

Alternative Discourses and B-learning during pandemic season.

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Abstract.

This research intends to analyze what alternative discourses are being used by teachers in B-learning during covid-19 pandemic. To develop this research two teachers from Departamento de Idiomas de la Universidad Católica Luis Amigó were selected. To collect data the semi-structure interview was used. The intention was to recognize new strategies, methods or approaches related to alternative discourses, that they are considering to use in their virtual classrooms, and probably will be used in physical classrooms, to improve the learning of English as a communicative tool rather than an instrumentalized tool to become competitive in the world. The data analysis led to the conclusion that teachers are aware of what alternative discourses are and what they can be applied in their classrooms. As researchers in formation we learned a lot and many questions arose for future studies.

Key words: Alternative discourses, b-learning, language policy appropriation, pandemic.

Resumen.

Esta investigación pretende analizar qué discursos alternativos están utilizando los docentes en el B-learning durante la pandemia del covid-19. Para desarrollar esta investigación se seleccionaron dos docentes del Departamento de Idiomas de la Universidad Católica Luis Amigó y posteriormente se les entrevistó para reconocer nuevas estrategias, métodos o enfoques relacionados con los discursos alternativos, que están teniendo en cuenta para utilizar en sus aulas virtuales , y probablemente se utilizará en las aulas físicas, para mejorar el aprendizaje del inglés como una herramienta comunicativa en lugar de una herramienta instrumentalizada para volverse competitivo en el mundo. El análisis de los datos llevó a la conclusión de que los docentes conocen qué son los discursos alternativos y qué se pueden aplicar en sus aulas. Se logran muchos aprendizajes como investigadores en formación y surgen varias preguntas para futuros estudios.

Palabras clave: Discursos alternativos, b-learning, apropiación de la política lingüística, pandemia.

Degree requirements.

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Introduction

1.1 Problem & Context:

The Colombia government has adopted Language Policy from Common European Framework, this adoption was chiefly driven by the need to respond to the changes associated with economic globalisation (Peña Dix & de Mejía, 2012) regarding the absence of national, all-encompassing assessment criteria for foreign language proficiency. Also, this adoption came in the form of externalisation of policy discourses, stratification of groups, and marketisation of language teaching (Usma Wilches, 2009). This happened taking advantage of the absence of information in the local communities to impose a hegemonic discourse (Cárdenas, 2010). In consequence it is thought that mastering a target language entitles the speaker to a membership to the economic, cultural, geographical, and socio political benefits held by the verbal community of native speakers. (Bonilla Carvajal & Tejada-Sánchez, 2016)

A perfect example is the “implementation” of the Common European Framework, which carries out how to evaluate, teach and learn English, and promotes English as hegemonic and promotes levels and categories that decide if language is correct or incorrect.

On the other hand, according to Shohamy (2006) language is open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal. It has no fixed boundaries, but is rather made of hybrids and endless varieties resulting from language being creative, expressive, interactive, contact- and dialogue-based, debated, mediated and negotiated.

Nowadays, the starting point for understanding what an alternative discourse it is the contradiction between hegemonic and alternative discourses. We refer to hegemonic discourse as that which presents us with a world without options, with a single discourse, that of power and the powerful, which throws us into a void of alternatives. The imposition of the single discourse is not carried out only by using repressive apparatuses, but fundamentally by means of systems of subjective modelling.

In the teaching of English do we see how hegemonic discourse permeates our way of teaching since language policies promote an instrumentalized discourse of language with the intention of satisfying the powerful intentions of the country, and do not allow scholars to express their ideas in discourses that they consider pertinent according to the social context that surrounds them.

And this pertinent discourse is reflected in alternative discourses that are emerging, expressed in concepts such as responsible consumption, veganism, sustainable economy, ecology. Etc

Virginia Armisen(2018).

By mid-April 2020, almost every country in the world had implemented nationwide closures of schools and other educational institutions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers across the globe have had to scramble to help their students navigate the world of distance learning, often without sufficient guidance, training, support, and resources.

Future teachers have also been impacted by the crisis: trainee teachers are among the learners affected by school closures, having not only lost access to face-to-face tutorials and in-person supervision at teacher training institutes, but also to essential practical teaching experience in the classroom. For the duration of the crisis response and beyond, it will be vital to find ways to sustain and nurture teachers' professional networks, as well as the relationships between teachers and learners, their families and communities.

It will be important for all stakeholders, including teachers and principals, to come together to reflect on, research, and systematically evaluate what interventions have worked and why, and where gaps remain, and how these can be addressed, to support more inclusive and equitable education systems that are resilient and responsive to future challenges and provide quality education for all. (UNESCO, 2020).

1.2 Literature review.

To contextualize our research, we have 5 categories which we are going to develop.

According to Usma (2015) Language Policy are “All these different programs and policies have made evident the special interest of the central government to promote, improve, and regulate foreign language teaching, learning, and certification processes in the country, and thus look more attractive to foreign investment at times of economic globalization, transnational policymaking, and international competitiveness.”

Additionally, Shahomy (2006) explains that language can be used as a form of control, by imposing the use of certain languages in certain ways (correct, pure, native-like, grammatical, and so on) or even to exclude or include people who use it. According to Shohamy (2006) Language is viewed by policy makers as a closed and finite system. Also used as a tool for manipulation and political control.

Fairclough (2003), language is a social practice where discourses, both written and oral, are created, understood, shaped, and validated within a community in a specific context by means of interaction.

Furthermore, Kumaravadivelu (2003) discourses reflect a fragment of the world that is only understood by addressing the context where they are produced in relation to the participants and

their intentions. It is critical that teachers no longer see: "teachers simply as teachers, and learners simply as learners, because both are, for good or ill, managers of learning" (Allwright, 1984, p. 156) Because the production of classroom discourse is a cooperative venture, teachers cannot afford to ignore any contributory discourse from other partners jointly engaged in the process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities.

The concept of B-learning is still vague and poorly understood but it is defined as "blended learning is to picture a continuum of technology usage in education. At one end of the continuum is the "traditional" classroom. This classroom has desks that face the front of the classroom, a teacher who explains concepts in a lecture format and then involves students through class discussions, small group work, or independent work. This classroom contains very little or even no technology. All the way on the other end of the continuum is a wholly online learning program. In this setting, students learn completely off-site (for example, in their homes) and students interact virtually both with the curriculum and their teacher-of-record" (Beaver et al., 2014, 2).

1.3 Main Question:

How does the pandemic Covid-19 relate to the emergence of alternative discourses in blended learning?

1.4 Objectives:

1.4.1 General objective:

-To analyze what alternative discourses are being used by teachers in B-learning during covid-19 pandemic.

1.4.2 Specific objectives:

-To recognize alternative discourses in virtual classrooms during the pandemic season.

-To contrast B-learning strategies with face-to-face learning strategies.

-To Associate alternative discourses and Language policies in the Colombian context.

Method.

2.1 Research methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach with an interpretative paradigm which is going to be developed through the use of interviews (Solís, 2020). Due to the fact that we were forced to develop this project during a pandemic and we had to stay at home during a contingency period, we could not do the interviews face-to-face but we interviewed the participants via Zoom.

2.2 Population

The participants were two teachers from Departamento de Idiomas from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, they were selected because they were delivering English courses inside the university, so we approached them via email with the proposal to participate in our research after they accepted, we send them the consent form.

2.3 Data Collection

To collect our data, we used interviews as the instrument of collection, the interviews were made through Zoom meetings due to the pandemic contingency period and we were not allowed to meet with the participants in a specific place.

2.4 Data Analysis

The process of the analysis of the interviews that were done under the qualitative analysis, it means we were looking for themes that can reflect the perception that participants shared with us previously (“Entre sus principales bondades se encuentra que permite la obtención de información amplia, profunda y de carácter sustancial”) (Solís, 2020) So, we initially generated codes, so we went through the interview and classifying and labeling in colors the information, so we selected codes to understand what participants wanted to express, we got about 50 codes. Then we grouped the codes into categories, so we found 5 categories. Finally, as a group we were able to group the categories into themes that we are going to call them preliminary findings.

Findings.

After analyzing the data that we collected we could establish some themes which will be explained, so we find out that a) Teaching mediated by technology has contributed to the emergence of alternative discourses. b) Students demand alternative methodologies from teachers as they feel that they are not learning through virtuality and do not feel fully in tune with the learning process. c) Teachers had to reflect their pedagogical practices and reflect on

their beliefs. d) Reinvention of existing alternative discourses due to the need to be more authentic and the ability to adapt to the reality and needs brought about by virtual education.

a) Teaching mediated by technology has contributed to the emergence of alternative discourses. Even though the change to blending learning has turned into a challenge, it has been a really useful tool to expand the way of teaching to students with different approaches and strategies that were briefly used before, but now they are being reconstructed and re-thought in a way that it wasn't before. According to the follow evidence that led us to concluded that alternative discourses has been emerged and they are being used daily in the classrooms. Also, teaching mediated by technology has brought many good alternatives discourses that we are still not aware of them but participants tried to explain the most valuable that they use in their classrooms.

“El discurso de tiza y tablero ya está mandado a recoger obviamente yo no me voy a poner a hacer un tablero en mi alcoba y además desconocer que puede enseñarle a utilizar otra forma de tableros.” (P2)

“Yo creo que el uso de herramientas digitales se ha evidenciado bastante. Porque estamos usando más lo que son juegos y muros en líneas y todas estas herramientas digitales” (P1)

b) Students demand alternative methodologies from teachers as they feel that they are not learning through virtuality and do not feel fully in tune with the learning process. Due to the migration to the virtual environment, necessities had emerged, showing new opportunities of improvement, reaching a real learning and satisfactory development process. This one is not only limited by students, it also applies for teachers, creating new guidelines to make it more access full and understandable. As we can appreciated from participants P1 and P2:

“(...)el estudiante denuncia la necesidad de un discurso alternativo en la medida que ellos se sientan compenetrados o que se sientan satisfechos porque sienten que no están aprendiendo porque hay muchos profes que se resisten todavía a esos discursos alternativos y se resisten porque cambiar es mucho más difícil a mantenerse en lo que ya saben(...)” (P2)

“(...) entonces sí creo que más que desarrollar estilos de aprendizaje alternativos se ha revelado que tan autónomo, independiente y comprometido son los estudiantes con su mismo proceso de aprendizaje.” (P1)

c) Teachers had to reflect their pedagogical practices and reflect on their beliefs.

As a matter of fact, teachers have reflected on their pedagogical practices, their improvements, their lacks, their beliefs. Through the interviews made to participants they were aware of their pedagogical practices and how these have changed through the time. The common factor was the b-learning, they said it was a challenge, a new teaching context that they had to adapt to. As we can appreciate in the following evidence from the interviews:

“Yo me siento bien, porque igual sigue siendo un contexto de enseñanza y es algo que he disfrutado y hecho toda mi vida (...) eso me hace sentir un poco más confiada en el desarrollo de mis habilidades como docente.” (P1)

“(...) para mí es un reto y a veces hay miedo y siempre que me enfrente a un grupo nuevo lo primero que hago es sensibilizar con respecto a cuál es mi perspectiva pedagógica y trato de mostrar eso y siempre les digo yo me considero un docente distinto (...)” (P2)

d) Reinvention of existing alternative discourses due to the need to be more authentic and the ability to adapt to the reality and needs brought about by virtual education.

The migration to virtuality dusted off alternative methodologies that already existed and that were used in a de- contextualized and inauthentic way, because teachers made use of them but due to the face-to-face modality these methodologies were perceived as not very useful for the learning process.

“(...) tengo muchas ganas de decirte que contribuyó a utilizar muchas cosas que ya existían de una manera más auténtica, más necesaria, más real(...)” (P2)

“(...) creo que hay cosas que estamos utilizando ahora que siempre han existido y nos resistimos a utilizar por diversas razones(...)” (P2)

“(...) hay otros discursos que han emergido y más que emergido se han reinventado ¿y por qué se han reinventado? Porque utilizan cosas ya existentes y se adaptan a la realidad o demuestran fenómenos o problemáticas en el aula ya existentes ahora evidentes en la virtualidad(...)” (P2)

Discussion.

During this investigation new topic and question show up during each interviews, also different points of view and how they change before and during the pandemic season, we found that for the now on had emerge new requirement for the teacher and students in order to reach a real learning and develop themselves as competent in their own study, that shows that the critical thinking had an exponential growing for the way the student learn and the teacher teach, setting up higher requirement to feel that they are fulfilled with real and applicable knowledge of their daily life's or non their academic field.

Things like physical spaces were almost unable to reach, since we still having some restrictions for being public or private spaces to avoid and spread the contagion of the COVID-19, One suggestion will be state in a accessible side with all the healthy recommendation, another difficulty was the time because the time to set an appointment to proceed with the interviews were not the best, since the participant had very specific timeframes to work and be on the interview, Also for the time of the investigation field like the new expectations to learn during the pandemic were not able to explore for the time of the investigation. By the other hand, the connectivity was also an inconvenience because the clarity of interpretation and also the physical expression were limited for an external factor like the Internet or if the participants present some lag on the connection or directly with an energy outage.

Besides, this research, we start to develop new questions that emerge during this investigation, the ones who we consider very important were:

How can be promote Alternative Discourses in virtual classrooms? The main characteristic of this questions was during the interview where some of the participant show some knowledge about alternative discourses, but they have not explored more of that, like P1 that said “Yo creo que he escuchado aproximaciones teórico-prácticas a las realidades educativas que vivimos en un contexto en particular.”

How blended learning has boost or shrink authentic learning in virtual classrooms? This one focus on the present and the new requirement that student and teachers have been requesting to reach a real teaching and learning, to be competent with strong bases for they own human development.

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