



Reflections on the transformative power of language education: exploring strategies for effective teaching and learning

*Reflexiones sobre el poder transformador de la educación en lenguas:
explorando estrategias para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje efectivos*

Fabián García Sarasty

Maestrante, Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia-UNAD, Cali, Colombia

ORCID_0000-0003-4334-5589

ABSTRACT

In this reflective paper, the author attempts to examine my language-learning and language-teaching journey. This reflective exploration delineates an educational philosophy that encapsulates the transformative potential inherent in language education. By accentuating the significance of adaptable pedagogies and learner-centered approaches, the author advocates for a paradigmatic shift in language teaching, emphasizing the transmission of linguistic knowledge and the cultivation of a dynamic, engaging, and inclusive educational environment. Furthermore, the author's educational philosophy diverges from conventional didactic models, highlighting the multifaceted nature of effective language teaching. It focuses on nurturing critical thinking, cultural awareness, and communicative competence, fostering an environment that amalgamates linguistic proficiency with socio-cultural insights. Three proposals are presented to enhance my language teaching process; They aim to foster diverse learning styles, and active engagement, and facilitate language acquisition. This paper is a reflection on the emphasis on the transformative nature of my journey and the potential impact of the proposed pedagogical strategies on language learning and teaching.

KEYWORDS:

acquisition,
Innovation,
Language,
Pedagogy, and
Teaching.

RESUMEN

En este documento reflexivo, el autor intenta examinar mi trayectoria en el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de idiomas. Esta exploración reflexiva delinea una filosofía educativa que encapsula el potencial transformador inherente a la educación lingüística. Al resaltar la importancia de pedagogías adaptables y enfoques centrados en el estudiante, el autor aboga por un cambio paradigmático en la enseñanza de idiomas, enfatizando la transmisión del conocimiento lingüístico y el cultivo de un entorno educativo dinámico, atractivo e inclusivo. Además, la filosofía educativa del autor difiere de los modelos didácticos convencionales, resaltando la naturaleza polifacética de la enseñanza efectiva de idiomas. Se centra en fomentar el pensamiento crítico, la conciencia cultural y la competencia comunicativa, promoviendo un entorno que fusiona la competencia lingüística con perspectivas socio-culturales. Se presentan tres propuestas para mejorar mi proceso de enseñanza de idiomas; Estas pretenden fomentar estilos de aprendizaje diversos, un compromiso activo y facilitar la adquisición del idioma. Este documento es una reflexión sobre el énfasis en la naturaleza transformadora de mi trayectoria y el impacto potencial de las estrategias pedagógicas propuestas en el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de idiomas.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

adquisición,
Innovación,
Lenguaje,
Pedagogía y
Enseñanza

INTRODUCTION

In this ever-changing world of education, language teaching still remains to be a dynamic and multifaceted endeavor. I consider that our role as language teachers should be extended far beyond the sole transmission of words and grammatical rules. I mean that teaching also involves nurturing our students' linguistic abilities, cultural awareness, and communicative competence.

As I embark on a reflective journey, delving into the heart of transformative pedagogical strategies, I intend to explore the backdrop of a relentless commitment to lifelong learning and dedication to teaching. According to my experience, language teaching is an activity that demands adaptability, continuous professional development, and a relentless pursuit of the latest advancements to be applied in our classes. However, this transformative experience has helped me expand my intellectual horizons, foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter, and enhance analytical skills.

It has not been a lonely journey, because this transformation is based on the integration of innovative pedagogical approaches influenced by the works of experienced scholars such as Maturana, Yáñez, Muñoz, Tebar, MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Méndez. These scholars' insights have inspired me to switch from traditional teaching methods to a more holistic, learner-centered approach. My journey towards pedagogical transformation has led me to three innovative proposals: incorporating multimodal learning activities, implementing task-based learning, and embracing technology-enhanced language learning.

This reflective document serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of teachers committed to the transformative power of education and our relentless pursuit of excellence in the classroom.

DOCUMENTARY AND ACADEMIC SOURCES

The transition from traditional teaching methods to a more holistic and learner-centered approach has been influenced by various theoretical perspectives, including the works of Maturana et al. (2016).

They offer insights into the role of mediation in learning, particularly through cognitive mapping. Their work provides a theoretical foundation for the incorporation of cognitive mapping techniques in teaching practices, aligning with the author's approach to fostering deeper understanding and knowledge retention among students.

Tebar's work (2011) discusses the significance of mediation in the learning process, emphasizing its role in facilitating understanding and knowledge construction. The source has influenced the transition from traditional teaching methods to a more learner-centered approach. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) explore the positive impact of imagination and emotions on language learning, which has informed the integration of imaginative activities and emotionally engaging content into the author's teaching practices. The source aligns with the goal of creating a more immersive and enjoyable learning environment.

Méndez's research focuses on the motivational properties of emotions in foreign language learning. It has contributed to the author's approach of acknowledging and addressing emotional aspects of learning, this helps create a supportive and motivating classroom atmosphere, and encourage active student participation.

As for Devia-Cárdenas (2018), his work introduces a reflective perspective on biopedagogy in learning processes, emphasizing self-reflection and critical analysis of teaching

practices for continuous improvement. The author has applied this approach to identify areas for growth and refine bio-pedagogical strategies, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness.

Mayer's Multimedia principle (2009) is referenced to support the proposal of incorporating multimodal learning activities. It highlights the effectiveness of using words and pictures together for learning, which aligns with the goal of creating a more engaging and holistic language learning experience.

Additionally, Willis' work (1996) is cited to support the proposal of implementing task-based learning. This source emphasizes the benefits of using tasks that simulate real-world communication, promoting language acquisition and developing practical language skills.

Kress's concept of multimodality (2003) is referenced to underscore the value of offering learners opportunities to make meaning through different semiotic resources, this contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of language. Finally, Warschauer and Healey (1998) are cited to support of the proposal to implement technology-enhanced language learning. It emphasizes the role of technology in providing opportunities for interaction with the target language, access to authentic resources, and personalized learning experiences.

In incorporating these sources, I intend to strengthen the credibility of their ideas and align them with established pedagogical principles and findings.

In incorporating these sources, I intend to strengthen the credibility of their ideas and align them with established pedagogical principles and findings. In addition, it shows

that the proposed teaching strategies are grounded in sound educational theory and research, which make them more likely to be effective in enhancing language learning outcomes.

DISCUSSION

I am aware of the long road I have ahead of myself when it comes to changing and adapting my teaching strategies, that is why I am planning to restructure my classes with these proposals:

PROPOSAL 1: INCORPORATING MULTIMODAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In order to promote a more engaging language learning experience, it is important to incorporate multimodal learning activities. These activities use different modes of communication, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, to adapt to different learning styles and enhance language acquisition. As noted by Mayer (2009), Multimedia principle suggests that students learn better from words and pictures than from words alone. By integrating videos, interactive online exercises, and hands-on projects into the classes, my students will be able to engage with the language and develop their linguistic skills in a holistic manner.

This approach encourages self-expression, creativity, and critical thinking, which in turn will produce more effective language learning outcomes. I am sure that this proposal will allow my language students to engage with language in various contexts, and their comprehension, expression, and overall language proficiency will increase.

PROPOSAL 2: IMPLEMENTING TASK-BASED LEARNING

Willis (1996) states that tasks provide opportunities for learners to use language

for genuine communicative purposes. Task-based learning promotes language acquisition through real-life, meaningful tasks that simulate authentic language use. If I give my students tasks that reflect real-world situations, they will feel motivated to apply their language skills in practical contexts.

By implementing interactive group projects, role-plays, and problem-solving activities, my students will develop their linguistic abilities and also, enhance their collaborative and critical thinking skills.

I hope that this proposal will allow my students to develop practical language skills and their ability to apply language knowledge in real-world contexts.

In order to promote a more engaging language learning experience, it is important to incorporate multimodal learning activities. These activities use different modes of communication, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic,

PROPOSAL 3: INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LANGUAGE LEARNING

This is the best moment of the digital age, integrating technology into language learning may increase pedagogical mediation. The implementation of online resources, and language learning apps will allow my students to access a wealth of authentic materials, interactive exercises, and language exchange opportunities.

I support the idea that technology allows for personalized and adaptive learning experiences, which eventually leads to self-paced progress. As stated by Warschauer and Healey (1998), technology can provide

opportunities for learners to interact with speakers of the target language and access authentic texts.

Technology offers a wide range of tools that can enable students to practice language skills, access authentic resources, receive immediate feedback, and collaborate with peers. This makes language learning more accessible, personalized, and motivating for both teachers and students.

I consider that the three proposals mentioned above aim to improve my pedagogical mediation processes in language teaching. By implementing multimodal learning activities, task-based learning and technology-enhanced language learning, I can promote a more engaging, and effective language learning experience.

In my view, one of the primary outcomes will be higher language proficiency of my students. Incorporating multimodal learning activities, such as the integration of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements will allow students to engage with language in diverse contexts. According to Kress (2003), this finding aligns with the notion that learners benefit from making meaning through different semiotic resources.

As mentioned in Proposal 2, real-life and meaningful tasks that simulate authentic language will empower students to apply their language skills in practical contexts. Through interactive group projects, role-plays, and problem-solving activities students will develop linguistic abilities, and enhance their collaborative and critical thinking skills. This outcome is in line with Willis' research (1996), emphasizing the importance of tasks for genuine communication and language acquisition.

Incorporating technology-enhanced language learning has revolutionized the learning experience. The digital age has provided

students with a variety of opportunities for personalized and adaptive learning experiences, enabling self-paced progress. The integration of online resources, language learning apps, and interactive exercises, as mentioned in Proposal 3, will make language learning more accessible, personalized, and motivating for both teachers and students. This finding aligns with the insights of Warschauer and Healey (1998) on technology's potential to facilitate interaction with native speakers and access authentic texts.

These proposals are grounded in theoretical foundations and personal teaching experience, and represent a significant step forward in my pedagogical approach.

Incorporating technology-enhanced language learning has revolutionized the learning experience. The digital age has provided students with a variety of opportunities for personalized and adaptive learning experiences

LIMITATIONS

While the proposals outlined in this article hold the promise of enhancing language teaching methodologies, I am convinced that it is essential to acknowledge their limitations.

For instance, one significant limitation lies in the availability of resources required to make the proposed changes effectively. The incorporation of multimodal learning activities, task-based learning, and technology-enhanced language learning demands access to various materials, tools, and technologies. Unfortunately, in our country not all educational institutions have the means or infrastructure to support these initiatives thoroughly.

Usually, when innovative teaching methods are introduced, an adaptation period for

both teachers and students is necessary. Resistance to change, especially in established educational settings, could hinder the proper implementation of these proposals. It is important to keep in mind that transitioning from traditional teaching methods to a more holistic approach may face some resistance and require ongoing support and training.

Educational institutions have diverse students with varying learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds. Although, the proposed strategies aim to create inclusive learning environments, it is important to keep in mind that not all students may respond uniformly to these approaches. Adapting instruction to meet each individual needs could be challenging.

In our current world, technology goes hand-in hand with education, therefore ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, digital access, and equity become paramount. Ensuring that the incorporation of technology into language learning will not exacerbate the existing disparities is a complex issue that requires careful attention.

Being aware of these limitations is essential for teachers and institutions, as they should address these challenges with careful planning, ongoing assessment, and a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of students. After all, language education is a dynamic field where continuous reflection and adaptation are essential to meaningful progress.

PROPOSED FUTURE LINES OF RESEARCH

A critical area for future research involves empirically validating the effectiveness of the proposed teaching approaches. We know that language education is often influenced by cultural and contextual factors. Comparative studies across different cultural and linguistic contexts can shed light on the adaptability and effectiveness of the proposed approaches.

Such research could explore how these strategies are received in diverse settings and if any modifications are needed to ensure cultural relevance.

Technology-enhanced language learning is a significant component of the proposed approaches. Research should also explore issues of digital equity. Research on how technology can be leveraged to bridge educational disparities and provide equal learning opportunities for all students is a pressing concern.

Research on how technology can be leveraged to bridge educational disparities and provide equal learning opportunities for all students is a pressing concern

Additionally, given the emphasis on continuous professional development in my reflection, research should delve into the impact of ongoing teacher training on the successful implementation of innovative teaching methods. This could involve case studies of teachers who have undergone training in these approaches and an examination of their pedagogical growth.

By proposing the integration of multimodal learning, task-based learning, and technology-enhanced language learning, this work offers

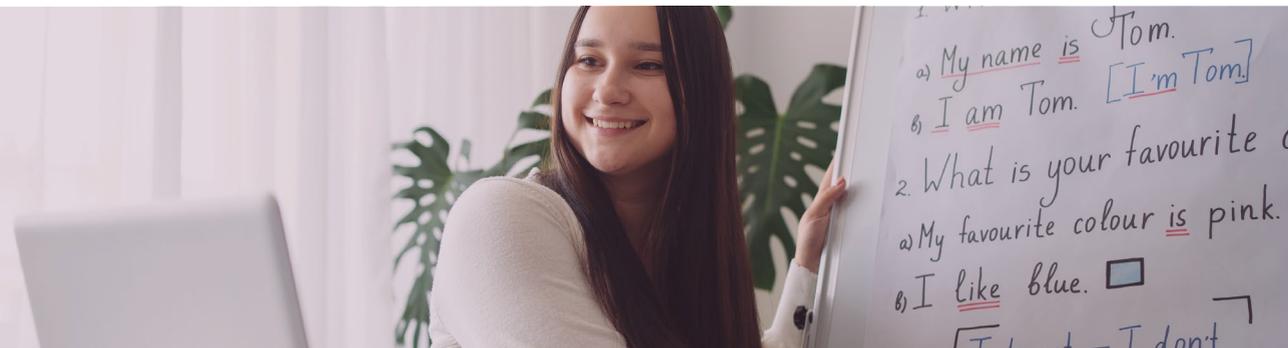
innovative teaching methods that can enhance language acquisition and engagement. These approaches align with the evolving landscape of language education.

The recognition of the need for cross-cultural comparative studies highlights the importance of considering cultural factors in EFL education. This contributes to a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to teaching languages.

The acknowledgment of the role of ongoing teacher training in implementing innovative approaches emphasizes the significance of professional development in the field. This can catalyze discussions and initiatives focused on enhancing teacher preparedness and pedagogical skills.

In conclusion, this reflective journey, although limited in certain aspects, lays the foundation for future research and development in EFL education. By addressing its limitations and following the proposed lines of research, it is possible to create more effective and inclusive language learning environments that benefit both teachers and students.

The recognition of the need for cross-cultural comparative studies highlights the importance of considering cultural factors in EFL education.



REFERENCES

- Amaya, T. S. (2014). El cuidado esencial: Una propuesta ética de actualidad. In *Quaestiones Disputatae: Temas En Debate*, 6(12). <http://revistas.ustatunja.edu.co/index.php/qdisputatae/article/view/261>
- Bleckner, J. (Director). (2011). *Beyond the blackboard* [película]. Hallmark hall of fame. <https://youtu.be/PzEBGuofD5Q>
- Castillo, I. (2013). La mediación biopedagógica desde una perspectiva ética: Ethical Perspective of Biopedagogical Mediation. *Revista Electrónica Educare*. (pp. 111-121). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262738831_La_mediacion_biopedagogica_desde_una_perspectiva_etica
- Chojak, M. (2019). Neuropedagogy as a Scientific Discipline: Interdisciplinary Description of the Theoretical Basis for the Development of a Research Field. <https://lumenpublishing.com/journals/index.php/brain/article/view/5778>
- Devia-Cárdenas, J. (2018). La biopedagogía: una mirada reflexiva en los procesos de aprendizaje. *Praxis & Saber*, 9(21), pp.179–196. <https://doi.org/10.19053/22160159.v9.n21.2018.7862>
- Kress, G. (2003) Multimodal design, learning and cultures of recognition. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1096751611000947>
- MacIntyre, P. & Gregersen, T. (2012). Emotions that facilitate language learning: The positive-broadening power of the imagination. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 2 (2), pp.193-213. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1135856.pdf>
- Maturana, H., Yáñez, X., & Muñoz, S. (2016). Cultural-biology: systemic consequences of our evolutionary natural drift as molecular autopoietic systems. *Foundations of Science*, 21(4), 631-678. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9317857/>
- Mayer, R. E. (2009). *Multimedia learning* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press <https://ctl.wiley.com/principles-of-multimedia-learning/>
- Méndez, M. (2011). The motivational properties of emotions in Foreign Language Learning. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*. 13(2). <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/3057/305726661004.pdf>
- Tebar, L. (2011). Aportaciones del paradigma mediador a la función docente (217- 263). *El profesor mediador del aprendizaje*. Editorial Magisterio. <http://bibliotecadigital.magisterio.co.bibliotecavirtual.unad.edu.co/libro/el-profesor-mediador-del-aprendizaje-0>

Warschauer, M., & Healey, D. (1998). Computers and Language Learning: An Overview. *Language Teaching*, 31, 51-71. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444800012970>

Willis, J. (1996). A framework for task-based learning. Harlow: Longman. https://www.academia.edu/11696134/A_Framework_for_Task-Based_Learning

