



From pedagogical mediation and biopedagogical key features towards transcendental changes in TEFL practices.

De la mediación pedagógica y los rasgos clave biopedagógicos hacia los cambios trascendentales en las prácticas de TEFL.

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ABSTRACT

The present article offers a literary review and description of the educational mediation notions and their relationship with the Bio-pedagogy features in education. This description is specifically oriented to the crucial changes in education that have also affected the TEFL practices. In a nutshell, the purpose here is not to portray a teacher's model but to be concerned about some features that would encourage the teaching experience with pedagogical mediations. The bibliographic search method was performed through the ERIC, SCIELO, SAGE, and Editorial Magisterio databases. The exploration was developed under the following stages: familiarization with the content of the documents, preliminary classification, selection and extraction of the most relevant information, verification of the concepts, and synthesis of the information. Pedagogical mediation occurs here when apprentices' emotions and identities become the main pretext to mediate meaningful learning activities attending their second language needs. Finally, this article presents a personal concern about pedagogical mediation in my mediation experience.

KEYWORDS:

bio-pedagogy, Mediation, TEFL, creativity, Colombia, education

RESUMEN

El presente artículo ofrece una descripción orientada a las nociones y cambios cruciales en la educación que también han afectado las prácticas de TEFL y una reseña literaria de las nociones de mediación educativa y su relación con las características de la biopedagogía en la educación. El propósito aquí no es retratar el modelo de un profesor, sino preocuparse por algunos rasgos que alentarían la experiencia de la práctica de cada uno con las mediaciones pedagógicas. El método de búsqueda bibliográfica se realizó a través de las bases de datos ERIC, SCIELO, SAGE y Editorial Magisterio, y se desarrolló en las siguientes etapas: familiarización con el contenido de los documentos, clasificación preliminar, selección y extracción de la información más relevante, verificación de los conceptos y síntesis de la información. La mediación pedagógica tiene lugar aquí cuando las emociones e identidades de los aprendices se convierten en el principal pretext para mediar en actividades de aprendizaje significativas que atiendan a sus necesidades en la segunda lengua. Finalmente, este artículo presenta una preocupación personal sobre la mediación pedagógica basada en mi experiencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

biopedagogía, mediación, TEFL, creatividad, Colombia, educación.

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical approach to the development of teaching is a dynamic process that incorporates new concepts and terminologies, among which mediation stands out, a term used in current educational discourse as a new paradigm that reconsiders the teaching task, where the student appropriates the scientific knowledge built with the teacher's support (Contreras, 2010). This article aims to analyze and discuss the theoretical and conceptual context of Pedagogical Mediation as part of a new Bio-pedagogical approach.

“The pedagogical mediation is a useful tool to help the actors of education to interpret these experiences and realities” (Delgado Alvarez, 2013, p.514). Pedagogical mediation is the treatment and expression of contents to make the educational process possible where creativity, expressiveness, and relationally are the main features of this expression (Gutiérrez, P. F., Castillo, 1993). The teacher, as a mediator not only sets the learning goals, objectives or organizes and directs the pace of the course, thus generating responsibility and discipline. However, they design the learning process-oriented to propose strategies based on interaction so that all the apprentices participate in their learning process. The mediating teacher acts as an intermediary between the contents and the student, offering help to discover the meanings shared through the contents.

Our task as a pedagogical mediator transcends the mere transmission of content. Instead of offering content as “the finished knowledge,” we must offer strategies that stimulate students to assume the process of knowledge construction by themselves.

PEDAGOGICAL MEDIATION BASIS

Before going specifically into mediation criteria, it is essential to understand what this matter is “the act of meditating means to be a conciliator between knowledge and the learner” (Delgado Alvarez, 2013, p.515). Mediation is only achieved by giving greater participation to the praxiological (know-how), ethical (know how to be), and cognitive (know how to know) components of the educator (Belmonte *et al.*, 2016). Going deeper, Feuerstein (1986) came up with the teacher's role, not as a transmitter of knowledge but a coach of apprentices (as cited in Torres, 2005). By the 1990s, mediators were seen to be dealing primarily with disadvantaged adolescents and children (Asmali, 2018). “Pedagogical mediation is the procedure by which the “mediator,” one of the three members of the triad: teacher-student - content, manages to facilitate the resolution of the cognitive conflict between the other two intervening parties.” (Bettendorff, 2004). All pedagogical mediation offers different theoretical and methodological proposals that allow diverse student interactions (Salas-Cabrera, 2017). On the other hand, authors such as refer to pedagogical mediation and scientific knowledge as a fundamental element to develop competencies for scientific, critical, and reflective thinking in students, adequate to the scientific needs of today's society (León-León & Zúñiga-Meléndez, 2019). Most of these postulates agree on the importance of the role of the teacher conceived as a transformer, trainer and facilitator; the mediator is an entity in charge of perceiving the reality of the target individual and not of the target knowledge.

ENGLISH PEDAGOGICAL MEDIATION IN COLOMBIAN EDUCATION

Looking at what Colombian education is within the public and private, and middle and higher education, I can state that there are countless differences in the mediation of learning in each sub-setting. Private high schoolers enjoy greater benefits and resources that allow the quality of pedagogical mediation in the EFL (English as a Foreign language) learning process; however, it is well known that in this type of population, apprentices' needs are taken for granted, that is why we as mediators should call for awareness of selecting activities for them. "They should not only be meaningful for the mediators' teaching purposes but for the learners' motivation and interest" (Torres Vigoya, 2005, p.). Teacher guidance has a limited but indispensable impact on high school learners' curiosity.

On the other hand, English in higher education has meant hard work for most of the English courses with heterogeneous groups of students enrolled in most programs that are not a bachelor's degrees in languages and with little interest in learning a foreign language, which has led to a concern about carrying out new and innovative methods of pedagogical mediation in English learning. CLIL, ESP, PBL, Critical Thinking, and Literacy are in the list of approaches that have been implemented by university language institutes or centers in charge of promoting and ensuring that these future professionals are proficient in English as a foreign language, B1 as a minimum level for professionals from other than English Teaching programs (Decreto No.3870, 2006)

E-learning has also become a reliable source for acquiring important digital literacy and developing online competencies throughout this change period. Teachers have overco-

me this worthy challenge in my profession by creating opportunities and guiding students to take advantage of digital tools and environments in their English learning process.

A tool kit of ideas to mediate enjoyable English learning experiences in the classroom and beyond.

As language mediators, we must constantly try to improve our praxis day in and day out. Here are some challenges I would consider to improve and develop my teaching or be a better English language mediator.

Students' Motivation.

It is difficult to persuade and maintain students' conviction to learn and use English in a TEFL process. (Richards, 2013b)each of which has different implications for curriculum design. Three curriculum approaches are described and compared. Each differs with respect to when issues related to input, process, and outcomes, are addressed. Forward design starts with syllabus planning, moves to methodology, and is followed by assessment of learning outcomes. Resolving issues of syllabus content and sequencing are essential starting points with forward design, which has been the major tradition in language curriculum development. Central design begins with classroom processes and methodology. Issues of syllabus and learning outcomes are not specified in detail in advance and are addressed as the curriculum is implemented. Many of the 'innovative methods' of the 1980s and 90s reflect central design. Backward design starts from a specification of learning outcomes and decisions on methodology and syllabus are developed from the learning outcomes. The Common European Framework of Reference is a recent example of backward design. Examples will be given to suggest how the distinction between forward, central and backward design can clarify the nature

of issues and trends that have emerged in language teaching in recent years. © The Author(s) states that “The construct of motivation emphasized the importance of individual differences among learners (which also include language aptitude, age, and gender)” (p.12). The most important element that affects learning English is the lack of motivation. Learning EFL implies commitment and awareness (Jin, 2014). Students must set goals; they need to dedicate time and effort to succeed. Many students may find themselves in a situation where they have to learn EFL to get their bachelor’s degree and join postgraduate studies in Colombia or an English-speaking country. However, this is an issue that we, as language mediators, should also overcome as students may develop negative attitudes and perceptions or dislike toward learning English.

Designing a curriculum that meets apprentices’ needs.

Each student is different, they learn at different speeds, and each has his or her way of taking content and remembering it. However, as teachers, the challenge arises when we are expected to apply a fixed curriculum to students with very different needs (Finney, 2011). For example, a student who does not learn from grammar prefers frequent oral practice; others learn by reading texts, listening, or solving problems independently. Therefore, it is important that, as language mediators, we provide learners with tools and content that are adapted to their needs, which makes the design of a learner-centered curriculum emphasizing “individual difference.” (Richard, 2013, p.13).

Creativity as an opportunity for Pedagogical Mediators

Continuing with the suggestions given by Richards (2013), creativity brings a novel stimulating environment that allows

mediators to express themselves in different ways (Sandoval-Obando *et al.*, 2020). In this environment, new or unusual ideas are respected and valued. A context of freedom and autonomy to experiment, make mistakes and evolve. Teachers as guides rather than instructors so that knowledge is discovered rather than learned; lots of play; sensory and emotional education; a system of self-correction and evaluation by goals and progress.

“Creativity depends upon the ability to analyze and evaluate situations and to identify novel ways of responding to them” (Richards, 2013a, p.23). As a facilitator, I could positively influence the students’ curious minds by including strategies or tools that should not be only innovative but touch the heartstrings of young minds, encouraging them to stretch their creativity. English as a foreign language is best taught through creative means when students are encouraged to propose varied ideas. Creativity deals with students’ freedom to explore their creative side, which helps recall the ideas reflected as part of the teaching quickly.

We as mediators have the potential to be creative and innovative; biologically, we are creators, but we need to adapt to the environment in which we live since contexts may or may not encourage creativity; in the specific case of administrative institutions’ support (Devía Cárdenas, 2018). Therefore, it is important to focus the teaching-learning process on transmitting information and content and encouraging curiosity, scientific and literary competencies, and problem-solving. Besides storing information, apprentices must learn to innovate, change continuously, try, make mistakes to become better, question and explore. Teachers will be creative if they stimulate learners’ individual potentialities, mental flexibility, originality, inventiveness, new ideas, autonomy, and emotional and social development.

BEING AN ENGLISH MEDIATOR

Being a language teacher is to make communication channels open positively and effectively in their students so that a learner can achieve the goals they have set under teachers' supervision and pedagogical mediation. English teacher profession has become essential nowadays while learning English has become a priority or concern in all social and educational contexts-

In the profile of the mediating teacher Tebar (2003) touches on a crucial issue within teaching: the pedagogy of mediation and the profile of a mediating teacher who organizes the classroom generates simple and enjoyable motivation (Belmonte *et al.*, 2016). Rather than teaching and learning through transmitting and receiving, the pedagogical mediation approach attempts to help learners construct their knowledge, solve problems independently and understand their thinking processes (Fraser, 2006). This concern implies recentering the teacher from being a transmitter of knowledge to becoming a mediator during the teaching and learning process.

BIOPEDAGOGY LEARNING FOUNDATIONS IN PEDAGOGICAL MEDIATION

Biopedagogy is presented as a humanizing paradigm that allows

“the linking of knowledge to life through the consciousness of the living being, in other words, feeling, perceiving, being moved and reasoning that allows us to build the world, the world we want, the world possible for everyone; knowledge and consciousness are linked in the process of life, it is learning in life and living by learning” (Varela, 2000, p. 37).

Consequently, both Biopedagogy and Pedagogical Mediation are proposals capable of mobilizing all educational realities, and the TEFL context is no exception. Therefore, considering Varelas's statements, and supporting the transforming ideologies of the new education culture, a descriptive perspective of the key aspects of Biopedagogy in Pedagogical Mediation is presented.

Autopoiesis

Maturana's work focuses on a term he coined by combining two words from Greek: “auto” (himself) and “poiesis” (creation). Therefore, living beings are molecular autopoietic systems, that is, molecular systems that produce ourselves, and the realization of that production of ourselves as molecular systems constitute living (Maturana, 2016).

According to Maturana, every living being is a closed system that continuously creates itself and, therefore, repairing itself, maintaining itself, and modifying itself. The prestigious Encyclopedia Britannica, which lists autopoiesis as one of the six great scientific definitions of life, explains: “Unlike machines, whose governing functions are inserted by human designers, organisms govern themselves.” For all the above, the being is autonomous in determining what is relevant and what is indifferent in its learning that not only occurs at the brain level but that the conditions of the environment to an individual is exposed, significantly influences this process

Learning could be considered a psychosocial and biological phenomenon involving all dimensions of the human being: mind, body, and emotion (Mendes Santos, 2020). Therefore, our role as educators is more demanding every day. Our biological development requires it, where the cognitive part is present and the emotional part, largely playing a major role in the learning process and considering that we are human beings. We

combine thought and emotions present in all actions (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

Ecological niche in learning

“In fundamental terms, biologists speak of organisms when they refer to a single cell or to a closely spatially interconnected group of cells that operate as a single totality, and they speak of a colony, of a community, or an ecological system” (Maturana R. *et al.*, 2016).

Therefore, when talking about learning, it is not only focused on the school, without paying attention to the fact that we learn in all the contexts we develop. It is precisely one of the demands of the education of the XXI century: to support learning in any context and with different agents that enrich the experiences and learning of daily life (Chu *et al.*, 2017)

The ecological niche is each species’s function within a given ecosystem (Kolb, 2015). We need to broaden the vision of learning: we learn in any case and different ways, being in the street, at home, watching T.V., browsing in social networks, participating in social meetings, sharing with neighbors, each situation leaves us a learning process, so we should not think that the only responsible for teaching is the school, and the only thing to learn is the academic content. Each species or population acts and learns under environmental conditions determined by the habitat and the interaction and presence of other species.

Languaging’s role in learning

“We human beings find ourselves doing what we do at the moment that we reflect about what we do, and as we reflect about how we do what we do, we find ourselves being languaging human beings wanting to explain our living” (Maturana R *et al.*, 2016).

Languaging refers to the intuitive nature and use of human language for its expression, the expression of what is understood through speech, “implicit or explicit.” The expression of what we want to say or feel. The conversations, explanations, reflections, and theories want to give that great explanation of life, speak of our present, culture, and reality.

Although language and emotion are strategies of society to bring together the diversity of individuals, at the same time, as they produce that diversity, they are also biological (or, if you like, biologically social) strategies. Thus, they can be characterized as products that emerge from the tendency of the living to look for more complex ways of cohering the components of a system, maintaining the complexity of its elements. (Garavito G & Villamil L, 2017)

Language gives us a fundamental capacity to carry out our daily activities, especially those involving communication. Therefore, its development starts from birth and throughout our lives; it becomes a means of expressing knowledge and acquiring it.

Natural drift in the educational context

Natural drift refers to the organism’s interactions that adapt to the environment and result from the mutual structural coupling. This theory is based on a neutralist conception, arguing that the way in the lineage members performs their autopoiesis is cultivated, conserved, and consolidated transgenerationally, in a phenotype or ontogenetic life form whose innovation generates the diversification of lineages, derived from their history of interactions (Ortiz Ocaña, 2017).

The teacher operates by guiding his student to operate in self-awareness that takes place as a fourth resource. From the perspecti-

ve of education, Maturana's approach invalidates the traditionalist view that modifying the students' cognition is possible through the pedagogical practice of human logic. Instead, such a change is possible only if the student modifies his or her emotionally accepted pre-masses using the emotion implicit in the didactic interactions with the teacher during the logical and rational conversion (Ortiz Ocaña, 2015).

Dynamic architecture in the educational context

According to Maturana *et al.* (2016) among other, dynamic architecture refers to a medium that changes independently of the organism or individual since organisms move into the medium following different paths that emerge moment by moment. The notions of improvement, progress, perfection, efficiency or comparative advantage refer to the changing educational context throughout history (Alzate-Ortiz & Castañeda-Patiño, 2020); for example, with the emergence of new technological challenges, health crisis as we are living now, we have had to adapt to different media or educational contexts, creating and innovating tools that help us to face new environments.

According to Maturana R *et al.* (2016) among other, this dynamic architecture is a distinct manner of living. Like any other activity, education is loaded with trends, buzzwords, and enough acronyms to create a word search. We are constantly trying to find new ways to support our students, and many times, we are attracted by the next novelty - the next magic acronym that will solve all our problems. Nevertheless, unfortunately, teaching is not that simple; teaching is much more art than science. Formulas do not work because one size does not fit all, does not fit all teachers, and does not fit all students.

CONCLUSIONS

Meeting education challenges has influenced self-critical thoughts about the limitations or competencies in pedagogical mediation that most EFL teachers still have to take up. This fact is one of the main reasons for being assertive and mastering our knowledge, enhancing personal development, acquiring pedagogical mediation skills, and addressing research competencies that solve social, educational problems in work contexts. As facilitators, we should keep working on social impacts achievements that benefit ourselves and the community around us.

Considering the Bio-pedagogical notions presented above, I would like to preface the rest of my sketch by relating that many of the experiences as English teachers are in diverse contexts where livelihood needs prevailed in an unknown cultural system to many learners fundamental motivation to learn English. Thus, while dealing with heterogeneous and socially diverse groups, teachers have had to improvise as mediators, which has involved a dynamic process that requires constant self-monitoring of a set of misconceptions, beliefs, principles, concerns, attitudes, and practices; it is a matter of understanding the identities of individuals as these students come from different historical, social and cultural backgrounds. In addition, factors such as family situations, problematic situations, and emotional states force us to know and understand the learning process of each individual. Thus, pedagogical mediation occurred when apprentices' emotions and identities became the main pretext to mediate meaningful learning activities for their second language needs.

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