learning were maintained, it was very difficult to comply with the same dynamics, contents and time load. This situation forced teachers to change their pedagogical practices and approaches to meet the same expectations. It is also clearly evidenced how non-academic activities and others end up together in front of the same screen, leading the teacher and the student to spend more than 8 hours in the same position, making it difficult to manage time accurately.

Finally, this research showed us both sides of blended learning, on one hand we could evidence how teachers found new approaches to the courses they were already teaching, and new ways of reaching students and arouse their interest, however, on the other hand, this research showed the shortcomings of the Colombian educational system since education is a reflection of society. The positive aspect of this modality is that it brought us closer to the academy and the process could continue with the available resources, but not all students had the same resources to connect to the classes, sometimes it was a process that was not very dynamic since the absence of "real" interaction did not allow it.

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