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Title

Promoting on-campus theory-practice linkages in pre-service teacher training and development

Título

Promoción de nexos teoría- práctica en el campus universitario durante la formación y desarrollo inicial de docentes

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Abstract

The yearly practicum component periods in our foreign language teacher education program seem never enough in length and intensity, except for the fifth one, and this consequently may compromise the necessary theory-practice linkages, unless we stimulate and model this on-campus. In this paper, we reflect and discuss about this issue, based on experience, and suggest how to apply mediation strategies as a possible remedy for our learners to understand and accept key concepts and teaching and learning principles gradually. Then we suggest that we focus on building in student teachers a teacher repertoire of techniques and activities by modeling teaching; then we suggest to provide practice in collective lesson planning and practicing modeling classes or parts of them. Finally, to challenge student teachers cognitively, problem-solving and reflection about their professional development are a must. All this should happen in a blended learning context that may foster motivation and professional identity.

Key words: *Teacher training; Teacher development; Teacher repertoire; Practicum; Theory-practice linkages; Mediation strategies; Blended learning*

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Resumen

Los períodos de práctica laboral en la Carrera Licenciatura de Educación en Lenguas extranjeras nos parecen insuficientes en su extensión e intensidad, menos el de quinto año, y ello puede comprometer el vínculo teoría-práctica, a menos que esta relación la estimulemos y modelemos en las clases de la universidad. En la ponencia reflexionamos y discutimos sobre esta problemática y sugerimos una vía para la aplicación de estrategias de mediación como posible remedio que facilite la comprensión y aceptación de conceptos clave y paulatinamente de principios didácticos por parte de los docentes en formación inicial. Seguidamente sugerimos que nos centremos en apoyar la apropiación del repertorio del docente mediante la modelación de técnicas y actividades, la planificación de clases en pequeños grupos, a partir de modelos inicialmente, y la modelación de clases o fragmentos de ellas posteriormente. Seguidamente sugerimos que se estimule la resolución de problemas y la reflexión individual y colectiva sobre el desarrollo profesional que van alcanzando los futuros docentes. Todo ello debe acontecer en un contexto en el que se asuma la modalidad híbrida para fomentar la motivación y la identidad profesional.

Palabras Claves: *Formación docente; Desarrollo profesional; Repertorio del docente; Práctica laboral; Relación teoría-práctica; Estrategias de mediación; Modalidad hibrida.*

Aims*: To model on-campus theory-practice linkages through the use of mediation strategies, building on a teacher´s repertoire, promoting problem-solving and collaborative work, using technology and reflecting on theory and practice to foster professional development and teacher identity.*

Methodology

The methods used were theoretical systematization, analysis and synthesis, document analysis, participant observation, and teacher reflection. Data was obtained while teaching two cohorts of third year student-teachers from 2022 to 2023 and from reflections that we kept along the way.

Results and Discussion

How can we model on-campus theory-practice linkages in preservice teacher education? (Zahedi H., and Rowe S., 2022; Maiken Risan, 2020)

Using mediation strategies to teach key concepts and principles

Teaching key concepts and principles when training and providing teacher development is a gradual process that may start with rejection, but with the passage of time student teachers realize that key concepts and principles are very important to substantiate our practice as professionals and to do research, given the fact that indicators come out of operationalizing concepts. After all, teaching is a profession, not a job, so we teachers must embrace the language of science.

During the third year of our English Language Teaching Program (ELT), student teachers face, for the first time, the learning of theoretical and methodological subjects in English. For this reason, they find it hard to understand key concepts and principles about language teaching and learning, and to cope with tasks that demand academic language. For this reason, some of them need a lot of support or mediation to promote interest and success in learning.

We made a list of key concepts for each of the units of FLT Didactics I and II that we teach in the third year, based on these subjects´ syllabi, and surfing through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, teaching and assessment (CEFR 2020) and other sources.

From this seminal document we also found the concept of mediation:

> *The CEFR describes mediation as follows: "Mediation describes the actions of those who help when, for some reason, there is a communication gap which needs to be filled, and the same (or similar) content is conveyed using different language (not necessarily just one different language), in order to bridge that gap."*

This concept is also related to Lev Vygotsky social-historical psychology:

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3

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The CEFR affords invaluable mediation descriptors and strategies that may help us facilitate understanding of key concepts and principles. Here are some mediation strategies that may help us:

1. *Strategies to explain a new concept (p.118)*

   - *Linking to previous knowledge, that is, encouraging others to activate prior knowledge so they may understand key concepts and principles;*

   - *Adapting language; that is, paraphrasing and explaining a key concept so our students can understand;*

   - *Breaking down complicated information; that is, clarifying by creating a series of steps, bullet points or identifying the main points in a concept.*

2. *Strategies to simplify a text (p.121)*

   - *Amplifying a dense text; that is, enabling understanding of a complex text by paraphrasing, modifying style or giving examples;*

   - *Streamlining a text; that is, enabling understanding of a complex text by highlighting relevant points and excluding irrelevant points.*

Then it occurred to us that the understanding of key concepts can be facilitated if we provide first, examples such as the ones given in the Collins Cobuild Intermediate Learner´s Dictionary (2014).

Here are some examples from FLT Didactics I and II of Strategies to facilitate understanding of key concepts and rewording to make understanding user-friendly and to explain a new concept (p.118):

The mediation strategies

   - *Linking to previous knowledge: encouraging others to activate prior knowledge;*

   - *Adapting language by paraphrasing and explaining;*

   - *Breaking down complicated information; that is, clarifying by creating a series of steps, bullet points or identifying the main points.*

4

<u>*Key concepts*</u>

<u>*Mediating through resorting to user-friendly dictionary definitions*</u> *(e.g., Collins Cobuild Intermediate Learner´s Dictionary, 2014):*

- *Communicative competence: Someone who is competent is efficient and effective;*

- *Communicative function: the purpose that you want to accomplish when interacting or producing language in a particular context;*

- *Notion: it is a concept, e.g. furniture includes table, chair, rocking chair, sofa, and so on;*

- *The functional- notional approach: communicative language teaching;*

- *Principles: the principles of a particular theory or philosophy are its basic rules or laws (Collins);*

- *Values: the values of a person or group are their principles and beliefs (Collins);*

- *Accuracy: something that is accurate is correct to a detailed level (Collins).*

- *Student-centered class: the opposite of a teacher-led class;*

- *Monitor: if you monitor someone or something, you regularly check its development or progress. You monitor an activity, something in progress, or a performance (Collins);*

- *Fluency: someone who is fluent in a particular language can speak easily and correctly. If your speech, reading or writing is fluent, you speak, read or write easily, with no hesitation or mistakes (Collins);*

<u>*Breaking down complicated information*</u>*: clarifying by creating a series of steps, bullet points or identifying the main points:*

Talking about fluency, we can notice that a student is not fluent in speaking when:

- *He/she has to make a great effort to pronounce;*

- *He/she makes long pauses, which denotes that the student is groping for words or is having a hard time producing sentences and linking them, due to a grammatical deficit;*

- *He/she does not react quickly when the other person speaks;*

5

- *He/she is unable to take the lead (or the initiative) when participating in a conversation;*

Vocabulary and phonology key concepts

- *Vocabulary range: the breath and variety of expressions used, from basic to broad (CEFR 2020);*
- *Vocabulary control: ability to choose an appropriate expression from their repertoire (CEFR 2020);*
- *Phonological control: ability to effectively use prosodic features to convey meaning in an increasingly precise manner (CEFR 2020). If you show control of something, you make yourself behave calmly (Collins).*

Learner-friendly definitions when teaching reading or listening:

- *Top-down knowledge is knowledge about the topic, the discourse type, or about the sociocultural context in which language occurs;*
- *Bottom-up knowledge is knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.*

Obviously, we do not teach all concepts in one unit of study. Rather, we choose for each unit around two or three concepts, and mediate using the learner-friendly concepts and then contrast them with the real scientific concept that are accepted by science.

Building a teaching repertoire

When training future teachers, it is very important to help them have a repertoire for their teaching practice and for their future career as teachers. Since future teachers start doing their practicum, they need to know the tools available to succeed and obtain better results from their learners.

Helping future teachers to have a repertoire in teaching refers to having a set of tools, techniques, strategies, tactics, ways of working expertise and know-how from which a practitioner may draw, choose from, and/or combine to suit both known and novel situations or address a particular purpose.

6

Hera are some of quotations that show the importance of a teacher's repertoire in order to succeed in their teaching.

"A teacher's repertoire is like a toolbox, and the more tools they have, the more effective they can be in helping their students learn."- Jim Knight

"The key to successful teaching is having a wide repertoire of strategies and techniques to draw from, so that you can adapt to the needs of each individual student." - Doug Lemov

"As teachers, we need to constantly expand our repertoire of teaching methods and approaches, so that we can meet the diverse needs of our students." - Diane Ravitch

"A teacher's repertoire should include a range of instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and classroom management skills, all tailored to the unique needs of their students." Robert Marzano

"The most effective teachers are those who have a deep and varied repertoire of teaching strategies, and who are able to select the right approach for each situation." - John Hattie

As has been said above by different experts, in order to succeed in teaching and meet students' learning needs, teachers need to have tools, techniques, strategies, tactics, ways of working that would allow them to keep students' interest and motivation along the process. Using a variety of teaching strategies ensures that students are never bored and that different learning styles can be met throughout each lesson.

In some of the bibliography related to teacher training, there is a proposal of strategies that teachers may use to promote learning while training. Some of them include: Instructional Match; Scaffolding; Step-by-Step Strategies; Modeling & Demonstration; Performance Feedback; Opportunities to Drill & Practice to Strengthen Fragile Skills; Student 'Talk-Through' Activities; and Periodic Review. Others mention effective teaching practices that can become a person's repertoire. Some of them include: Model as you teach; Make mistakes; Work as a team; Encourage learning from experience;

7

Let the students teach; Integrate technology into the classroom; Try graphic organizers; and Emphasize behavior management.

In our school program at UCLV, in the subject Foreign Language Teaching Didactics, some of these strategies and practices have been adopted with the purpose of giving future teachers some models that they can follow in their present and future practice.

Another aim that has been considered in our program is to try to engage these future teachers to be more involved and motivated for class discussion, teacher awareness, and effective action.

Some of the used tools and strategies have proven to be effective to meet the desired goals. The examples provided in this paper will illustrate that students can be better prepared and motivated to put theory into practice in their own teaching context.

Scaffolding (or mediation) is one of the techniques that has been mostly used since it provides guidance and support in the process of their training. Breaking down complex tasks into more manageable steps has helped students to complete each task in a more successful way. For this purpose, in the case of FLT Didactics, the use of examples, prompts, modeling and feedback has given the support the students need to develop their own skills and independence in their learning process.

Another strategy which is referred to as Instructional match takes into consideration the need for teachers to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, their learning styles and their individual needs and characteristics in order to match the methods, the materials and types of resources that may seem more appropriate in different circumstances. By using this strategy, we are aiming at engaging students more actively, and making their learning experiences more personalized, relevant and meaningful. When this is done in the classroom, future teachers can realize how important it is to always look for ways to find a match on what they do and what they take to class for the benefit of their students' learning.

Performance feedback is another strategy that has been used and which is really necessary as part of a teacher's repertoire. Helping students to know about their performance, their strengths and weaknesses and the areas where they need to improve

can make changes in students' behavior to achieve better results. Future teachers need to see in practice how positive and constructive feedback can impact on students' behavior and desire for improvement; thus, using constructive feedback formally or informally will always promote growth and development in individuals and groups.

Another strategy that is effective is Student 'Talk-Through' Activities, which involves students explaining their thought process and reasoning out loud while working through a problem or task. Students need to be conscious that by sharing the reasons behind the things they do, they become more aware of their own thinking and problem-solving strategies, something that will help to develop their metacognitive skills. For the FLT didactics teacher, it is an opportunity to assess students' understanding and identify any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge, and this can be applied in any teaching context.

Periodic Review is another strategy that is regularly used and which involves revisiting previously learned material or concepts in order to reinforce and maintain knowledge and understanding. This strategy can help students retain information over a longer period of time and prevent forgetting. Several tools such as quizzes, games, or discussions are especially useful to reinforce previous knowledge. These tools are usually enjoyed by students in different moments of the lesson.

For many years there has been a myth among some teachers who believe that making mistakes should be avoided, not to leave a negative trace on students' learning. Nevertheless, making mistakes should be seen as a natural part of the learning process and can be used as a valuable teaching tool. When teachers make mistakes, they can use them as opportunities to model how to identify and correct errors. As has been put into practice in the FLT Didactics lessons, using mistakes as a source of discussion has given the possibility to help students develop critical thinking skills and learn how to learn from their mistakes. A very good example is when the teacher shows two sides of the same lesson, one which is mistaken and the other which is appropriate. This can be done in the form of a simulation or by asking students to read a description of the two lessons. When doing this, there is always room for fruitful discussion.

The use of mistakes can also be seen as a way to build rapport with students by showing that they are not infallible and that everyone makes mistakes. Let the students teach is another strategy that can give students the opportunity to teach and reinforce their own learning and build their confidence. Students can be assigned to lead discussions or presentations on a particular topic, or even teach a lesson to the class. This can help students develop communication and leadership skills, as well as deepen their understanding of the material. The use of micro-teaching has proven to be a very powerful way for future teachers' learning.

A teacher's repertoire can cover these and many other ideas that can serve as models for pre-service teachers to put into practice once they are in their own classrooms. Students need to learn from their own experiences, both inside and outside the classroom and should be encouraged to reflect on those experiences and use them as opportunities to learn and grow.

The experiences and strategies that have been provided throughout this paper, just reinforces the idea that there are different ways and approaches to meet the goal of successful learning, and that it is a teacher's task to have them as part of their practice to motivate and engage students in the process of learning for the present and the future.

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Planning lessons collectively and modeling them

Planning in groups of three or four helps those who are lagging behind. It is an excellent opportunity to foster self-correction and self-monitoring strategies, as well as collaborative values. Modeling and demonstration are also important teaching strategies that we the FLT Didactics teachers use on a regular basis. Modeling involves showing students how to complete a task or solve a problem, while demonstration involves performing a task or skill for students to observe. These strategies can help students to visualize and understand the steps involved in a process, and can also provide a clear example of what is expected of them.

Assigning problem-solving activities

Assigning this type of tasks may promote the development of higher-order shills and creativity.

Promoting reflection about their professional development

Teachers develop professionally by reflecting on theory and practice, and by analyzing critically their strengths and needs for more professional development (Wallace , Patterson Peña Matilde and Marisol Patterson Peña 2019 and Matilde Patterson Peña 2020).

Using technology in a blended learning context that may foster motivation and professional identity

Integrating technology into the classroom can be a powerful tool for enhancing teaching and learning (Cantera Pérez A.; Cordero Martínez G.; and M. Pérez Labrada. 2022; Rodríguez Rodríguez M., López Serrano M., Cáceres León D. 2023; and Umayra El Nabahany, Said Juma, 2019). Teachers can use technology to create interactive lessons, provide instant feedback, and connect with students outside of class. The use of the Moodle Platform and mobile phones and other devices as part of the lesson engage students and reinforce learning.

However, it is important to ensure that technology is used in a way that enhances learning and does not distract from it, so it is the teacher's task to really plan and have control of what happens in the classroom to make sure the learning aims are met. Giving future teachers the vision that technology can be used as a good support to the teaching learning process is crucial in today's teaching context.

Conclusions

In this paper have reflected on how to model on-campus theory-practice linkages. For this purpose, we have proposed the use of mediation strategies to facilitate understanding and meaning in key concepts and principles, that is learning about theory. In addition, we have highlighted the importance of building on a teacher´s repertoire, the promoting of problem-solving and reflection about student-teacher professional development; in other words, learning to develop teaching skills and strategies.

Teachers learn to teach by collaborating on campus and during the practicum. They learn by solving problems, using technology and receiving systematic feedback. These ideas have proved valuable for us in promoting interest in teaching, professional development and professional identity.

The theory-practice strategies that we have proposed in this paper have proved valuable in our FLT Didactics. However, we need to revise our practices constantly with respect how well this match is doing. This match or mismatch hasn't been solved in the literature that we have consulted and at times in our practices.

We need to emphasize with our colleagues that the theory- practice linkage may take place not only during the practicum, but also on campus. This paper has proposed some solutions for this issue.

12

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1. Introduction

Striking a fair balance between theory and practice in preservice foreign language teacher education

Searching for trends in teacher education in Europe, Livingstone Kay and María Assunção Flores (2017) found that in more than forty years the theory-practice relationship had been an issue.

This issue keeps being a concern nowadays (Judy Yin,2019) with respect to pre-service teachers' perceptions of practicum experience. Korthagen F. A. J. (2010) has pioneered and deepened has published possible solutions.

As early as 1980 one may find definitions and operationalization of the teacher training concept that clearly does not neglect theory. For example, according to Joyce (1980), the major components of training are presentation of theory, modeling or demonstration of skills or models, practice in simulated classroom settings, structured feedback and coaching for application (in Richards, 1989, p. 16).

Again, later in 2015, Richards breaks down training into practical and theoretical dimensions. The practical dimension includes developing a repertoire of classroom techniques, routines, skills and strategies; having opportunities to try out different strategies in the classroom; developing ability to teach using a textbook and classroom technology, and monitoring oneself and getting feedback from others on one´s practice. The theoretical dimension includes understanding basic concepts and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching.

The term training was the subject of debate between Peter Grundy and Penny Ur in the context of IATEFL 2016 in Birmingham, UK, referring to criticisms leveled to teacher training courses like CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) (Grundy Peter and Penny Ur 2017).

It seems that the CELTA program prioritizes the development of teaching skills at the expense of knowledge of basic theory that student teachers need, as they develop their skills, and make informed planning, classroom management and assessment decisions.

13

During this debate, Penny Ur concluded that prospective teachers could benefit from training opportunities that provide "practical ideas and access to research findings providing evidence and insights that can furnish a basis for more effective teaching procedures, and save the teacher from making time-wasting mistakes" (p. 34).

However, we must emphasize that in our context teacher preparedness is conceived as a process, which results not only in developing professional skills or behaviors, but also in developing professional qualities and values consonant to our society and the needs of a globalized world that shapes teacher identity.

Certainly we must make sure that pre-service teacher education keeps theory within the limits of what is essential for this stage of a teacher´s professional life. This is really a challenge in our context, even though our curriculum guidelines emphasize on what is basic for student teachers to start teaching and to carry on developing professionally.
The connection between practice and theory is important as it demonstrates our ability to use evidence to increase our understanding of key concepts, justify our decision making, and inform future practice. The strength of this theory-practice connection also contributes to the evidence of our critical thinking and growth. Ultimately, linking theory and practice shows that we understand the connections between what we are learning at university and how that knowledge is applied in the real world (Flinders University. Student support Service, 2022), we think that teachers may respond better to educational change and professional development demands, when they have developed a solid theory platform and have gained as much experience as possible. This includes areas like mastery of literacy and communication skills in their native language; command of at least one foreign language, digital literacy, learning strategies, reflective and thinking skills, group work skills, and basic skills to study teaching, among others. To this end, we must design disciplines with contents feeding from updated and pertinent science and taking into account the needs of the profession; in other words, planning following the logic of science and the logic of the profession.

Elsewhere in the professional world teacher educators also experiment the same challenge concerning what is basic for pre-service. For example, Feiman-Nemser S.

(USA) (2001, p.1013) identifies five central tasks during pre-service: analyzing beliefs and forming new visions; developing subject matter knowledge for teaching; developing understandings of learners; developing a beginning teaching repertoire; and developing tools to study teaching.

Again, we see in the above list of tasks that there is a combination of theory and practice, of the academic and the research components. In addition, Feiman-Nemser models these central tasks as a continuum from pre-service teacher education to the induction period, i.e. the early years of teaching; what we know as "Preparing for the job". Coincidently, in conceiving our program we must not only design the pre-service stage but also the induction and postgraduate stages (MES 2016, pp. 6 and 7), given the fact that teacher education should be conceived as a continuing process of training and professional development.

Richards (2015, p. 707) also identifies content areas for professional development upon graduation from pre-service that help us build a more holistic view of teacher education as we continue reflecting on what is essential for undergraduate teacher education and what should be left for later in the program. His list includes improving subject matter knowledge; bettering our pedagogical expertise; understanding of one´s teaching philosophy; theorization of practice; understanding of learners; understanding of curriculum and materials; research skills and career advancement.

In training student teachers to become professionals, there are at least, three teacher-education models that that we may resort to: the craft model, the applied-science model and the reflective model (Wallace M. 1991).

The craft model conceives teacher training as learning through experience and observation of a mentor. The applied-science model ponders the application of methods and theories of learning coming from the academia, and their application in practice in order to verify how they function. Reflective models of teacher education may include only reflection about practice, and for this reason, they have been criticized as anti-cultural. A more inclusive reflective model is one that conceives teacher development as

a result of the teacher reflecting both on theory and practice. We believe there are positive aspects in all three models that we can learn from.

Scaffolding our student teachers so they can manage to make theory-practice linkages meaningfully

Student teachers will accept the need to embrace theory and practice as a result of the experiences that they live through on campus, during the practicum and through reflection promoted by teacher educators and teacher mentors at school. This challenging topic and others in our profession implies teacher mediation to help novice student teachers form their beliefs as future teachers (Camacho Delgado A., 2021).

Teachers form their beliefs about teaching and learning as a result of thinking deeply about how what they learned in university functions at school, and debating this with a mentor and their peers. They also form or reaffirm their beliefs studying teaching (doing research) and thus participating in the creation of theory. This is very important in the process of teacher change and development because normally teachers do what they believe is suitable in a particular context and time. This also implies the central role of collaboration among student teachers, not only as a means to scaffold them when in need, but also as a method to reaffirm or foster their teacher beliefs collectively. Paraphrasing Korthagen et al., teacher learning occurs when student teachers work collaboratively, with their colleagues (Korthagen, Loughran y Rusell, 2006, in González Sanmamed M. & Fuentes Abeledo E., 2011, p. 63).

Teacher educators may promote collaboration applying the following techniques in the university classes and during the practicum: peer observation, shared lesson planning, microteaching and team teaching, among others. They must also promote student research, given the fact that learning to teach entails a process of research in which student teachers must show commitment (Korthagen, Loughran y Rusell, 2006, in González Sanmamed M. & Fuentes Abeledo E., 2011, p. 63).

Student teachers may be asked to do different types of research such as case study and action research, and keep a record of data, using diaries, portfolios and group discussion records (Richards 2015, pp. 715-722).

16

Teacher educators must pay attention to school issues that require critical analysis of the relation between theory and practice, since learning teaching occurs as a result of responding to the ever changing conflict demands of the schools (Korthagen, Loughran y Rusell, 2006, in González Sanmamed M. & Fuentes Abeledo E., 2011, p. 63)." For example, in our context teacher mentors or teacher educators may ask student teachers to discuss about student teachers´ concern about the application of communicative language teaching in some schools where there are overpopulated classes and discipline is slack.

Recent research on linking theory and practice has mainly focused on the practicum. For example, Silva Vázquez, A., & Caballero Hernández, H. (2023) in the Cuba context found that a good practicum may foster professional interest. Lucero, E., & Cortés-Ibañez, A. M. (2021) in Colombia found how student-teachers are constructed as language teachers during the practicum. Yin Judy (2019) conducted a study that focused on how the pre-service teachers perceived the effects of the university course, as they tried to connect theory and practice during the practicum. And Zahedi H., and Rowe S. (2021) evaluated an on-campus program on the topic of bridging the theory practice gap in Occupational Therapy Education.

However, only recently Maiken Risan (2020) has noticed that "relatively little attention has been paid to how educators actively construct linkages between different forms of knowledge at the micro-level of educational activities in campus-based teacher education." And this is a gap that we intend to bridge in our research.

2.Methodology

The methods used were theoretical systematization, analysis and synthesis, document analysis, participant observation, and teacher reflection. Data was obtained while teaching two cohorts of third year student-teachers from 2022 to 2023 and from reflections that we kept along the way.

3.Results and Discussion

How can we model on-campus theory-practice linkages in preservice teacher education? (Zahedi H., and Rowe S., 2022; Maiken Risan, 2020; Furman Shaharabani Yael and Yarden Anat, 2019).

17

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- *Linking to previous knowledge, that is, encouraging others to activate prior knowledge so they may understand key concepts and principles;*

- *Adapting language; that is, paraphrasing and explaining a key concept so our students can understand;*

- *Breaking down complicated information; that is, clarifying by creating a series of steps, bullet points or identifying the main points in a concept.*

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- *Streamlining a text; that is, enabling understanding of a complex text by highlighting relevant points and excluding irrelevant points.*

Then it occurred to us that the understanding of key concepts can be facilitated if we provide first, examples such as the ones given in the Collins Cobuild Intermediate Learner´s Dictionary (2014).

Here are some examples from FLT Didactics I and II of Strategies to facilitate understanding of key concepts and rewording to make understanding user-friendly and to explain a new concept (p.118):

<u>*The mediation strategies*</u>

- *Linking to previous knowledge: encouraging others to activate prior knowledge;*

- *Adapting language by paraphrasing and explaining;*

- *Breaking down complicated information; that is, clarifying by creating a series of steps, bullet points or identifying the main points.*

Key concepts

Mediating through resorting to user-friendly dictionary definitions (e.g., Collins Cobuild Intermediate Learner´s Dictionary, 2014):

- *Communicative competence: Someone who is competent is efficient and effective;*

- *Communicative function: the purpose that you want to accomplish when interacting or producing language in a particular context;*

- *Notion: it is a concept, e.g. furniture includes table, chair, rocking chair, sofa, and so on;*

- *The functional- notional approach: communicative language teaching;*

- *Principles: the principles of a particular theory or philosophy are its basic rules or laws (Collins);*

- *Values: the values of a person or group are their principles and beliefs (Collins);*

- *Accuracy: something that is accurate is correct to a detailed level (Collins).*

- *Student-centered class: the opposite of a teacher-led class;*

- *Monitor: if you monitor someone or something, you regularly check its development or progress. You monitor an activity, something in progress, or a performance (Collins);*

- *Fluency: someone who is fluent in a particular language can speak easily and correctly. If your speech, reading or writing is fluent, you speak, read or write easily, with no hesitation or mistakes (Collins);*

Breaking down complicated information: clarifying by creating a series of steps, bullet points or identifying the main points:

Talking about fluency, we can notice that a student is not fluent in speaking when:

- *He/she has to make a great effort to pronounce;*

- *He/she makes long pauses, which denotes that the student is groping for words or is having a hard time producing sentences and linking them, due to a grammatical deficit;*

20

- *He/she does not react quickly when the other person speaks;*

- *He/she is unable to take the lead (or the initiative) when participating in a conversation;*

Vocabulary and phonology key concepts

- *Vocabulary range: the breath and variety of expressions used, from basic to broad (CEFR 2020);*

- *Vocabulary control: ability to choose an appropriate expression from their repertoire (CEFR 2020);*

- *Phonological control: ability to effectively use prosodic features to convey meaning in an increasingly precise manner (CEFR, 2020). If you show control of something, you make yourself behave calmly (Collins).*

Learner-friendly definitions when teaching reading or listening:

- *Top-down knowledge is knowledge about the topic, the discourse type, or about the sociocultural context in which language occurs;*

- *Bottom-up knowledge is knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.*

Obviously, we do not teach all concepts in one unit of study. Rather, we choose for each unit around two or three concepts, and mediate using the learner-friendly concepts and then contrast them with the real scientific concept that are accepted by science.

Building a teaching repertoire

When training future teachers, it is very important to help them have a repertoire for their teaching practice and for their future career as teachers. Since future teachers start doing their practicum, they need to know the tools available to succeed and obtain better results from their learners.

Helping future teachers to have a repertoire in teaching refers to having a set of tools, techniques, strategies, tactics, ways of working expertise and know-how from which a practitioner may draw, choose from, and/or combine to suit both known and novel situations or address a particular purpose.

21

Hera are some of quotations that show the importance of a teacher's repertoire in order to succeed in their teaching.

"A teacher's repertoire is like a toolbox, and the more tools they have, the more effective they can be in helping their students learn."- Jim Knight

"The key to successful teaching is having a wide repertoire of strategies and techniques to draw from, so that you can adapt to the needs of each individual student." - Doug Lemov

"As teachers, we need to constantly expand our repertoire of teaching methods and approaches, so that we can meet the diverse needs of our students." - Diane Ravitch

"A teacher's repertoire should include a range of instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and classroom management skills, all tailored to the unique needs of their students." Robert Marzano

"The most effective teachers are those who have a deep and varied repertoire of teaching strategies, and who are able to select the right approach for each situation." - John Hattie

As has been said above by different experts, in order to succeed in teaching and meet students' learning needs, teachers need to have tools, techniques, strategies, tactics, ways of working that would allow them to keep students' interest and motivation along the process. Using a variety of teaching strategies ensures that students are never bored and that different learning styles can be met throughout each lesson.

In some of the bibliography related to teacher training, there is a proposal of strategies that teachers may use to promote learning while training. Some of them include: Instructional Match; Scaffolding; Step-by-Step Strategies; Modeling & Demonstration; Performance Feedback; Opportunities to Drill & Practice to Strengthen Fragile Skills; Student 'Talk-Through' Activities; and Periodic Review. Others mention effective teaching practices that can become a person's repertoire. Some of them include: Model as you teach; Make mistakes; Work as a team; Encourage learning from experience;

22

Let the students teach; Integrate technology into the classroom; Try graphic organizers; and Emphasize behavior management.

In our school program at UCLV, in the subject Foreign Language Teaching Didactics, some of these strategies and practices have been adapted with the purpose of giving future teachers some models that they can follow in their present and future practice. Another aim that has been considered in our program is to try to engage these future teachers be more involved and motivated for class discussion, teacher awareness, and effective action.

Some of the used tools and strategies have proven to be effective to meet the desired goals. The examples provided in this paper will illustrate that students can be better prepared and motivated to put theory into practice in their own teaching context.

Scaffolding (or mediation) is one of the techniques that has been mostly used since it provides guidance and support in the process of their training. Breaking down complex tasks into more manageable steps has helped students to complete each task in a more successful way. For this purpose, in the case of FLT Didactics, the use of examples, prompts, modeling and feedback has given the support the students need to develop their own skills and independence in their learning process.

Another strategy which is referred to as Instructional match takes into consideration the need for teachers to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, their learning styles and their individual needs and characteristics in order to match the methods, the materials and types of resources that may seem more appropriate in different circumstances. By using this strategy, we are aiming at engaging students more actively, and making their learning experiences more personalized, relevant and meaningful. When this is done in the classroom, future teachers can realize how important it is to always look for ways to find a match on what they do and what they take to class for the benefit of their students' learning.

Performance feedback is another strategy that has been used and which is really necessary as part of a teacher's repertoire. Helping students to know about their performance, their strengths and weaknesses and the areas where they need to improve

can make changes in students' behavior to achieve better results. Future teachers need to see in practice how positive and constructive feedback can impact on students' behavior and desire for improvement; thus, using constructive feedback formally or informally will always promote growth and development in individuals and groups.

Another strategy that is effective is Student 'Talk-Through' Activities, which involves students explaining their thought process and reasoning out loud while working through a problem or task. Students need to be conscious that by sharing the reasons behind the things they do, they become more aware of their own thinking and problem-solving strategies, something that will help to develop their metacognitive skills. For the FLT didactics teacher, it is an opportunity to assess students' understanding and identify any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge, and this can be applied in any teaching context.

Periodic Review is another strategy that is regularly used and which involves revisiting previously learned material or concepts in order to reinforce and maintain knowledge and understanding. This strategy can help students retain information over a longer period of time and prevent forgetting. Several tools such as quizzes, games, or discussions are especially useful to reinforce previous knowledge. These tools are usually enjoyed by students in different moments of the lesson.

For many years there has been a myth among some teachers who believe that making mistakes should be avoided, not to leave a negative trace on students' learning. Nevertheless, making mistakes should be seen as a natural part of the learning process and can be used as a valuable teaching tool. When teachers make mistakes, they can use them as opportunities to model how to identify and correct errors. As has been put into practice in the FLT Didactics lessons, using mistakes as a source of discussion has given the possibility to help students develop critical thinking skills and learn how to learn from their mistakes. A very good example is when the teacher shows two sides of the same lesson, one which is mistaken and the other which is appropriate. This can be done in the form of a simulation or by asking students to read a description of the two lessons. When doing this, there is always room for fruitful discussion.

24

The use of mistakes can also be seen as a way to build rapport with students by showing that they are not infallible and that everyone makes mistakes. Let the students teach is another strategy that can give students the opportunity to teach and reinforce their own learning and build their confidence. Students can be assigned to lead discussions or presentations on a particular topic, or even teach a lesson to the class. This can help students develop communication and leadership skills, as well as deepen their understanding of the material. The use of micro-teaching has proven to be a very powerful way for future teachers' learning.

A teacher's repertoire can cover these and many other ideas that can serve as models for pre-service teachers to put into practice once they are in their own classrooms. Students need to learn from their own experiences, both inside and outside the classroom and should be encouraged to reflect on those experiences and use them as opportunities to learn and grow.

The experiences and strategies that have been provided throughout this paper, just reinforces the idea that there are different ways and approaches to meet the goal of successful learning, and that it is a teacher's task to have them as part of their practice to motivate and engage students in the process of learning for the present and the future.

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Planning lessons collectively and modeling them

Planning in groups of three or four helps those who are lagging behind. It is an excellent opportunity to foster self-correction and self-monitoring strategies, as well as collaborative values. Modeling and demonstration are also important teaching strategies that we the FLT Didactics teachers use on a regular basis. Modeling involves showing students how to complete a task or solve a problem, while demonstration involves performing a task or skill for students to observe. These strategies can help students to visualize and understand the steps involved in a process, and can also provide a clear example of what is expected of them.

Assigning problem-solving activities

Assigning this type of tasks may promote the development of higher-order shills and creativity.

Promoting reflection about their professional development

Teachers develop professionally by reflecting on theory and practice, and by analyzing critically their strengths and needs for more professional development.

Using technology in a blended learning context that may foster motivation and professional identity

Integrating technology into the classroom can be a powerful tool for enhancing teaching and learning (Cantera Pérez A.; Cordero Martínez G.; and M. Pérez Labrad. 2022; Rodríguez Rodríguez M., López Serrano M., Cáceres León D. 2023; and Umayra El Nabahany, Said Juma, 2019). Teachers can use technology to create interactive lessons, provide instant feedback, and connect with students outside of class. The use of the Moodle Platform and mobile phones and other devices as part of the lesson engage students and reinforce learning

However, it is important to ensure that technology is used in a way that enhances learning and does not distract from it, so it is the teacher's task to really plan and have control of what happens in the classroom to make sure the learning aims are met. Giving future teachers the vision that technology can be used as a good support to the teaching learning process is crucial in today's teaching context.

26

3.Conclusions

In this paper we have reflected on how to model on-campus theory-practice linkages. For this purpose, we have proposed the use of mediation strategies to facilitate understanding and meaning in key concepts and principles, that is learning about theory. In addition, we have highlighted the importance of building on a teacher´s repertoire, the promoting of problem-solving and reflection about student-teacher professional development; in other words, learning to develop teaching skills and strategies.

Teachers learn to teach by collaborating on campus and during the practicum. They learn by solving problems, using technology and receiving systematic feedback. These ideas have proved valuable for us in promoting interest in teaching, professional development and professional identity.

The theory-practice strategies that we have proposed in this paper have proved valuable in our FLT Didactics. However, we need to revise our practices constantly with respect how well this match is doing. This match or mismatch hasn't been solved in the literature that we have consulted and in at times in our practices.

We need to emphasize with our colleagues that the theory- practice linkage may take place not only during the practicum, but also on campus. This paper has proposed some solutions for this issue.

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28

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