An Experience of Vocabulary Teaching in an English Immersion Class in a Public School in Bogotá.

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ABSTRACT

The action research is a model that allows teachers to improve their educational practice from a critical reflection. After making observations in the seventh and ninth grades of the Enrique Olaya Herrera school in the immersion classroom, it was evident that the students had a limited vocabulary that restricted them to express what they wanted to say. For this reason, during four months the research emphasized in three aspects: increasing vocabulary, teach the intelligible pronunciation of the new words acquired, and, finally, promote the participation of students in the immersion classroom. To accomplish these objectives, the communicative and audiolingual methods were used. In addition, guides, songs, and flashcards were used to help students acquire new vocabulary. As a conclusion to this research, the data collected from the quizzes, questionnaires, the interview, and my own observations evidence advancement in students’ learning of vocabulary.
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RESUMEN

La investigación – acción es un modelo que permite a los docentes mejorar su práctica educativa a partir de una reflexión crítica. Después de realizar observaciones en los grados séptimo y noveno del colegio Enrique Olaya Herrera en el aula de inmersión, se evidenció que los estudiantes tenían un vocabulario limitado que los restringía expresar lo que querían decir. Por este motivo, durante cuatro meses se enfatizó en tres aspectos: incrementar vocabulario, enseñar la pronunciación inteligible de las nuevas palabras adquiridas, y, por último, promover la participación de los estudiantes en el aula de inmersión. Para cumplir con estos objetivos, el método comunicativo y audio lingual fueron utilizados. Asimismo, se usaron guías, canciones y flashcards que ayudaron a los estudiantes a adquirir nuevo vocabulario. Como conclusión de esta investigación, los datos recopilados de los quizzes, cuestionarios, la entrevista y mis propias observaciones, evidencian un progreso en el aprendizaje del vocabulario de los estudiantes.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. The practicum

At the Languages and Culture program at Universidad de Los Andes, students can major in the pedagogy of a foreign language; to obtain their degree, they can enroll in a four-month practicum and write a practicum-research report. This report must give an account of how the student teacher intervenes in an educational environment to optimize processes, or solve issues within the classroom while they are supported by their tutor and in-service teachers, and applying the knowledge acquired throughout the major.

The purpose of the teaching practicum is to help the student teacher develop and improve their pedagogical skills. Therefore, the pre-service teacher must observe a class in which they are expected to explore the field of education and, according to it, plan, design, and implement an educational strategy that aims to tackle a problematic situation in the context.

The present document is the report of my personal practicum. I carried it out at Institución Educativa Enrique Olaya Herrera (hereafter I.E.D. Enrique Olaya Herrera or “the school”), in the locality (urban division zone) of Rafael Uribe. This locality is in south-east Bogotá, where 423,000 people live. In this place, the middle-low socioeconomic class predominates, and the majority of the people are at the second level of social strata. Public investment is focused on public events, entertainment activities, cultural displays, sports, and construction and maintenance of recreation areas. On the other hand, the economic activity of the locality is concentrated in "trade (40%), industry (24%), hotels and restaurants (9%), transport, storage, and communications (8%), and rental services (4%)" (Mena, 2008, p. 45). However, despite the great investments made in Rafael Uribe, it remains the sixth locality with the highest unemployment rate (34,000 people).
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I.E.D. Enrique Olaya Herrera is one of the biggest schools in the city. It is a public and co-educational institution that offers morning and afternoon school hours, providing tuition-free education to students at all levels. The school also has an agreement with more than five public and private entities such as the SENA (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje), which offers technical and technological specialties focused on software programming, computer maintenance, sales and services, sports training, musical accompaniment, market management and logistical management; other institutions are Universidad de Los Andes and the British Council. In addition, the school is governed by the standards, competencies, and curricular guidelines set by The National Ministry of Education (hereafter MEN). The institutional organization chart included in the Educational Project of the Institution (henceforth PEI) guarantees decision-making, distribution of tasks, and participation for the benefit of the entire educational community.

According to the PEI, the institution has a social constructivist institutional pedagogical approach (Enrique Olaya Herrera PEI, 2013, p. 14). The premise of the approach is that the people involved, individually and collectively, build their knowledge based on their physical, social, and cultural environment. Thus, the constructivist approach understands knowledge as the result of a process of construction and reconstruction of reality through the interaction between individual and society. Finally, the main purpose of the educational government, through the PEI, is to contribute to the permanent development of all competencies of the students. (Enrique Olaya Herrera PEI, 2013, p. 13). In other words, PEI’s main focus is to implement a quality educational approach that take into account the students’ academic, physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social needs.

The practicum took place in the English immersion class, which is one of the projects on which the school has been focusing to strengthen English learning. Furthermore, the focus is
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especially on social skills related to the coexistence with and the knowledge of other cultures (Cárdenas, 2017). In brief, this project allows students to engage with more English input and practice that aims to help them to obtain more opportunities in their work life.

This immersion class has been in operation for eight years, with a two-year break due to logistical difficulties. Students take this class because they would like to improve their English skills. Hence, there are approximately twenty students in a dedicated room furnished with twenty-three chairs and six tables of different colors. There is a small board and a smart board that, unfortunately, does not work. There are two big tables where the teacher sets a small speaker, and a box with classroom materials such as cardboard and foam. Also, there is a video projector and a computer.

Finally, students voluntarily attend the immersion class one day per week to improve their communicative skills in the English language. In the immersion class there are no more than twenty-five students whose ages oscillate between 12–15 years. The number of students is appropriate for the classroom because its design facilitates their engagement with the teaching. Also, students are dynamic, active, and willing to cooperate in the class, telling the teacher stories about their own lives. However, their interventions are short and mainly in Spanish due to their low level of English.

The observation dynamics were planned with my tutor based on Wajnryb’s (1992) Classroom Observation Tasks and on Richards & Farrell’s (2011) Classroom Observation in Teaching Practice. Throughout my practicum, I attended the class on a regular basis, from where I carried out ten class observations. I attended the class every Tuesday and Thursday and conducted my observations with seventh and ninth grades. During the observations, I sat as an observer without interventions while I took notes related to the learning environment, patterns of interaction, and students’ language level. My tutor and I agreed that it would be useful because it
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would allow me to know the course and decide on my research focus, taking into account the school context. Meanwhile, I further read related theory according to create useful observation tools to collect specific information focusing on the classroom context. On these forms I recorded the specific information I was collecting, and in my notebook, I wrote extra information to add valuable aspects to my observation instruments. From my observations, I tried to find patterns to learn about the behaviors in this specific classroom. At the end of every observation, I reflected on what I had learned from the class to incorporate into my future teaching.

According to the observations that I made, I realized that students had limited vocabulary that restricted them to express what they wanted to say; for that reason, they mostly used Spanish to communicate. Hence, I decided to engage in an initiative to help students enrich their vocabulary, with the hope of facilitating the students’ learning of English, particularly in their speaking skills. Given that the students in this immersion classroom seemed to be already motivated, I was willing to help them overcome their vocabulary limitations to the extent possible; to help them benefit from more meaningful interventions. Thereupon, I felt that it would be interesting to dynamize strategies that motivate students to acquire vocabulary that allow them describe themselves, objects and / or people; this, hopefully, would allow them to communicate with others in English. In addition, according to the immersion class teacher, the intention of the course is for students to communicate ‘something’ at the end of the class. Consequently, my intervention was focused on increasing vocabulary by taking into account the meaning and pronunciation of words because the class focuses more on speaking than on writing skills.

Related to pronunciation, I taught the new vocabulary with its pronunciation because throughout the observations, I noticed that the students had certain problems communicating in English, and for that they spoke mostly in Spanish. Therefore, the purpose was that they acquired
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new vocabulary with its pronunciation so they could communicate in English being understood by other people.

As to the topics and contents of my lessons I was in contact with the head teacher and she informed me the topics of the following week to plan the lesson. Most of the times, the teacher gave me the topic (which was part of the curriculum) and I planned the class taking into account variables such as time, language level, aim of each activity, procedures, interaction patterns, and materials. Those variables allowed me to be aware of each stage of the lesson to accomplish the goals of the class and those of my research. I taught my lessons for forty-five minutes approximately, focusing on topics around aspects of students’ lives.

1.2. Research Question

As I mentioned above, based on my classroom observations, I noticed that students would benefit from more focused work on vocabulary and oral expression. Therefore, I came up with the following research question:

*How can I help students who are attending the immersion class at I.E.D Enrique Olaya Herrera to increase their vocabulary repertoire and its use in oral expression promoting their participation into the class?*
CHAPTER 2: PROPOSAL FOR INTERVENTION-INNOVATION

2.1 What is action research?

According to Burns, Action Research (hereafter AR) is a tool that empowers teachers to find answers to their own questions (2010, p. 2), In other words, it is a self-reflective, systematic and participatory process in which the teacher-researcher and the students are immersed in order to understand the teaching process being carried out in the classroom. This process helps the teacher-researcher improve the educational process. In addition, Freeman (1998, p. 5), defines a teacher-researcher as a person immersed in a process that is different from teaching. Research is linked to questioning, examining phenomena, documenting processes of why certain things happen within the educational context and how these phenomena can be improved (p. 8). In summary, AR aims to produce change and understanding of the issue at the same time.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the core of a language, which is the basis for determining how well a learner speaks, listens, reads, and writes (Richards, 2002, p. 255). According to Hornby (1995), vocabulary is the total number of words in a language with their meaning. It increases and changes as society does allowing humans to describe themselves (As cited in Alqahtani, 2015, p. 24). Vocabulary is important in the practicum process referred to in this paper because its enhancement aims to help students develop their language proficiency in the target language. Harmer (2001) claims that knowing a word implies knowing the meaning, word use, word formation, and word grammar (p. 58). Because of the importance of daily interaction in the immersion class, this research is focused on knowing the meaning, usage, and pronunciation of a
word taking into account segmental features; these are the individual sounds (phonemes) of a language, which are essential in pronunciation.

2.2.2. **Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is one of the main components of a language. It is the production of sounds taking into account aspects of speech such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, and rhythm (AMEP, research center, 2002, p.1). According to Otolowski (1998) “pronunciation is a way of uttering a word in an accepted and understandable manner (p. 7). Therefore, “good pronunciation avoids misunderstanding in communication” (p. 8). In the school context, pronunciation is important because it helps students to achieve a level-appropriate performance in the second language, which in turn would potentially let them have better opportunities in their work life.

Also, a good pronunciation will potentially increase students’ self-confidence promoting their participation inside the class and motivating their own practice at home. According to Pourhosein (2012), communication means to understand and be understood (p. 3). Therefore, focusing on pronunciation would hopefully improve students’ communication skills, giving value to their ideas and thoughts. In brief, learning how to pronounce words in the English language could help students become more proficient in the language, and eventually make them more likely to achieve their personal goals related to second language learning.

2.2.3. **Intelligible pronunciation**

Intelligibility has important repercussions for language teaching and social interaction because it allows students be understandable to a speaker’s audience (Munro, 2010, p. 7, as cited in Levis & LeVelle, 2010). According to Abercrombie (1949) “learners should aim for a ‘comfortably intelligible’ pronunciation rather than for a native-like one” (As cited in Jarosz,
An analysis focusing on segmental pronunciation developed by Brown (1988) who proposed to apply *functional load* in teaching, helps to decide pronunciation priorities (p. 593). Functional load serves “as a means of determining which consonant distinctions have the greatest impact on listeners’ perceptions of accentedness and comprehensibility” (Munro & Derwing, 2006, p. 1). According to this, “phoneme contrasts that have a higher functional load are more likely to cause confusion if mispronounced, and they should be given priority over those with lower functional load” (p. 42). Based on research, pronunciation specialists agree that some vowel and consonant distinctions deserve higher priority than others, for example, Colombian people tend to mispronounce these sounds: /r/ - /sh/ and /ch/ - /h/ that may interfere with intelligible communication (Hudson, 2013).

**2.3. Techniques and materials**

According to Fraser (2000, as cited in Pourhosein, A. 2016), teachers should be provided with courses and materials that help them improve their pronunciation instruction. In view that the intervention was focused on vocabulary acquisition, the use of tangible materials was useful to facilitate continuous learning of English words. For this reason, it was pertinent to use didactic material (preferably printed and/or electronic) that reinforced the acquisition and use of everyday words learned taking into account real contexts. To begin with, guides were key in the incorporation, spelling, and pronunciation of the words learned. Such guides allowed to them to be conscious about the words they were learning. Printed guides were useful because, when we take notes, “we create spatial relations between the various bits of information we are recording” (Wax, n.d.). This happens because when we write, we are encoding the information in different ways, according to our way of catching what we are listening to (Wax, n.d.). In the immersion class context, guides or handouts were very important because the vocabulary learned was always
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written on the board due to the lack of books or other tangible materials. In this context, guides helped students remember things more effectively.

Moreover, certain aspects of the Audio-Lingual Method were borrowed. Experts in this methodology argue that “a language can be taught without translation or the use of the native learner language, but it can be conveyed through demonstration or action” (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 11). Vocabulary is taught everyday through demonstration, objects, pictures, association of ideas, and mimics. This method emphasizes oral communication, for that reason pronunciation is modeled across the lessons. This approach was partially relevant for the development of vocabulary learning because it permitted the repetition of words modeled by the teacher-researcher. Since the audiolingual method is mainly repetitive and formulaic, other techniques from constructivist approaches were implemented to ensure that the role of the students was an active one. For example, students shared the words learned with other classmates through tangible materials such as flashcards that contained characteristics such as the image, meaning, and translation. The vocabulary acquired was connected with the immersion class syllabus that the main teacher had. These materials influenced in an active way the acquisition of basic and daily vocabulary.

As I mentioned earlier, some bits of audiolingualism were useful in some cases, but it was definitely not enough. The communicative approach was also used to take advantage of a combination of practices. This method emphasizes on viewing the language as a social tool (Roberts, 2004). This means that social, cultural, and political factors influence the learning. The immersion classroom focused on allowing students to know about their environment and communicate something about what they learnt. In this context, the communicative approach helped them to connect the four skills (listening, writing, reading and speaking) in order to pursue social and communicative purposes (Roberts, 2004). According to the British Council, “when
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Learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language” (British Council, n.d.). Hence, the communicative approach asserts that learning language successfully comes through communicating real and significant meaning. Due to the importance of students’ communicating in a real-world using vocabulary and an intelligible pronunciation, this method was also engaged for the purposes of this practicum.

2.4. Expected results

By the time that I started the intervention phase in my practicum, it was expected that students would increase their vocabulary repertoire to talk about themselves, things and other people that were familiar to them. Moreover, it was expected that students would improve their intelligibility in the pronunciation of new words. Finally, students were expected to increase their speaking participation in class through the increase of vocabulary in order to communicate better in English.
3.1. Observation and data collection

According to Freeman (1998), collecting data is collecting information that will help respond our research question (p. 98). Data collection is important to process and measure all the information that the teacher-researcher collected. It allows the student-researcher to reflect on the data to go deeper on the understanding and insights about the issue she found (Burns, 2010, p. 54). Consequently, data collection gives value, accuracy, precision, validity, reliability, and consistency to reach conclusions about the results of the study. The type of observation collection measures depends on what the teacher-researcher wants to observe. Freeman (1998) introduces the concept of “triangulation”; this means the use of more than one method to collect data about the same topic in order to ensure validity in the research; it allows capturing different dimensions of the same phenomenon (p. 97).

3.2. Instruments

To determine if my actions would have any effect on any of the objective areas, I used different data collection instruments that helped me reach conclusions. First, field notes were fundamental to keep a detailed account of what happened in each of my classes and how each activity went in terms of vocabulary, intelligible pronunciation, and participation levels. Also, I had valuable information to determine if changes were taking place or if things were simply not working. To accomplish this goal, I took notes during each class and returned to the notes and expanded them once the class was over. This provided me with subjective information of what occurred and what could be re-examined.

Furthermore, I used evidence of students' learning. I did that through the collection of quizzes, homework, and classwork that would potentially demonstrate some advance in the learning of vocabulary. In addition, the interview was made to the teacher. Interviewing the
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teacher helped me to obtain information about students’ pronunciation and students’ levels of motivation to participate in the class from the perspective of a trained and educated professional with experience in the field. Due to her knowledge and experience in teaching English, her insights were really valuable. Moreover, handing students a questionnaire gave me some information about their own perception about their levels of motivation and about their own perception towards their pronunciation. In summary, the teacher offered me information about students’ levels of motivation and their pronunciation, and students gave me their perception about their own pronunciation and how motivated they were to participate during my interventions.

The use of these instruments was meaningful to the study because as Burns (2010) claims, it helps researchers understand and insight about teaching issues to create strategies or actions to change or improve the situation they focus on (p. 57).

3.3. Data analysis

According to Mackey & Gass (2016) “once data are collected, it is necessary to organize them into a manageable, easily understandable, and analyzable format” (p. 112). Thus, it is important to code the data to make decisions about how to classify or categorize parts of data. According to that, grounded theory was used to analyze the data. This is a qualitative approach that implies the identification and integration of categories of meaning from data instead of having a priori hypotheses or ideas about potential conclusions. In other words, it is a methodic analysis that uses different instruments to generate an inductive theory about the research (Glaser, 1992, p. 744, as cited in Murillo, n.d. p. 1).
**CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

4.1. Findings

Based on the data collected and their analysis, some findings emerged from the process of action research / practicum that respond to the research question exposed earlier: "How can I help students who are attending the immersion class at IED Enrique Olaya Herrera to increase their vocabulary repertoire and its use in oral expression promoting their participation into the class?"

One of the objectives of the immersion class is to teach students to have effective communication in English. Therefore, the classes designed during my intervention were aimed at this purpose, so that students had enough tools to describe aspects of their environment. For this reason, there was an important emphasis on the teaching of nouns and adjectives. Also, the pronunciation was reinforced by the continuous repetition of words and the practice of listening skills, where the students could have a native and/or intelligible input to English pronunciation. Also, the activities allowed the students to pronounce the words more than twice until they did so intelligibly.

Moreover, the promotion of participation was taken into account throughout the intervention, generating strategies that encouraged this action in an autonomous way by the students. I believe that, by increasing the vocabulary, students felt motivated to participate actively because they had knowledge of the language and clarity about the instructions of the activities in question. In summary, by teaching vocabulary that students could use and doing activities that would encourage them to pronounce intelligibly, the active participation of seventh and ninth grade students increased.

4.1.1. Efficacy of teaching/learning

The data collected from the quizzes, questionnaires, the interview and my own observations, evidence advancement in students’ learning of vocabulary. Data from post-intervention quizzes reveal that 82% of the vocabulary was learned during the class, which was
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also supported by students’ perceptions of their own learning, where they report that they have learned vocabulary with a rate of 84% of positive responses. This is, certainly, good news.

According to my observations, a reinforcement of learning may be done with students through different dynamics such as the use of flashcards and songs, which helped students relate with the vocabulary learned and consider it useful and meaningful for their real life.

The learning referred to above is also supported by the head teacher at the immersion class, who reported, through the interview made, a perceived gain in the lexical repertoire of the students; this, in her perspective, was useful to the point of being able to build her classes upon and around what I had taught during my intervention lessons. In general, vocabulary learning was visible after my interventions; this by no means implies nor suggests that students had not learned anything prior to my participation as a teacher-researcher in the classroom, but just that my interventions proved useful. This is important to note. However, it is also important to report that the levels of lexical retention that students showed as time passed tend to decrease over time. Although I did not analyze the reasons for this occurrence, I believe there may be a relationship between this phenomenon and various factors that affect the kind of English immersion at the school. Students attend the immersion class only once a week, and this course is not for credit, so their report cards do not show grades from this class; this may give the impression that what is learned is not so important, which is linked to the fact that students do not have homework that promotes autonomous learning at home.

4.1.2. Motivation to participate

There was a phenomenon that was evident in the class throughout my intervention; there was a division between students who knew the language more and those who did not. Therefore, students who knew the language more tended to have a rather more active and frequent
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participation than those who did not. For that reason, the dynamics in which the whole group was included (such as turns) ensured that all students participated in some way.

According to the questionnaires given to the students, 88% of them feel good when they attend the immersion class. 82% of students report to participate in class, and 71% claim to do so voluntarily. After my interventions, 84% of the students reported that they liked to participate actively during class. This increase, though relatively small, is positive when the difficulties inherent to learning a foreign language are taken into consideration. Also, the head teacher agrees with this; during the interview, she stated that on many occasions there was no time to let all the students participate during the class. According to her, this is probably due to my youth, my attitude and my enthusiasm, reporting “closeness to youth, to your youth, it is important for students to perceive other points of view”. This is a flattering observation on my attitude in the classroom because I always tried to give them confidence with a positive stance. Thus, these are factors that I corroborate during my observations which support the conclusion that my positive attitude played a role in motivating the students to participate even more. Also, there were several actions that encouraged the participation in the immersion class, some generated by the main teacher and others planned in my classes, such as pointing at them, giving them a marker to participate in the board or by assigning turns.

4.1.3. Quality of pronunciation

Although pronunciation is a complex aspect to measure, students' intelligible pronunciation improved. At the beginning of my interventions, many of the few words students spoke were difficult to understand, but as I emphasized on the repetition of the words, the students began to show improvement. According to my observations, a great effort was made to reinforce this theme with repetition and listening to native speakers in videos or songs. For this
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reason, the students showed an advance in the pronunciation of some sounds like "i :, ai, j, and ʌ".

According to data from the questionnaires, 72% of the students agree that the pronunciation of the English language is easy, and 80% of the students think that their pronunciation has improved during my interventions, as well as the teacher who agrees that the pronunciation of the students has improved. Interestingly, however, this self-perceived improvement goes together with 70% of the students’ reported agreement with the idea that the pronunciation of the language should be like that of native speakers. This apparent conflict between native-like pronunciation and intelligible pronunciation was not analyzed.

4.2. Applications

The results of the practicum / research process are relevant to my own pedagogical training process, the context where the practicum was carried out, and the discipline of language teaching because it allows future professionals to consider a perspective of a pedagogical process that was carry out in a real context. As to my own pedagogical training process, this practicum experience helped me realize the complex and dynamic reality in which an educational environment develops in Colombia. Therefore, this practicum process made me have a more critical and reflective view of the processes that were unknown to me, in which I had the opportunity to apply the theory that I had learned during my major. In addition, this practicum taught me to be more receptive to the needs of a group of students who are influenced by emotional and physical factors, which I will learn to manage better over time. Thus, this research was relevant to my pedagogical training process because I could be immersed in a real context where I had successes and made mistakes that taught me to be aware of the importance of focusing teaching on the student. Moreover, I had the opportunity to be emerged in a real context
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where I learned not only to apply the theories of language teaching, but also to consider aspects
of the hidden curriculum that were perhaps most relevant during this process.

This intervention process is relevant to the Enrique Olaya Herrera school because it
allows to better know the students who attend the immersion class and generate strategies that
improve the learning process for them. Also, the strategies that were applied during my
intervention can be applied from now on in an attempt to improve the learning experience in the
students. Furthermore, this intervention allows future teachers to discover aspects of students and
teaching in a real context where their needs and interests were taken into account. Eventually, this
can help teachers maximize the effectiveness of their teaching by analyzing and interpreting their
own practice to develop skills that transform the reality of students.

Finally, this intervention process is relevant to future partners Languages and Culture
professionals when they become teachers because this offers a real-life perspective of the
learning process of a language in a context where various factors converge at the same time.
Hence, this short study would allow them to think about the relationship between theory and
practice applied in a public school in Bogotá. Therefore, the application of scientific concepts in a
real context allows them to predict which ones are functional in a specific situation. This in order
to generate results that spread new knowledge for the improvement of educational practices that
take into account the role of the students learning a second language in Colombia.
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Success-contributing factors

The fact that the immersion class was voluntarily chosen helped students engaged actively with the learning of English. Since the beginning, students had the opportunity to choose any activity they like, thus there were more motivated students in the classroom than those ones who does not want to be there. In addition, as the immersion class is a reinforcement to the regular English class, the capacity of the classroom was not higher than twenty-five students. This allowed me to focus on a few students, which also eased the classroom management. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the curriculum is designed to engage students with topics that are related to their own lives. Therefore, teaching English for students’ use it in their life allowed me to teach vocabulary that was interesting and meaningful to students. Also, the infrastructure and resources were appropriate for the class development. For example, the projector allowed me to show some presentations using technology in classes with teenagers. When I did presentations, students saw another way to learn English, not just in paper, but also using tools that they already knew. Finally, the teacher was a useful help for my pedagogical practice because she supported me every time with the classroom management and with the review of the topic I taught. The teacher helped me control the students’ behavior to carry out my classes and she tried to pick up from what I taught to reinforce the learning in students.

5.2. Limitations

5.2.1. Logistical limitations

At the beginning of my practicum process, thanks to the diligence of the general coordinator at the School, I was assigned to a class of tenth-grade students. The English teacher in that class and I had some conversations to get the process started. Then, I visited the class a couple of times in order to carry out my initial observations. Unfortunately, after one week, the English teacher
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prevented me from carrying out further observations, arguing that he had not been provided with enough information. This meant an important drawback in terms of time, and therefore caused a delay in the beginning of my practicum. Also, there were other limitations related to the organization of the students to get into class. First, because of the lack of teacher in the sports areas, the students were distributed in a disorganized way, which made the classes start late. In addition, there were also teacher strikes, which forced to have a few classes cancelled.

5.2.2. Physical/infrastructure limitations

Although the infrastructure in the immersion class was generally good, there were times when physical limitations occurred. One of these limitations was that the room was sunlit, sometimes so much, that sunlight interfered with the picture from the video projector. Also, there were a lot of buses and cars making noise outside that made it difficult to listen to the teacher or to the students. Moreover, on occasions there was not good sound, and the speaker that I had available was sometimes not very useful.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The experience at Enrique Olaya Herrera School was a favorable opportunity to discover and develop pedagogical skills that will be useful in my future as an English teacher. I had the space to be immersed in a real context in which I had to go through different situations that taught me aspects that I had only read about in books. Therefore, I could practice this theory and also learn about myself in terms of weaknesses and strengths and about the importance of knowing my students in order to know their interests and potential behavior. Each intervention taught something new that helped me grow as a teacher.

At the beginning, it was complex to plan my classes because I had not developed the skills necessary to do it. Also, I did not know the students in detail, so I made mistakes that made me realize that teaching is more than just preparing a topic and teaching it. Thus, this practice was forged in the way of teaching which, beyond applying theories for the teaching of a language, is also knowing how to manage the environment in which students develop. In this sense, I believe that teaching must take into account factors that influence a student's learning such as attitude, environment, theory applied to practice, methods, activities, among others.

I learned that it is essential to take into account the needs of the students. At the beginning of my practice, I realized that students did not have the skills to speak English, not because they did not want to, but because they did not have the necessary vocabulary to express their ideas. Clearly, it is difficult for students in four months to learn another language perfectly, and getting students to achieve that was not the goal of this practicum. However, by teaching vocabulary to students, they showed a more active participation as I could observe during the reflections I made after each practice. In addition, during my interventions, students had the opportunity to practice
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the pronunciation of English words, a task that was rather rare in the classroom. Therefore, through songs and conversations models proposed in the classes, the students could have access to the practice of this aspect of the English language.

Finally, by teaching vocabulary and pronunciation at the same time, students developed certain, yet still limited skills in expressing some ideas with the help of conversational models which were applied to real contexts such as talking about their life projects or buying fruits. In general, the practice was positive for me and the students.

In summary, my teaching skills improved during this practicum. I feel more comfortable with the act of standing in front of many students teaching a given topic. Although teachers cannot guess how their students will act because each human is different, teachers know their course and try to understand students to make the class interesting and meaningful for students and for themselves. As it is natural, there are various variables that influence the effectiveness of the planned class, and for that reason teachers have to be prepared to face different issues that can arise, but I learnt that I will continue acquiring those skills through the practice of teaching in real contexts.
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APPENDIX

1. Observation format

MICROTEACHING

Topic:  
Date:  
Course:  

1. Context

2. In general, how did the class go?

3. If I could do something from the class again, what would it be?

4. If I could change something from this class, what would it be?

5. Did the students understand what we did in the lesson, specifically vocabulary and pronunciation? How do I know this?

6. Did the students participate during the lesson?

7. What did I learn from this experience?

8. Was the difficulty appropriate for students? How do I know this?

9. What problems did the students have (if any)?