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Exploring EFL Teaching and Learning Processes in Two Undergraduate Mandatory Courses

Exploración de los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje en dos cursos de inglés obligatorios de pregrado

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This multiple case study explored the influence of English teachers' methodological practices over undergraduate students' learning processes in two English as a foreign language mandatory courses for different majors, at Universidad de Pamplona (Colombia). Data were gathered through non-participant observations, field notes, stimulated recall interviews, and semistructured interviews. Findings revealed that teacher-centeredness, the grammar-translation and audiolingual methods dominated the lessons; textbook-oriented classes with an emphasis on listening and writing characterized the courses; teacher and peer correction were encouraged; and classroom tasks and evaluation mostly focused on grammar and vocabulary. Although teachers had methodological practices, these influenced students' learning processes differently.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, learning, teaching, undergraduate students

Este estudio de caso múltiple exploró la influencia de las prácticas metodológicas de profesores de inglés sobre los procesos de aprendizaje de estudiantes universitarios de programas diferentes, en dos cursos obligatorios de inglés de la Universidad de Pamplona (Colombia). La información se recolectó por medio de observaciones no participantes, notas de campo, entrevistas de recuerdo estimulado y entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los resultados revelaron un predominio de las clases centradas en el profesor y orientadas por el libro, con énfasis en la comprensión oral y la producción escrita; el uso de los métodos de traducción gramatical y audio lingual; la corrección por parte del profesor y de pares; y tareas de clase y evaluaciones centradas en la gramática y el vocabulario. Dichas prácticas metodológicas influyeron de modos diferentes el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje, enseñanza, estudiantes universitarios, inglés como lengua extranjera

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Introduction

English has become a significant language for use in professional, academic, social, and economic settings. In Colombia, for example, The Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, MEN) has implemented the National Bilingualism Program (Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo, PNB), to "improve [the country's] human capital and economic development by increasing participation in the largely English-speaking global economy" (British Council, 2015, p. 14). Therefore, the Colombian English language policy requires high standards of proficiency for university graduates.

Additionally, the MEN implemented standardized English proficiency tests as an exit requirement for undergraduate students to accomplish the B2 English level of the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001) before finishing their bachelors' degrees. Hence, to help students achieve such proficiency level, Universidad de Pamplona, for example, has implemented two more alternatives for those students who do not pursue a language degree: English free-access courses and English mandatory courses. The former includes five levels and lasts 12 weeks. The latter, which is the context of this study, is offered for the students doing careers in economics, philosophy, music, electronic engineering, and Bachelor of Arts in the Spanish language and communications programs. The English mandatory courses option consists of three or four levels—depending on the degree—with an intensity of 64 hours each course (Agreement 023, 2014). Thus, by successfully accomplishing any of these two alternatives, undergraduate students at this university will be exempted from taking the proficiency test required by the MEN because they will be granted the required B2 level when finishing their degrees.

Campo-Barrios (2017) studied the influence of non-linguistic factors in the English learning process only within the English free-access courses in this same university. Conversely, the present study focuses on the English as a foreign language (EFL) mandatory courses as an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the conditions and the effectiveness of these alternatives. Thus, we analyzed the teaching practices and learning processes following Wang's (2009) teaching perspectives: instructional approaches, language pedagogy, use of textbooks, student modality, error correction, and classroom tasks. Additionally, we included a seventh factor: evaluation.

This study aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What type of methodological practices do teachers adopt when teaching English in mandatory universities' courses?
2. How do teachers' methodological practices influence their students' English learning processes?

The purpose was to explore the English language teaching practices along with their influence over the learning processes experienced by two groups of mixed undergraduate students from the programs mentioned above.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, we will define the six aspects of Wang's (2009) teaching perspectives and an additional factor: evaluation.

Wang's Teaching Perspectives

In order to answer the research questions, we analyzed the participating teachers' methodologies and followed Wang's (2009) teaching perspectives:

- *Instructional approaches* are "the way in which students are taught and are organized" (Wang, 2009, p. 36). Wang differentiates between two basic types of instructional approach: teacher-centered and student-centered. She relates teacher-centeredness to teachers who play the role of transmitter of knowledge and controller of activities. In the former, teachers are seen as providers of information in the

classroom; in the latter, they design, organize, and manage every single classroom activity. Conversely, in student-centeredness the role of the teacher is "to facilitate learning, and to foster responsibility and autonomy among learners" (p. 56) for them to participate in the classes. In our study, we explored how each of these variants influenced students' learning process.

- *Language pedagogy* "refers to how a language is taught" (Wang, 2009, p. 40). Wang links this term with approaches that are "theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practicing principles in language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 16) and methods, "an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, pp. 15–l6). We identified which methods or approaches informed our participating teachers' language pedagogy.
- *Use of textbooks*, according to Wang (2009), these "guide[s] teachers' lectures to impart knowledge systematically and logically" (p. 46) to make the teaching and learning processes fully effective. Subsequently, the present study focused on identifying whether and how textbooks guided teachers' methodological practices within the EFL mandatory courses.
- *Student's modality*, that is defined by Richards and Schmidt (2002, as cited in Wang, 2009) as "the mode or manner in which language is used" (p. 489), through the four language skills. We identified whether listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills were used together or separately.
- *Error correction*, understood as "feedback in response to learners' errors in second language acquisition" (Wang, 2009, p. 47). Debreli and Onuk (2016) propose three different error correction approaches: peer correction, self-correction, and teacher correction. We wanted to identify which of the three was more prevalent in the settings under study.
- *Classroom tasks*, which are "basic unit[s] of classroom activity-interaction, purposely designed to control and regulate the teaching of meaning, focused so as to achieve a particular goal and outcome" (Wang, 2009, p. 593). As a result, we analyzed the contribution of classroom tasks to the learning of EFL within the mandatory courses.

Additionally, we also focused on evaluation, defined as a way to quantify students' learning processes through tools such as tests or exams wherein assessment involves a reflective element to help identify the effectiveness of such learning process (Álvarez, 2003, as cited in Rodríguez-Ferreira, 2009).

Literature Review

In this section, we briefly review some studies focused on EFL teaching and learning processes in university settings.

Teachers' Methodological Practices in EFL Education at Universities

There are several studies that deal with teaching methodologies and practices in the EFL arena including influential teaching factors and error correction approaches. In Colombia, recent studies have found that English language teaching at some universities is dominated by some methodologies focused mainly on grammar instruction (Jiménez et al., 2017; Pavas-Amado, 2017; Sánchez-Solarte et al., 2017). Perhaps one exception to such tendency was identified by Posada-Ortiz and Patiño-Garzón (2007), who studied the EFL teaching methodology at Universidad del Valle and found that it was based on cooperative learning and the communicative approach. Second, Bastidas (2017), who investigated methods and approaches in EFL teaching in Colombian history, found that, mostly, the

methodologies have been textbook-oriented. Similarly, in India and China, for instance, authors showed that textbooks are still being used as the main teaching material in EFL classrooms (Radić-Bojanić & Topalov, 2016; Wang, 2009).

Regarding teaching factors affecting students' English learning processes, in Asia, for example, Güneş (2011) and Nguyen et al. (2014) found that grammar-based instruction, uninteresting teaching styles, and insufficient time for practicing the target language hindered undergraduate students' learning processes. Additionally, Anwar (2017) and Quezada-Sarmiento et al. (2017; a study conducted in Ecuador) concluded that teachers' lack of training and overuse of the mother tongue obstructed the learning processes. Two resembling factors were corroborated in the Colombian context by Pavas-Amado (2017), who revealed that grammar-driven instruction and inexperienced teachers inhibited learners' English learning processes.

Tertiary Education Students' Learning Experiences in EFL Courses

In Colombia, undergraduate students have perceived the English language as an essential tool for their professional development, communicative real-life situations management, and knowing about other cultures (Bailey, 2017; Gómez-Paniagua, 2017).

Concerning students' perceptions of teachers' methodological practices, Sánchez-Solarte et al. (2017) and Jiménez et al. (2017) found that students perceive English language teaching methodologies as too focused on grammar subjects. Likewise, In Kourieos and Evripidou's (2013) and Ağçam and Babanoğlu's (2016) studies, findings revealed that Cypriot and Turkish students disapproved of grammar instruction or the use of textbooks in EFL teaching. In contrast, Fereidoni et al. (2018) contradicted the aforementioned outcomes, in view of Iranian students' preference for the grammar-translation method and coursebooks with grammar content. Furthermore, Chien (2014) revealed that the grammar-translation method and the communicative language teaching and collaborative learning approaches worked effectively for university students' enhancement of the four language skills and grammatical knowledge.

Considering research on students' attitudes and perceptions on error correction in European higher education contexts, Kavaliauskienė and Anusienė (2012) and Kourieos and Evripidou (2013) demonstrated that students preferred the teacher's immediate correction. In Chile, Westmacott (2017) found that students favored the teacher's indirect and coded feedback because it contributed to their cognition.

In terms of undergraduate students' preferences on classroom activities, Samperio-Sanchez (2017) indicated that Mexican students favored listening, grammar-based, and drilling activities. Conversely, Ağçam and Babanoğlu's (2016) study demonstrated Turkish students' inclination for speaking activities.

Method

Design

This study was guided under a constructivist research paradigm given that, according to Lather (1992) and Robottom and Hart (1993): "Participants are able to describe their vantage points of reality which allows the researcher to better understand the participants' actions" (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 4). This study adopted a multiple case study "in which multiple cases are described and compared to provide insight into an issue" (Creswell, 2005, p. 439). The two groups in charge of each participating teacher represent the two cases under study.

Context and Participants

This research was conducted at Universidad de Pamplona, a public university in Colombia, during the first semester of 2019. We studied two third level EFL undergraduate mandatory courses. These courses

used the *World English 2* textbook, level B2, and had a duration of 64 hours. After having reviewed the timetables of three potential groups, we decided to study Group A and Group C due to their availability. Both groups had students from the music, electronic engineering, and economics degree programs as well as from the Bachelor of Arts in Spanish language and communications programs. In total, there were 58 students: 38 students in Group A and 20 students in Group C; however, following Creswell's (2012) simple random sampling, we selected 10 students from Group A and nine from Group C to be interviewed. This sampling technique allowed participants the same probability to represent the population under study. To protect the participants' identity, we provided them with pseudonyms, as follows: Margaret, the teacher from Group A, holds a BA in foreign language; her students were labelled with the letter A and a number (e.g., Participant A1). Frank, the teacher from Group C, holds a specialization degree in translation with an emphasis on English to Spanish; his students were labelled with the letter C and a number (e.g., Participant C1).

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through four instruments:

- six non-participants observations in each classroom (Creswell, 2012);
- the corresponding field-notes to register relevant data from participants;
- semistructured interviews with each teacher and with the previously selected students; and
- two stimulated recall interviews (SRI-1 and SRI-2), which refer to the "'self-reporting technique' in which audio and/or video records of participant[s] . . . are used to stimulate recall of concurrently occurring internal thought processes (Marland et al., 1984, as cited in Wang, 2009, p. 97). We recorded two lessons from each teacher. While students and teachers were interviewed, we played back some segments to stimulate their reflections on particular learning and teaching actions.

Findings

Data were analyzed qualitatively following Hatch's (2002) interpretative analysis which "details a way to transform data that emphasizes interpretation" (p. 179). In doing so, we analyzed and interpreted the data gathered in light of two aspects: first, the research questions about the participating teachers' methodological practices and their influence on students' English learning processes; second, Wang's (2009) teaching perspectives along with evaluation.

Instructional Approaches

Regarding the way in which students were taught and organized (Wang, 2009), the teacher-centered approach dominated the teaching and learning processes in both groups since teachers played three main roles: transmitters of knowledge, controllers of activities, and monitors. In addition to these roles, one teacher also assumed the role of a manager (Archana & Usharani, 2016). The student-centered approach was slightly reflected through pair work, group work, and elicitation, that is, "any technique or procedure that is designed to get a person to actively produce speech or writing" (Richards & Schmidt, 2014, p. 191).

Teacher-Centered Approach

Teacher-centeredness was reflected in teachers' lecturing when they explained the grammar topics, gave instructions of the activities, and provided students with advice. Coupled with this, Frank behaved as a manager and Margaret dictated grammar concepts in Spanish and gave commands in order to maintain students' discipline during the explanation of the topics.

Transmitter of Knowledge Role. Margaret and Frank explained the grammar topics mostly in Spanish while standing in front of the class and using the board.

Participants, on their own, regarded their teachers as the prior source of knowledge, as Participant A2 stated: "I think that [the teacher] has lots of knowledge and masters the topics"[1]; and as the one responsible for correcting their errors and grammar mistakes (Interview).

Monitor Role. Both teachers tended to walk around the classroom during the development of activities to check students' progress and to assist them with any questions. According to Frank, for example, when he resorted to this role, he "allowed the students to gain some confidence." Additionally, he stated: "When I explain a topic, a lot of questions emerge and when I approach the students, they are able to ask questions they did not ask in front of the group." As a result, the students benefited from this role because, as Participant C7 explained: "The teacher shows interest in the learning processes," along with the development of the activities (SRI-1).

Controller of Activities Role. In this role, both teachers controlled the completion of activities by reading aloud the instructions and carefully explaining them in Spanish. Although Frank sometimes initiated the activities by revealing the first answers of the worksheets, both teachers concluded by revising students' work and, sometimes, collecting their worksheets. This role limited students to pronouncing isolated words and hindered their interaction during the activities.

Apart from the aforementioned shared major roles, Frank played the role of a manager. His students perceived him as rigorously organized and aligned with the stipulated time for the development of the lessons. Frank's students suggested that the lessons should have exhibited more flexible timing of activities and the topics explained more thoroughly.

Student-Centered Approach

Margaret commented that she continuously elicited students' understanding of a topic by asking questions about it in Spanish. Similarly, Frank explained that he implemented this technique to refresh students' knowledge about grammar rules and structures, in Spanish as well. Indeed, during the six observations, Frank constantly elicited the correct use of grammar rules from the students, while revising homework and introducing new topics. Furthermore, he also elicited the correct pronunciation of isolated words. In both groups, only 10% of the participants answered teachers' questions by providing isolated vocabulary and short phrases, mostly in Spanish.

Pair work and group work were also promoted during the development of classroom activities. Eighty percent of the participants from both groups agreed that this sort of arrangement allowed them to help and support each other since they perceived the third level course as complex, as Participant A5 stated: "Two heads are better than one" (SRI-2). However, 10% of Margaret's students regularly favored pair work and group work because, sometimes, not every member of the group was actively involved; only one or two students completed the activity. Participant A7 explained: "It depends on each person, if they cheat and let the others do everything or if they help" (SRI-2). Therefore, Participant A10 suggested: "[Pair work] is a good method but it should not be used all the time" (SRI-2). Therefore, according to students, individual work was also needed for showing their particular language abilities. Although Frank encouraged pair work when students had long worksheets to complete, he also asked them to work individually because, as he remarked, "during pair work, one student may work more than the other one, which is not equitable" (SRI-1).

Language Pedagogy

Language pedagogy was associated with use of the grammar-translation and the audiolingual methods.

Grammar-Translation Method

The way the two teachers used the grammar-translation method was reflected by deductive grammar,

1 Excerpts have been translated from Spanish.

use of the mother tongue, use of translation, and a focus on reading and writing skills. In both groups, teachers placed a major emphasis on grammar and vocabulary.

Margaret explained the grammar topics traditionally, in Spanish, while practicing eliciting with the students. Afterwards, she would ask them to complete class activities related to the grammar subject and vocabulary learnt in previous lessons. She carried out the explanations explicitly, focusing on the structure of sentences and the meaning of words using the board. Likewise, Frank introduced new grammar topics, explained structures of sentences, carried out activities based on grammar by delivering worksheets, and assigned homework. Participant C6 affirmed that: "As we are taught new grammar rules each class, [Frank] provides us with a sentence for us to compare and implement the grammar rules such as 'used to' or the passive voice" (Interview).

Both teachers used the mother tongue as a medium of instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) and communication when they explained a topic, asked and answered students' questions, dissipated learners' doubts, and corrected their mistakes. Additionally, Margaret dictated grammar concepts and gave commands and instructions in Spanish about the activities. Although Frank clarified instructions in Spanish as well, he tried to use the target language when greeting students at the beginning of the lessons and when giving short commands such as "sit down" or "silence." Both teachers explained that using the target language was a challenge due to students' low proficiency levels. This was corroborated in most of the observations since students from both groups seemed to be confused when the teachers uttered short statements in English during the development of the lessons.

Teachers also translated examples they gave during the explanations, as well as the ones provided by the textbook in its grammar boxes. Although they both asked students to translate isolated vocabulary from English to Spanish, Frank sometimes asked for the translation of short sentences from Spanish to English and assigned homework based on translation of complex texts taken from the textbook units.

Furthermore, as characteristic of the grammar-translation method, Margaret mostly focused on the reading and writing skills given that most of classroom activities were based on reading short texts and practicing students' writing through grammar and open-ended question exercises. Consequently, learners' oral participation was always limited to saying isolated words, grammar rules, and short phrases as answers to activities.

Participants from both groups perceived the use of the grammar-translation method differently. In Margaret's group, 60% of the participants considered grammar-focus classes as boring because of basic and repetitive topics. Conversely, 90% of Frank's participants perceived the teaching of grammar rules and linguistic structures as essential to learn EFL. Both teachers and a few of the participating students agreed that there was a benefit in using the mother tongue and translation in class, as Participant A8 stated, "the use of the mother tongue in class is necessary because I would understand nothing otherwise" (Interview). Nonetheless, 10% of the participants called for the alternation of the target language and the mother tongue in order for them to become familiar with the English language and enhance their pronunciation along with the listening and speaking skills. Participant A1 expressed his dislike in this situation by arguing that: "It is an error to give the lessons in Spanish because we are in the third level of English" (Interview). This evidence shows that participants did not favor the frequent use of Spanish and translation during the lessons.

Audiolingual Method

Frank used the audiolingual method as he focused a great percentage of his lessons on memorization and repetition of dialogues, isolated words, and short phrases (Celce-Murcia, 1979, as cited in Brown, 1994).

After grammar explanations, he always asked students to first listen attentively to the audios of native speakers provided by the textbook. Then, he asked them to repeat the dialogues or words mentally, and finally, to repeat them in unison, in pairs, and individually several times. During one interview, Frank explained that he implemented the above-mentioned sequence in each class due to two main reasons:

> To listen to [the students] in order to know whether they have worked [on pronunciation] at home or not [and] to provide the students with the pronunciation of new words…given that this was the vocabulary that would be addressed in the textbook unit. (SRI-1)

With reference to Frank's participants' perceptions about his use of the audiolingual method, 80% of them agreed with the frequency in which the teacher trained their pronunciation through drilling exercises. Participant C7 stated: "It is good because drilling generates learning" (SRI-2). However, this method was also perceived as monotonous and exhausting. "The teacher spends a lot of time in pronunciation of isolated words, and it is exhausting. We need more participation in class, through conversations, for example" (Participant C10, SRI-2). Bearing this in mind, this method also restricted learners' participation.

Use of Textbooks

The third level of EFL mandatory courses required the use of the textbook World English 2 that featured content from National Geographic and TED talks. The book is built upon the competency-based approach. It comprises 12 units that integrate the four skills as well as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and includes a workbook section at the end.

In both courses, the textbook guided teachers' methodological practices. While being interviewed, Margaret and Frank explained that they planned their lessons based on the contents and objectives provided by the textbook. They adapted classroom activities such as gap filling and matching and reading comprehension exercises based on the book.

In contrast to Margaret's strategy, Frank based the development of the classes entirely on the completion of the textbook units on several occasions. He first explained the topics by referring to the grammar boxes in the book and provided the students with vocabulary related to the units. Then he allowed his students to complete some exercises in the interactive textbook CD-ROM.

Considering the influence of the textbook on their learning processes, Margaret and Frank's students generally perceived this teaching resource as interesting and good. This was because the textbook contained exercises integrating the four language competences, provided students with broad vocabulary, and helped reinforce the topics learnt in class. However, 80% of the participants from both groups thought that the textbook was basic and had a low grammar focus. Frank spent most of the time using the textbook during his lessons, resulting in two students stating that it made the classes monotonous and annoying. Participant C6 suggested that: "It would be good to use teaching resources different from the textbook" (Interview). This suggestion was also given by Margaret's students since they considered the book as boring.

Students' Modality

Taking into account that students' modalities refer to how the language is used through the four language skills, teachers in both groups worked on them separately.

Writing Skills

In Margaret's group, writing was one of the skills she centered the class on. Generally, she first explained the grammar topic according to the textbook and then asked the students to complete written exercises to practice the topic. Participants agreed that she placed a major emphasis on students' writing skill during the development of the lessons. Participant A1 stated:

> Well, at the beginning of the course, [the teacher] had told us: "Well, we are going to work on listening, speaking, writing"...but...we have not seen anything of that, just writing. No audios, nothing like that...just photocopies or activities from the book. (Interview)

Margaret affirmed that she regularly asked students to write short paragraphs and to answer simple questions about diverse grammar topics and vocabulary prompted by the textbook. However, she usually asked students to write such paragraphs at home. She only worked on writing during class when asking students to develop grammar exercises in which they had to fill in blanks and, sometimes, answer reading comprehension questions.

For Margaret, practicing writing in this way may have had a positive influence on students given that she pointed out: "While I was revising some written productions, I got surprised because many of them were really good…and also because coherence was great and there [was neither] spelling nor word order mistakes" (Interview).

Listening Skills

Frank prioritized listening skills through the development of oral comprehension exercises based on gap filling and following the pre-, while, and after listening stages. It was customary for Frank to play audios in which native British people pronounced isolated vocabulary and short utterances, and video-journals with subtitles provided by the textbook. He preferred to work on the receptive skills (listening and reading) since they were "easier to control and maintain students concentrated while reading or listening." This was somehow reflected during observations as students were only exposed to listening attentively to the audios, followed by controlled oral activities in which Frank asked them to drill or pronounce certain words or dialogues. According to Participant C9, "focusing on the listening skill helped us improve our pronunciation, intonation, and vocalization of words." Therefore, 90% of Frank's participants favored a listening emphasis.

Reading Skills

Margaret and Frank implemented reading exercises provided by the textbook. Margaret, for example, asked students to mostly read and answer open-ended questions related to a text, in pairs or groups. Frank also taught this skill when asking students to read the texts that introduced each textbook unit, in order to translate them into Spanish as homework.

Speaking Skills

Although the speaking skill was not sufficiently taught in both groups, Margaret and Frank related its teaching with drilling, reading texts aloud, and asking students for responses or pronunciation. As Margaret's students expressed, they practiced the spoken English language when she asked them to read short utterances or answer grammar exercises aloud. As a result, they perceived these strategies only as an opportunity to pronounce words and sentences in isolation. Frank explained that the principal drawbacks when practicing the speaking skill were the number of students and time constraints that hindered the possibility to provide students with conversational practices. He explained that he would have emphasized this skill only if he had "monitored [speaking activities] with no more than four or five students and with a sufficient amount of time" (Interview).

All the participants from both groups equally called for the integration of the four skills and more practice of oral and writing skills inside the classroom. They suggested developing their speaking skills through discussions around different topics and interaction with their partners instead of focusing on grammar all the time. Participant A4 suggested "making a balance between the two [skills], as much as speaking as writing…and listening. The four [skills]. Taking into

account that pronunciation is not emphasized at all" (SRI-2). This evidences students' need for working on all the four language skills in an integrated way rather than separately.

Error Correction

The way the participating teachers corrected students' mistakes can be considered from three aspects: approach, timing (immediately or delayed), and manner (implicitly or explicitly).

Approach

Margaret and Frank implemented different error correction approaches according to those proposed by Debreli and Onuk (2016). Margaret claimed that she supported teacher-correction and did not encourage self-correction or peer-correction, due to students' low proficiency levels to correct their own mistakes. When learners read their answers from grammar and reading comprehension exercises, Margaret corrected their pronunciation mistakes by reading aloud the correct answers with the appropriate pronunciation to enable students to listen attentively to the accurate articulation of English words and phrases. Moreover, when students approached Margaret's desk to show their written answers from grammar exercises, she corrected the mistakes individually by giving them hints, providing examples, and explaining how to correct them. According to Participant A2:

> [Teacher-correction] seems good in the sense that she gives an example. Well, in my case I dissipate doubts as well. When I don't understand something, she gives me an example, and if I don't understand, I ask her again and she dissipates my doubts. I mean, no matter how many times I ask, she clarifies my doubts again. (Interview)

In this way, 80% of participants favored individual teacher-correction when they approached Margaret to check their answers.

On the other hand, Frank encouraged peer-correction and self-correction since he preferred to let students become aware of their own mistakes. He corrected students' pronunciation through the support of audios. He first listened attentively to students' performances, then asked the whole class to repeat the correct pronunciation. After replaying the audio, the students corrected themselves by listening to the native speakers. If students continued pronouncing incorrectly, he asked other students, in English, to give their opinion on their classmates' mistakes. For instance, on several occasions, Frank asked them: "what do you think, is it correct or incorrect?", and then wrote on the board the mispronounced word or phrase and asked students to pronounce it accurately. Peer-correction was highly favored by most students. They expressed their preference for this practice since they felt less intimidated and less exposed so they could correct their mistakes individually instead of in front of the whole group.

Timing (Immediate or Delayed)

There were a few circumstances in which students used the target language orally in class. Margaret rarely corrected students' speech mistakes. In contrast, Frank emphasized students' pronunciation. However, when interviewing Margaret, she highlighted that she corrected students' oral mistakes immediately when reading a text or answering questions aloud. According to Participant A9, the teacher barely corrected their oral mistakes. As he stated: "Just the other day, when she asked us to read what we had done, and then, I read it and she did not correct me" (SRI-2). This participant also argued that Margaret seldom corrected their speech or pronunciation because there were simply not enough opportunities to speak.

Conversely, since Frank focused on pronunciation, participants stated that there were several times in which the teacher corrected their pronunciation mistakes,

mostly, once they had finished their speech. This was differently perceived by his participants, as 80% of them favored immediate correction. For example, Participant C9 stated: "I prefer the teacher to correct my mistakes immediately because, in this way, I realize my mistake at the moment, and not at the end. Maybe, I can forget it" (Interview). Twenty percent of Frank's students preferred the teacher to correct their pronunciation mistakes after their speech. As explained by Participant C2: "I feel comfortable with the way in which the teacher corrects errors" (Interview).

Manner (Implicit or Explicit)

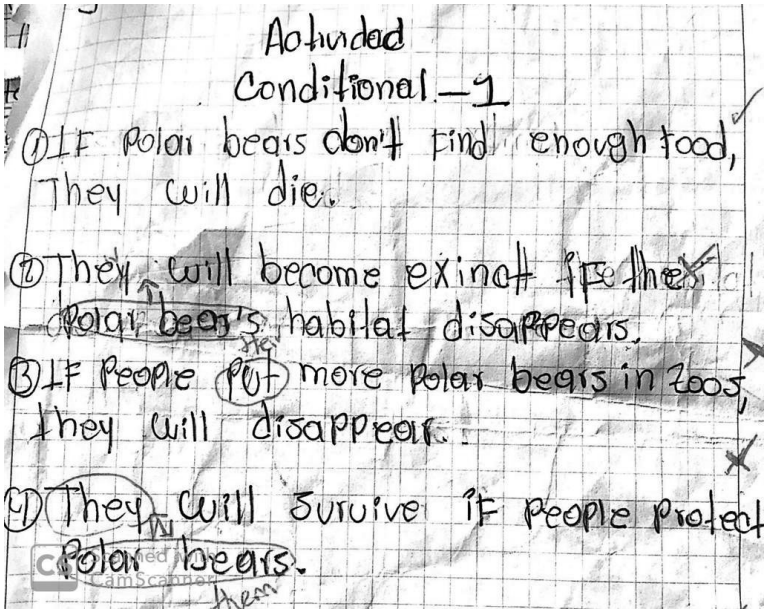
Although Margaret preferred explicit corrections, Frank favored implicit corrections. For example, Margaret directly explained the mistakes she spotted while students completed grammar and reading comprehension exercises. Moreover, in written productions, she corrected students' errors explicitly by underlining students' mistakes (see Figure 1) and specifying whether they were misspellings, misused words, or incorrect grammar.

Conversely, Frank pointed out students' mistakes implicitly. For instance, during students' speech, he encouraged implicit correction when he allowed them to realize their own mistakes. During the development of grammar exercises, he asked students to re-read and review their sentences for them to spot the grammar mistakes by themselves.

Classroom Tasks

In both groups, we identified that teachers favored grammar exercises similarly (e.g., gap filling, matching, and circling exercises). There were a few other tasks characteristically used by each teacher. Margaret affirmed that she asked students to complete gap filling exercises and identify the error in a list of incorrect sentences in order for them to understand the appropriate way of

Figure 1. Margaret's Explicit Correction of a Student's Text



using the grammar topics previously learnt. Additionally, her students confirmed having completed reading comprehension exercises such as "true or false" and open-ended questioning related to the texts; matching exercises, in which they had to connect some concepts with different nouns; and unscrambling exercises.

In addition, 90% of the participants perceived that although the textbook was the usual source for such exercises, they were good but repetitive. They stated that those exercises did not provide them with enough capabilities to be able to practice such knowledge later through speaking or listening activities. Margaret acknowledged having brought different activities to the class when those from the textbook seemed repetitive. During some classroom observations, for instance, she asked the students to answer open-ended questions based on flashcards with first conditional sentences and to complete a crossword based on identifying the correct vocabulary on a text about giving advice. She also asked students to perform a short oral presentation, in Spanish, in which they were asked to briefly explain the modal verbs "must" and "have to."

Margaret's students perceived the crossword, for example, as good, creative, and fun because it included reading comprehension and helped them to learn vocabulary. However, 90% of them argued that this activity was extremely complex because of non-contextualized words. They confirmed that the oral presentation allowed them to learn the topics better since they first had to look for the information by themselves and then present it to their classmates. Besides, it also enabled them to pronounce certain words when giving examples in English. However, during this activity, some students seemed nervous while waiting for the one who would be selected to explain the topic in front of the classmates.

Moreover, Frank's students agreed that classroom activities were based on translating texts, listening to audios about dialogues and repeating them. They also did gap filling, matching, and multiple-choice exercises, and sometimes, reading comprehension exercises such as "true or false" and open-ended questioning. They affirmed that the repetition of audios helped them remember and get used to the correct pronunciation of certain words and identify new vocabulary. However, they occasionally got confused when listening to native speakers' pronunciation since it was sometimes difficult to comprehend. Ninety percent of Frank's students perceived this activity as monotonous due to the amount of time Frank played the same audio. As Participant C7 stated: "He wastes a lot of time of the class on pronunciation…so he says that we have to save time by listening to an audio three times and then repeating it once again, which makes it monotonous" (SRI-2).

Evaluation

The participating teachers stated that the main emphasis of students' evaluation was on grammar and vocabulary. Although their evaluation practices were aligned with the university evaluation system (15% to tests and classroom activities and 20% to final exams for each school term), they evaluated their students differently. Frank usually evaluated the content from the textbook through listening comprehension. For example, students listened to a passage three times and then completed blanks by writing down missing words. Although this practice was regarded as very basic and easy, 70% of his students approved it. However, 30% of them perceived it as difficult because of the complex pronunciation of the speakers. For instance, Participant C8 argued: "It is unfair to evaluate listening when the teacher's pronunciation is way too different from the audios" (SRI-2). This demonstrated their dislike for this evaluative practice. In addition, Frank tried to integrate the four language competences in which listening was evaluated the same way as the tests mentioned before. The competences were: speaking, with a 25-question questionnaire that required students to translate and unscramble sentences orally; reading

comprehension, through true or false exercises; and writing, by means of gap filling exercises.

In contrast, Margaret centered students' evaluation solely on grammar exercises. However, Participant A1 stated that "at the beginning of the semester . . . she told [us] that she would evaluate the four [language] competences" (Interview). She also evaluated students' understanding of grammar through the various class activities (e.g., crosswords, open-ended questions, true or false questions related to a specific text, and gap-filling exercises).

Generally, participants from both groups earned better grades during class activities than the ones of the final exams.

Conclusion

With regard to teaching methodologies, as in Wang's (2009) research, the participating teachers of this study favored a teacher-centered approach. Although in Wang, the teacher centeredness was reflected only in two roles (transmitter of knowledge and controller of activities), in our study teachers played three main roles when teaching EFL.

Teachers were *transmitters of knowledge* and, as characteristic of grammar translation, both of them taught grammar deductively. They explicitly focused on the structure of sentences and translated them into Spanish due to the students' target language low proficiency. This panorama has not changed much since, according to some studies, English language teaching at some universities in Colombia is focused mainly on grammar instruction (Jiménez et al., 2017; Pavas-Amado, 2017; Sánchez-Solarte et al., 2017). Finally, it was also evidenced that they taught language skills separately placing major emphasis on writing and reading comprehension.

Teachers *monitored* their students' progress paying close attention to the way they completed class assignments while interacting in Spanish. They perceived the use of the mother tongue more beneficial and effective for giving instructions, answering questions, explaining grammar, and correcting mistakes.

Teachers *controlled* the way the students responded to classroom activities from the beginning to the completion of them. They frequently used the textbook as the main source of knowledge and upon which to base their class tasks. In a way, this echoed Bastidas's (2017) and Posada-Ortiz and Patiño-Garzón's (2007) studies in the sense that the teaching of English in Colombia has been textbook-oriented. The teachers mostly used textbooks to teach grammar structures and gap-filling exercises. Additionally, one of the teachers favored the audiolingual method as he provided students with several opportunities to practice listening and drilling activities.

Along with Wang's (2009) perspectives, this study examined the teachers' evaluative practices. It was clear that the approaches they followed strongly marked the way they evaluated. With respect to the grammar-translation method, it was common that students translated reading passages. Both teachers evaluated the skills in isolation and included grammar as a key component of the quizzes and final exams. Sometimes, students were even asked to orally translate isolated sentences from English to Spanish and vice versa. As characteristic of the audiolingual method, one of the teachers evaluated listening and speaking on the final exams.

With regard to learning processes, these were largely influenced by the teachers' practices, the use of the textbook, and the use of Spanish as a means of teaching. Although the participating teachers' practices offered the students low involvement in class activities, all the students succeeded at learning different language structures and new vocabulary. Although these courses aimed at acquiring a B2 English level, the participating teachers were aware of the difficulties most of the students faced due to their low language proficiency.

The students mostly played a passive role. However, sometimes pair and group work and elicitation exercises allowed them to actively participate in class.

Although the students generally considered the textbook as interesting and good, its frequent use was perceived as monotonous and boring. This makes sense as the teachers planned their lessons based on the contents and objectives of the book and adjusted classroom activities to it. As for the use of the mother tongue, most students agreed that the use of Spanish in class eased their understanding. This may contradict somehow Quezada-Sarmiento et al.'s (2017) study in which the use of the mother tongue constrained the learning processes.

Further Research and Limitations

We hope that these findings may foster further research on how English is taught to those who do not pursue a foreign language degree. Similarly, findings from this study support the need for more conclusive research that includes students' learning preferences.

We faced some limitations related to participants and time. For instance, a few of the students did not attend some interviews due to their schedules and occupations. Besides, considering the academic semester duration, we feel that the number of observations and interviews we did were a hindrance to describe in-depth the issue under study.

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