The challenge of learning EFL teaching
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> La ingente cantidad de publicaciones que día a día aparcecen en el mercado prometiendo resultados seguros en el aprendizaje de la LE no hacen sino evidenciar la buena salud de la enseñanza en este campo.
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> En línea con este programa, el profesional de la enseñanza que se demanda en nuestros días tiene ante sí nuevos retos que hasta ahora ni se plantesban. Es por ello que, durante su proceso de formación, los futoros docentes deben desarrollar no sólo una serie de competencias en la lengua a enseñar, sino que habrán de desplegar igualmente una serie de actitudes y valores que les permitan sintonizar con su alumnado y facilitarles así su aprendizaje.
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> Para ello, desde nuestra perspectiva, es fundamental que los futuros profesores aprecien el valor de la **reflexón sistemática** sobre su quehacer de docente cotidiano, como la estrategia más idónea que les posibilitará una constante efectividad en su tarea. El hecho de incorporar la reflexión como una faceta constitutiva adicional de su responsabilidad profesional supondrá encaminarse hacia una permanente revisión y puesta al día en su modo de actuación, y le facilitará, así mismo, una progresiva mayor sintonización con las necesidades e intereses de sus alumnos.

1. APPROACHING THE PATH FOLLOWED BY FL TEACHING

Due to the lack of an overwhelming success on the part of any of the methods adopted to implement FL teaching throughout history, countless efforts have been made to locate and describe a methodological approach to FL teaching able to bring about the most effective results in learning. The thing is that the search for effectiveness has been permanent in FL teaching, maybe taking for granted a certain correspondence between teaching and

learning. Notwithstanding this, trying: " ... to establish cause-effect relationships between specific teaching activities and specific learning outcomes" (Prabhu, 1995: 62) is something certainly complex. In fact, whenever a teacher is teaching, s-/he can hardly be sure enough of the "exact quantity of learning" (so to speak) that is actually taking place, given the difficulty in capturing evidence of learning in a truly objective way.

This difficulty in establishing objective and explicit correspondences between certain types of "teaching activities" and "learning outcomes" derives from the essential difference between the nature of both: whereas the activity of teaching is "physical" and, as such, it can easily be planned, observed or controlled, on the contrary, the actual process of learning is a mental one and consequently it can hardly be observed, controlled or even noticed while it is taking place. Despite it, it is noteworthy, in this regard, that many insights have already been gained, and we now know that students taught under the guidelines of certain sets of class procedures do achieve better results in learning than those others who have received a different sort of instruction. Invaluable innovations have been introduced in the world of ELT as the result of intense discussions concerning syllabus design, materials, classroom practice and learners' performance. All these have brought about a new attitudinal approach towards FL teaching nowadays. For example, we can state that fortunately we find ourselves nowadays far from those previous methodological proposals which regarded the whole operation of learning a language as a simple "lineal process", consisting just of accumulating knowledge "about" the target language. That view assumed that language acquisition was a mere task of "piling bricks one on top of the other", as if "linguistic knowledge" were enough in order to develop the "ability to use that given language". The underlying belief was that language could quite easily be segmented and divided into little bits; "learning a language" was thus a question of progressively accumulating those "bits".

This has to do with the regrettable and long prevailing neglect of the role of language as a vehicle of communication in favour of a teaching of languages which has concentrated mainly on a language-as-product view. What has it implied? Very simple: students have been made aware of the main aspects of the code of the language in question (vocabulary items, syntactic rules, phonological and morphological features) without having enjoyed at the same time with much practice in communicative exchanges or negotiation of meaning. Terrible neglect! Needless to say, as students

failed to experience how to encode and decode messages, how to express their intentions, or how to interpret their interlocutor's speech, it was really difficult for them to become ordinary users of the language they were studying.

However, from now onwards, teachers share a more eclectic view towards the whole set of activities, tasks and operations that, are to be seen as essential for the acquisition of a FL under instruction; among them, we would like to spotlight three as the most outstanding foundations of the approach currently at issue:

1. the provision of an essentially communicative environment in class,
2. special attention to help students become more effective FL learners, and to develop their autonomy in FL learning,
3. teachers' organisational skills and professional on-going development.

2. EFL TEACHING NOWADAYS

2.1. Providing learners with communicative experiences in class

We are aware that "It is difficult to make any statement which is always true about language teaching" (Lewis & Hill, 1985: 8). There are, however, certain principles generally assumed in the world of FL teaching. Today we know that the main purpose of learning a new language is acquiring a tool by means of which individuals may eventually be able to interact: "Real success in English language teaching and learning is when the learners can actually communicate in English inside and outside the classroom" (Davies & Pearse, 2000: 15). This, in itself, means an important step forward if we compare this objective to those ones attained in the past. Mere accumulation of knowledge about language, in itself, makes no sense, if it is not put at the disposal of a truly communicative use.

After all, what a communicative approach to FL teaching does is to set clear and attainable objectives for learning the language in terms of communicative competence1. This will require a progression in the development towards full ability to perform through the target language: "The object in teaching a language [...] is to enable the learner to behave in

such a way that he can participate to some degree and for certain purposes as a member of a community other than his own" (Corder, 1973: 27).

Then, in order to achieve this aim, most researchers suggest the promotion of genuine and meaningful communicative encounters in class2, together with the provision of manifold tasks in class to involve students in different sorts of situations that they will have to solve by using language as spontaneously as possible.

Against the cheerful and naive assumption that, in the past, posited a natural development of the communicative skills (as if they could safely be left to get on by themselves), there has been recently an increasing concern for identifying explicit ways of developing both the spoken skill and the listening ability in the FL class. In this sense, it is currently agreed that in order to develop the competence to intervene in communicative exchanges by means of any language, experience with language in use becomes an essential prerequisite. Is there any other way to learn how a language operates? Being in a vacuum, with no direct contact with the communicative facet of the language will make no good to students. This realisation has made researchers state that nowadays: "Communication is at the heart of modern ELT" (Edge, 1993: 17).

According to this basic tenet, in order to be able to produce target language utterances eventually, learners will have to be equipped with a vast array of input first. They, obviously, need models to learn from. Thus: "The fundamental idea is, then, that as much language as possible serving as many functions as possible should be presented by teachers in the foreign language" (Abello, 1995: 9-10). The organisation and management of the classroom itself obviously may supply lots of opportunities for using the FL in a very immediate and real situation. This provision of input will hopefully trigger the students' noticing of how the target language works, and this very awareness may mean the starting point of a whole process that, with the passage of time and accumulated experience, will enhance the students' own production in the L2. It is reasonable to believe that if these parameters are complied with, students will eventually become active interlocutors of the language under study.

Though undoubtedly invaluable, teacher talk in itself is not enough. Hence, in order to provide students with a myriad of input, teachers should

neither neglect, nor underestimate the additional usage of recorded material, because it will certainly provide students with a much wider variety of models (accents, rhythms, styles, etc.) to learn from. This is something necessary if we really want the students to be ready to cope with the different idiolects they may find outside class, in the real world. As we see, the "quantitative" parameter is regarded as something really important when considering the deployment of the oral component of the competence in any language. In fact, it has been explicitly recognised that: "The mere quantity of listening the learner does is of importance" (Madrid & McLaren, 1995: 40).

Not only should teachers provide students with input, but they should equally focus their attention and devote class time to the promotion of other activities which are extremely important to help students develop useful strategies for their survival in communicative encounters through the target language, such as conventions for turn-taking, negotiation of meaning or paraphrasing, just to mention the ones that most frequently occur.

As our main focus in this current study is the process pre-service FL teachers should undergo to become effective professionals, the key issue at this point is to consider that prospective teachers should become aware of the importance of re-creating communicative encounters in class. The challenge for teachers in this regard is to develop an ability to cope with something as multifaceted as communication is. Despite the claim so often made that communication is something spontaneous in its own nature, pre-service EFL teachers should learn ways to provide students with different situations so that they will approach the new language as communication, not only as a system of rules. It seems fully pertinent at this point to wonder whether native teachers enjoy an advantage in this regard. If so, can non-nativeness be offset somehow?

2.2. Paying attention to the actual environment and conditions for learning

The new tenet that FL learning will be the result of the students' own engagement in what takes place in their immediate environment implies paying attention to the conditions of the class. The context around the learner does matter, this seems to be beyond any doubt. It entails not only paying attention to the material conditions, but also to: "other, less tangible, conditions such as opportunities for learners to participate in class, and an atmosphere

in which they feel motivated to learn" (Davies & Pearse, 2000: 16). Then, learners must be actively involved in different sorts of tasks and all kinds of communicative situations (re-)created in class. An atmosphere of interaction must surround students, this is obvious. But it is equally important that students perceive such an atmosphere as a relaxed one, so that they can feel free to participate. Anxiety would prevent students from wanting to participate.

Not only should the students perceive the environment around them as relaxed, but as a supportive one as well. The reason is that their inter-language is still "on its tiptoes", so they need to leave behind the negative feelings that may derive from making mistakes3 and overcome the inhibitions that may appear because of their non-exhaustive knowledge of the L2. It is important that they find themselves motivated and confident enough to take risks and make their own combinations in the target language. In other words, the students must want to learn. Motivation is not only invaluable, but also almost a requisite. The effort required in order to acquire a language is really demanding.

Harmer (1991: 3) states that: "Motivation is some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of an action". Motivation makes us perceive something as appealing and would push us to do anything in order to attain it. Though "in an ideal teacher's world, students would enter the classrooms admiring the target culture and language, wanting to get something out of the L2 learning in themselves, and thirsting for knowledge" (Cook, 1991: 99), in practice, many students do not bring the desired motivation to class. That means that teachers have to devise ways to create or instil such a motivation in students, mainly due to the realisation that "the key to learning is motivation" (Edge, 1993: 15), i.e., some learners do better than others simply because of their motivation.

Also in relation to the actual conditions of each particular class, all teachers must necessarily take into account their students' personalities too, given the potential variety to be found among them:

> "All learners are different. No two individuals have the same knowledge, or skills, or expectations or any other thing. [...
>] Learners are also influenced by their age and their educational, social and cultural background, which they may or may not share with their fellow students or teacher" (Edge, 1993: 9).

All these differences will determine different ways to tackle learning: different paths to learning, different rates of acquisition and different learning styles, as well. For example, if students are shy or self-conscious, they will quite likely show reluctance to take part in oral interaction in front of the whole class. Teachers will have to implement certain techniques, such as group-work, to help students decrease the level of anxiety they may feel in class. In fact, in a class of, say, 25 students, in which a lesson is being taught, we could think of it as 25 different lessons being received, given the astonishing variety in characteristics and backgrounds students may have. What is expected from the teacher in each case will accordingly be different.

We must reflect upon FL teachers education as this particular issue is concerned. What can teachers do to attain effectiveness in this regard? Prospective teachers should be made aware that learners are very different among themselves and so their performance will have to satisfy different needs in each case. Is there a recipe to learn to cope with it successfully?

2.3. Training learners to become better learners

From the perspective mainly assumed these days, learners stop being thought of as the "passive recipients" of what happens in their immediate environment (i.e., in their FL class) but for learning to take place, students must actively engage and participate in the whole operation of language development. Accordingly, the target language knowledge they will eventually acquire is no longer regarded as something "inherited" from the teacher, but rather as something to be constructed by the students themselves. From this perspective, for language to be acquired, learners will have to build up their own knowledge (intake) meaningfully and progressively through the activation of different mental processes and with the help of certain strategies that should accordingly be properly deployed. The belief that instruction (input) could straightforwardly become output is no longer tenable.

However, not all students build their interlanguage at the same pace. This, together with unavoidable constraints (such as, for example, the limited amount of class time allotted to learning the FL) might impede effective learning. This realisation has made current research suggest that it is necessary to devote class time to help students become aware of the fact that certain attitudes and/or behaviours on their part may bring about more effective results. The idea is guiding students so that they can learn better.

With this premise in mind, in recent years, emphasis has been placed on training students to become better learners: "Learner training is vital if students are to achieve their full potential as learners. In its different forms it encourages them to think about their experiences, discuss them with the teacher and take action to make the whole process more effective"(Harmer, 1991: 151). Learner-training leads straightaway to the idea of "autonomous learning", according to which students progressively take on responsibility and maximise their opportunities to learn. In this sense, it is generally agreed nowadays that "the students must be encouraged to develop independence inside and outside the classroom" (Cook, 1991: 106).

In order to make learners learn to learn more efficiently, teachers will have to pay special attention to three areas, mainly: language awareness, personal assessment and learning strategies.

Seeing things in this way, it becomes apparent that nowadays the FL teacher is no longer viewed simply as a mere conveyor or supplier of information related to the target language. Surely in the past, effective FL teachers were only required to have developed "linguistic competence", and also to have received proper training regarding classroom procedures. Nowadays the scope of FL teacher performance is more comprehensive and also more demanding: teachers should make students competent users and also help them learn more efficiently and thus becoming an effective learner trainer is a new requirement for teaching professionals. Consequently, the process of education prospective teachers should go through is considerably more challenging.

2.3.1. Language awareness

It is important to make learners notice the way in which language is used and how it operates. It is assumed that students' awareness of the "organic development" of the 2LA process will help them become more effective when tackling L2 learning. After all: "The more students understand about the process of learning the foreign language, the more they will be able to take responsibility for their own learning" (Lewis & Hill, 1985: 18). One way of developing students' awareness about the target language is simply to ask students to do an exercise in which the topic being dealt with is "language", exactly the same as they do exercises about some other topics (leisure time activities, films, shopping, festivals, ...). The pay-off is that as

students complete the activity, they get involved in studying closely the way in which the target language works, and thus become more and more aware of its inherent characteristics, as a result of the close study they engage in. This will be invaluable for learners both when monitoring their own production in the target language, and, also while inferring target language speech. As we see, language awareness contributes to develop students' autonomy, as they are able to "notice more" when they are engaged in using the language.

2.3.2. Students' personal assessment

In order to support students in the process of becoming more effective learners, teachers should also make them reflect upon the kind of learner they are. Once they know their learning profile, students will be able to disclose how to achieve better results in learning.

The point of departure in all this process is the stage in which students reflect upon their own learning behaviour: whether they get good results in grammar tests, whether they have good memory for new words, whether they hate making mistakes, whether they enjoy being in class, etc. After trying a quiz with questions such as these (in which students are simply required to tick that option which reflects most accurately their learning habits), learners are given a score, and, according to it, they have their answers evaluated.

The ultimate purpose of this kind of activities is to gain effectiveness, because learners may use the insights they get after having had their own learning behaviour assessed to change (or abandon, if necessary) those learning habits which have proved to be unrewarding for their learning.

2.3.3. Learning strategies

In accordance with the proposal to train students to learn in a more effective way, teachers should equally encourage their students to deploy learning strategies. When methodologists and FL teachers talk about "learning strategies", they refer to: " ... a choice that the learner makes while learning or using the second language that affects learning" (Cook, 1991: 103).

Strategies are associated with a considerable wide range of enabling learning actions and behaviours of different sorts (learning habits, attitudes,

mental operations or even approaches towards the FLA process) with a positive triggering effect. It is firmly believed that promoting the development of learning strategies in students guarantees the achievement of a higher quality of their learning. Once strategies have been deployed, learners can transfer them to other moments and situations, facilitating, in this way, the learning process. We see to what extent the deployment of strategies is consistent with the tenet of learning to learn. Thus, it is not a question of teaching students new contents, but rather of training learners in the deployment of certain triggering skills (i.e., enabling strategies) assuming that, with them, learners will be more effective while learning the contents.

Recent research has revealed that people who are good at languages either tackle L2 learning in different ways from those who are less good, or, if they perform in similar ways, at least, they are able to obtain better results.

Extensive research that has gone very deeply into learning strategies has identified and defined three major types of strategies used by L2 students:

1. Metacognitive strategies, which involve planning and thinking about learning.
2. Cognitive strategies, which involve conscious ways of tackling learning.
3. Social strategies, which mean learning by interacting with others.

The kind of strategy being used in each case may be different according to the task and kind of situation the students are engaged in, and also according to the level.

Maybe the autonomy that strategies step by step bring to students could mischievously make us think that teachers will gradually become irrelevant in the 2LA process. This is not the least true, but quite on the contrary, when considering the possibility of promoting strategies so that students may gain effectiveness in learning, the indispensability of the FL teacher is still alive, as:

"either by explicit instruction or by means of an awareness-raising process, there is no doubt of the invaluable role teachers should play in the deployment of successful strategies on the

part of their students so [that learners can] achieve a more efficient performance throughout the whole FL learning process" (Montijano, 2000: 35).

Obviously, if students are unable to notice the extent to which certain behaviours, attitudes and strategies may be helpful for them, they may hardly deploy them. Thus, the teacher should talk explicitly about their learning effects, so that students may enjoy the benefits of having deployed them, after having appreciated their triggering effect strategies may bring about for learning.

Bearing in mind the picture of the beneficial effects that derive from learner training, we can scarcely do anything but recognising that prospective teachers will have to devise ways to make their students aware that there are ways to maximise their effort so as to learn as effectively as possible, if it is not something inherent to their own personality.

2.3.4. Not merely instructing, but educating FL learners.

In connection to what we have said before (i.e., that the FL teacher has to perform a much more comprehensive task than just conveying L2 knowledge to students), we would like to add now that, in fact, the principles underlying the Spanish Educational Reform highlight the view of the teacher as an educator. The FL teacher is someone who has to collaborate in their students' personal development:

> "An EFL teacher is also an educator and will not only have to teach the language but also contribute to the pupils general education developing their intellectual capabilities and personal development, fostering positive attitudes towards the language class and helping them become co-operative in society" (Madrid, 1995: 109).

The role of the FL teacher goes beyond merely instructing learners, as we see: s-/he must create the most optimum conditions for learning by offering his/her students opportunities to make the most of, while being engaged in learning, thus helping learners grow psychologically and intellectually, while physically.

> "The role played by any teacher goes far beyond what actually happens in the classroom. The EFL teacher is not only

responsible for the learners' language development, but s-/he
is also a contributor to the students' personal (social, emotional
and cognitive) development by providing students with lots
of activities and tasks by means of which they may get involved
with their classmates and interact" (Montijano, 1998: 238).

We must also recall that: "teachers may have a crucial influence on
the unique character of any class, and are very much responsible for the
success or failure of the FL class" (Montijano, 1998: 237). Given that their
performance is to have such an effect, all teachers must be professionally
equipped so that they fulfil the expectations.

Educating is certainly a challenging task, so once more we should
underline how important it is that prospective FL teachers accumulate
knowledge from different sources (psychology, pedagogy, didactics, linguistics,
...) to give responses to the demands made on them. Also, a great deal of
sensitivity may be useful to be as close as possible of the students' realities.
To a certain extent, we can agree that being an educator must be vocational.
However, it is nonetheless true that certain principles and a basic scaffolding
can also be provided to the teaching professionals. At least, teachers must
be fully aware of the implications of their task in this sense.

2.4. Teachers' ability to manage classes successfully

Teaching a FL demands an ability to cope with many circumstances
and factors, sometimes even co-occurring: students' inherent stage of personal
development, external factors affecting the FLA process, constraints of
different nature (time, students' fatigue, students' shift of attention), the
choice of a given methodological approach, etc.

It is extremely important that a teacher has developed certain
organisational skills so that s-/he can be permanently in charge of everything
that takes place in his/her class. Successful classroom management is not
only desirable, it can be said to be a must. For example, learning to cope
with disruptive behaviour or lack of discipline is something essential on the
part of the teacher: that is, teachers should deploy an ability so that they
succeed at: "the making of practical decisions of various kinds in the planning
and conduct of teaching, both at the individual teacher's level and at the
institutional level" (Prabhu, 1995: 67).

Apart from the individual personality (which may or may not contribute to the learners' learning) and, of course, charisma (for all those who are gifted with this value), there are many attitudinal and organisational skills and abilities required if the professional teacher is to be successful while managing his/her class.

We did anticipate above that the environment plays an important role in learning a language. The reflection, at this point, is whether all pre-service FL teachers will equally be able to manage their classes in such a way that they provide their students with the right atmosphere in their classes so that learning is permanently enhanced.

It is specially important, at this point, to remind them that teaching language as communication will imply a certain degree of noise and activity on the part of the students. However, they should be acquainted with the fact that it is not necessarily a synonym for disruptive behaviour or misbehaviour. Keeping a balance and a sense of tidiness in class will be essential.

3. MAIN DEMANDS CURRENTLY MADE TO FL TEACHERS

It is interesting to read that certainly nowadays: "Teachers are pulled in all directions: to focus on the code, on its use, on grammar, on lexis, on meaning, on the book, on the task, on the learner, on the teacher, on society […] Language teaching, if it is to promote language learning, must go in all of these directions" (Cook & Seidlhofer, 1995: 9). It is really challenging.

The thing is that the requirements made on teachers are many and varied. In fact, it would be extremely complex to x-ray everything FL teaching comprises; however, something is clear: the belief that the FL teacher is exclusively a mere conveyor or source of target language knowledge is completely overcome. The job of the FL teacher as seen nowadays can be defined as that of ensuring that students get both input and also a variety of exercises and practice which emphasise the use of language by means of communicative tasks. In this sense: "clearly, the nearer we can get to stimulating the kind of communicative situations that the student will encounter outside the classroom the better" (Geddes, 1981: 80).

The programme should be planned on the basis of achieving a balance between activities for the deployment of both receptive and productive skills. It should also include some formal language work, where new language is progressively being introduced, practised and thus gradually acquired by students.

Teachers must also make optimum use of any kind of aid (both materials and resources) that may somehow contribute to improve the outcomes of their students' learning.

Teachers can't either neglect to train their students to take charge of their own learning process, and to be more and more effective in the task of acquiring the FL by deploying certain behaviours (or "strategies") which may help them make the most of any opportunity to learn both inside and outside class.

We can conclude that the task of a teacher, as seen nowadays, is certainly wonderful and enriching for all those who follow our vocational guidance and have decided to devote our lives to this field of professional activity. But, at the same time, it is extremely demanding and requires a lot of personal investment on the part of the teacher.

4. EFFECTIVENESS IN EFL TEACHING

More and more people all over the world are committed to the task of learning foreign languages. As the influence and responsibility teachers have in the students' learning is crucial, the search for effective ways of educating teachers is more than ever at issue.

There is a host of qualities and hallmarks that could be attached to good teachers, quite often in contradiction with each other ... sometimes one even feels there is hardly a way to reconcile these contradictory views. Despite this, it is common knowledge that good teachers do exist.

We could say that good teachers are all those ones who attain "effectiveness"; then, one might think that once this key concept is precisely defined, the problem of the "bad teachers" will be solved for ever! Nonetheless, despite this tiny source of optimism, and without being utterly sceptical, I'm

afraid that the question is not as plain as it may seem, given that the "one-size-fits-all model" can be a perfectly efficient kind of model for other areas, but it is undoubtedly not an adequate one to resolve the debates currently running in the field of education. How could we devise an all-embracing definition of an "effective teacher", which can be equally suitable for all professionals working in every learning situation and with all sorts of students? We should not neglect the comprehensive and multifaceted scope of language teaching. Neither should we overlook that there is a myriad of different learners that could potentially be found: requirements to comply with all these circumstances will always be different!

> "Students at different levels of complexity of thinking require different methodologies, different content, different organisational structures, different disciplinary models, different strategies for motivation, and different types of relationships with their teachers and their classmates in order to stay focused, directed and self-disciplined" (Owen, 2003: 47)

In very general terms, we could state that there exist two opposing views propounding different processes teachers should undergo to be effective. Both views mirror their opposing assumptions about the nature of teaching. On the one hand, there are methodologists who believe that the process of learning language teaching is similar to that of cooking a meal: you use the right ingredients in the most adequate moment inside the whole operation, and with the passage of the required time (different in each individual, as different is also the time required to cook each different meal) the desired outcome will appear. It seems as if it were merely a question of locating the exact "magic recipe"! In fact, the majority of researchers in this area are permanently doing their best to make the most of any programme for FL teacher training, i.e., trying to find out both the "ingredients" and the exact order in which they should ideally be put into use.

On the other hand, there are others who prefer to emphasise the uniqueness and complexity of language teaching, something that can't straightforwardly be reduced to simple patterns to be "imitated" endlessly. The proponents of this view claim that when analysing everything FL teaching really comprises, it immediately becomes apparent that not all the actions teachers perform are the "logical response" to behaviours "learned" or "inherited" from their period of instruction. Quite on the contrary: for them,

teaching is a very complex business, and complexity implies unpredictability. That means that more often than not teachers have to decide how to perform on the spur of the moment. Supporters of this view might even guard against the relentless adherence of "bad teachers" to their agenda. For them there is scarcely more than mere assistance that teacher training may provide prospective teachers with, but it can never be regarded as the key for an effective performance in the "real world".

Both approaches supply two different pictures of what can be considered as effective teaching. But they seem to clash quite dramatically.

We personally agree on the fact that every teacher should be familiar with manifold different techniques, activities, approaches and possibilities for teaching, all those which are mostly adopted by their colleagues. It is in this precise sense that we must admit that training makes an important contribution throughout the educational process pre-service teachers should undergo. Nonetheless, we must recognise too that becoming a teacher requires having deployed the ability to adapt to the uniqueness of our situation. That is why we agree that education to personalise our teaching, and also to deploy certain attitudes and values inherent to being a good teacher, is something without which any prospective teacher will hardly be able to perform effectively. Bearing all this in mind, who would dare to bet for an easy solution? We do refuse to throw in the towel; and, as we firmly believe that blind commitment to any theory is not a virtue, we are going to present our proposal to attain effectiveness for those FL teachers learning teaching.

First of all, from our viewpoint, in order to attain the pursued goal, both the theory of teacher training and instruction, and the one which aims at teacher education can be helpful for prospective teachers; we think that they are not mutually excluding, but both have interesting facets and thus can complement each other: whereas instruction has to do with the most mechanical and manipulative elements of teacher performance, education has to do with the process of professional development to make teaching something tailor-made for the actual students teachers teach in each case. The extent to which each of them can be of use is a question that deserves being scrutinised deeply.

Those teachers whose performance is disreputed as "traditional" (whenever this term is used in the most pejorative sense) may have learned to be teachers by simply following a module of instruction and training. From

this perspective, teaching behaviours are considered a closed set and hence learning teaching is a question of learning (almost by heart) the compilation of them. Teachers taught under the guidelines of this paradigm can never offer alternative paths. They can only follow exactly the same sequence for their lessons thus showing overt reluctance to do whatever may differ from what has been planned to suit into their student's personalities, interests or learning needs. This is not to say that what they have learnt is wrong. It's simply not enough. Their teaching appears as something completely divorced from reality.

Though useful, teacher training is an insufficient equipment for prospective teachers: learning teaching from this perspective means merely being competent in the language to teach, together with adopting all the principles generally accepted as valid in the field of FLT methodology.

However, teaching should rather be conceived as an exercise of adapting personally what is regarded as effective, taking into account the defining characteristics of the precise groups of students teachers may find when teaching. Thus, in agreement with the conviction that prospective teachers should experience a more comprehensive and enriching learning process, we coincide with those who call for teacher education for teachers to achieve effectiveness. The process of education will help student-teachers to become aware of the need to adapt their teaching always taking into account their students' requirements and motivation. Great doses of sensitivity are not only invaluable, but a must to be an effective teacher.

Stated in those vague terms, it may be argued that our proposal does not offer a straightforward solution to the intricate issue of learning teaching on the following bases:

1st: It seems to provide no clear formula to learn the required sensitivity to become an effective teacher.

2nd: Effective performance is not something that you get "once-for-all", but it is value that must be renewed in every performance. The proposal does not explicitly specify how it can be grasped by individuals before becoming a teacher.

We will deal with both arguments. Our suggestion entails instilling in pre-service FL teachers the importance of on-going education and

professional self-development as the main bedrock to gain and renew effectiveness in every particular instance of performance. How to achieve it? Simply by raising in pre-service teachers awareness of the importance of reflection as the personal exercise which should be carried out by teachers to aim at improving the results previously obtained. Reflection, thus, becomes a crucial strategy to inform every instance of one's teaching and is certainly invaluable in order to draw useful conclusions and to infer enriching insights. It can become a source of development of new resources to fit into the students' always changing needs. Systematic reflection becomes essential to engage oneself in developing one's personal ideas and attitudes, to make one's teaching something personal, in response to one's actual learners.

The problem is that there may be in-service teachers who are not aware of the positive implications that may derive from reflecting upon everything that constitutes their teaching. That is why prospective teachers should become familiar with it before starting to work professionally.

The way we see it, in order to get engaged in the habit of systematic reflection should follow several successive stages:
Introspection:
look inside oneself and "observe" the process of language acquisition undergone: try to select everything which was relevant at that stage

Peer observation:
look outside: how other teachers actually work in class: try to select everything which seems important for them

Reflection:
look for likely "why" elements of the performance being observed.

Discussion + Sharing ideas:
express in your own words your impressions. Share your inner beliefs and enrich them by listening to others' views

Decision:
making choices to proceed in your teaching based on your experiential learning

Despite its undeniable importance, getting into the habit of reflecting

systematically is not something that can be lectured to student-teachers. As a theoretical construct it could lack validity for them. In fact, it means almost nothing if it is divorced from real practice at school, isolated from reality (as if teaching took place in a sort of vacuum). That is why claim that prospective teachers need to experience actual learning contexts: being in contact with the reality of school, enjoying the possibility to work directly with students and know them in depth could be the most rewarding aspect of the whole process of getting themselves ready for their future teaching career. In this sense, a comprehensive module of learning how to cope with the reality of schools (by actually attending to learning centres) will be crucial for the education of FL teachers. Pre-service teachers may learn from this experience far more if everything they have previously studied from an exclusively theoretical perspective is compared to what they observe in actual classes. It is a possibility to start practising realistic systematic reflection upon every co-occurring or emerging circumstance of the FL class.

On top of this, attending to schools is invaluable not only because it allows prospective teachers an observation of actual teachers working with their actual students in class, but also because of the subsequent discussion of their performance (with the teachers who have just performed in front of them) that it ideally should bring about. These discussions will help pre-service teachers' notice even more from that moment onwards, as they may be alert to certain aspects previously unnoticed. This, in its turn, will also lead them more diligently to the habit of systematic reflection upon everything conforming the routines of their classes, once they realise of the suitability of making teaching something personal and unique each time.

Once the module of FL teachers education at the Faculty has been already covered, surely we will have just started to create pre-service teachers' ideational scaffolding for their effective performance in future. The only requisite in this regard is that prospective teachers notice that individual on-going development (following the path from introspection, towards peer observation and then continuous reflection) is the starting point to attain effectiveness in teaching. And professional development may be attained as the result of systematic reflection.

The learning teaching operation should accordingly be considered as an endless process, the key of which is the process of self-development teachers should engage in, and never stop throughout their whole careers.

NOTES:

1. A thorough study of the meaning and scope of the term "communicative competence" since it was first coined, can be found in Pérez Martín (1995).
2. Given that the classroom is the most immediate context for the students to develop their ability to understand and also to be understood, the situations lived there must be meaningful so that learners can really enjoy manifold opportunities to rehearse for the "real thing". Cf. Breen (1985), Chaudron (1988) or Ellis (1985, 1990).
3. It is specially important that teachers provide their students with feedback, avoiding being too negative with the mistakes learners make, given that mistakes are a natural part of all learning processes. Risk-taking should be permanently encouraged by teachers.
4. Cf. Ellis & Sinclair (1989: 6).
5. Cf. O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Oxford (1989), Wenden (1991) or Wenden & Robin (1987).
6. Naiman et al. (1978) studied what people who were known to be good at learning languages had in common, and they found six broad categories shared by the so-called "good language learners" (GLL), namely: they are able to find a learning style that suits them, they involve themselves in the language learning process, they develop an awareness of language (both as a system and as communication), they pay constant attention to expanding their language knowledge, they develop L2 as a separate system and they also take into account the demands the L2 learning process imposes.
7. Cf. O'Malley & Chamot (1990).
8. Research in this field has proved that intermediate students do use less strategies in total.

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