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Opportunities and Challenges of Using Community-based Pedagogy to Foster Meaningful
Learning of English in a Context of Escuela Nueva

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Abstract

This report chronicles the experience a pre-service teacher had with her ten mixed-grader students gathered in a context of *Escuela Nueva* Model, in a rural school located in El Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia. The preliminary observations did not display any community participation for English classes, even if it was stated as an essential statute in the school's pedagogical project and in the pedagogical model. In addition, English classes had no clear connection between language teaching and students' particular backgrounds. Community-based Pedagogy demonstrated to be an effective approach that facilitated students' English learning in a meaningful path. The authenticity of the content and the strategies implemented which integrated local knowledge and the students' familiar experiences, represented huge opportunities; while the passive participation of the community was a challenge found.

Keywords: Community-based Pedagogy, Meaningful Learning of English, Rural Education, Escuela Nueva

Título en castellano: Determinar cuáles pueden ser los retos y las oportunidades que ofrece la pedagogía comunitaria en un contexto de Escuela Nueva en medio rural, respecto del aprendizaje significativo del inglés.

Degree requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement to obtain a bachelor's degree in foreign language education (English- French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, El Carmen de Viboral, Colombia.

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Preface

From the beginning of the program I felt that there was a scarce of knowledge regarding English teaching in rural areas. I also had the feeling the rurality was an abandoned field regarding academical and governmental matters, especially for English. As I had experienced a lack of suitable English teaching in the rural schools my daughters had frequented, I early decided to run the program paying particular attention to all those things that could conduct me to focus my final research project on rurality, explicitly where *Escuela Nueva* Model (ENM) was applied. At that time, I did not know that pre-service teachers needed to be supported by an English teacher in the practicum site, what was impossible in ENM. Whatever, I continued running my program, meeting all kind of personal and academical circumstances, that made the program last four years longer than it was supposed to. In fact, during that extra time, policies in the *Escuela de Idiomas* changed, becoming possible for me to implement my practices and conduct my research project in a rural school where ENM was employed. I am glad to introduce to you this gratifying research project that looked for unveiling the main challenges and opportunities encountered in a context of *Escuela Nueva* regarding meaningful learning of English when Community-based Pedagogy is applied. Along this paper, you are meeting a brief description of the context, the problem found there and the proposal I deployed to cover that situation. Further on, you could also read an explanation of the core concepts that helped me to state the research question and objectives; and the findings achieved through the actions developed. I wish you enjoy this reading as I did during the practicum period.

Description of Context

The institution where this action research took place was a rural school in El Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia. It comprised 23 rural campuses in 23 different rural districts. The headquarter was the only regular school, with one group for each grade from preschool to 11th grade. There were 16 teachers, and a volunteer from Marina Orth Foundation who taught English in primary school. The other 22 sites implemented a pedagogical model called *Escuela Nueva*.

According to the Institutional Handbook (2016), one of the institution principles was to include the participation of the community (parents, guardians, and other actors) into the educational processes in order to create a collaborative environment that contributed to the integral development of students. In that sense, the main commitment of this institution was to help students to build their life project, highly engaged with their communities (Institutional Handbook, 2016). This document also mentioned methodologies such as meaningful learning and sociocultural learning, that included actions relating the students to their real contexts and lives. For its part, the slogan of the institution was: Agro identity and preservation of the natural resources, hence, strongly related to the rural students' realities (Institutional Handbook, 2016).

In the site where this research project was carried out, there was only one teacher, who was specialized in mathematics. He co-worked with other teachers from some near rural sites where *Escuela Nueva* was also applied. Those zonal groups took the name of *Comunidades de Aprendizaje*, where teachers with different specializations gathered with two goals: to prepare lesson plans and materials, and to make sure every site is teaching the same content (Personal Communication with the Cooperating Teacher, February 7th, 2023).

The participants in this study were ten students, from five to thirteen years old, distributed as follows: a preschool student, a first-grader, two second-graders, two third-graders, one fourth grader, and three fifth graders. Preschooler and first-grader were usually seated near the teacher; second graders were seated together; third and four-graders were separated into another circled-table; and fifth graders were seated together. Seven of those students lived in the rural district and the other three lived in a rural district nearby.

The situation I found in this context was that even though the *Escuela Nueva* teachers had been making big efforts to include the teaching of English into their classes, there was not a clear connection between the lessons implemented and students' communities. Consequently, English classes were, one, not pertinent since they totally excluded community as an active actor in the school processes and their knowledge; and two, not relevant because activities in the lesson were focused on fulfill the administrative expectations instead of being based on the students' realities.

Statement of the Problem

The educational model *Escuela Nueva* (ENM hereafter – *Escuela Nueva* Model) was adopted in Colombia since the sixties with the purpose of relieving the gaps that existed in marginalized contexts, such as access in rural areas, the limited audience in several grades, the heterogeneous ages, and the cultural characteristics of each territory. Although this model had somehow represented a good solution to the gaps just mentioned, it represented a big challenge. Particularly, there were two additional issues that should be considered in relation to teaching English in the context previously described: Community participation, and the fact that there was no clear connection between language teaching and students' particular backgrounds. Consequently, English classes were not relevant, nor pertinent.

Firstly, even if community participation was stated as an essential statute in the school's pedagogical project and ENM, English remains an accessory subject for rural population, concerning the principle of community involvement in the school processes. However, community's knowledge and membership ties were part of students' interests (Class Observations, March 8th, 2023), and could be considered to foster those interests meaningfully.

Secondly, examining the lesson plans and comparing them to the English Study Plan from the institution for primary, I could notice that lesson plans were concentrated in "*Mallas curriculares*" for each grade level and disregarded the "English for Colombia" program which was original designed for ENM.

Regarding this, even though elementary teachers, in rural and urban areas, had not being trained as English teachers (Correa & González, 2016), at least, they have been making efforts through the *Comunidades de Aprendizaje* (Personal Communication with the Cooperating Teacher, February 8th, 2023). However, the observations I made, displayed that there was no clear connection among the English lesson plans designed by the *Comunidades de Aprendizaje*, the students' surroundings, and ENM. In essence, English teaching was more focused on following the lesson plans than in provoking meaningful experiences for students.

Seeing the panorama just described, this project aimed to contribute to the scarce body of knowledge about English teaching in rural areas. The plan was to explore challenges and opportunities that the use of Community-based Pedagogy could bring in a rural context of ENM regarding meaningful learning of English.

Theoretical Background

In this section, some important concepts will be defined to have a whole background of the main notions that guided this research project. Regarding the context previously described it seems important to understand how and why ENM needs to be supported by Community-based Pedagogy to make more meaningful the learning of English.

Escuela Nueva Pedagogical Model

The pedagogical model of *Escuela Nueva* (ENM) in Colombia derives from the experience of *Escuela Unitaria*, a project from the UNESCO that started in this country in 1961. Its purpose was to look for the promotion of primary basic education in areas with low population density, as asserted Gómez (2010). Once the *Instituto Superior de Educación Rural* of Pamplona, Norte de Santander, had led the teachers' training process and form some of them, the ENM program was presented as a strategy to afford primary school in rural areas in Colombia in 1976, according to Galindo et. al (2018). ENM in Colombia aims to fulfil the contexts of ruralities, in terms of methodologies, didactics, ways of evaluating, and the interaction the community has with the school, as affirmed Galindo et. al (2019).

Following the statements of Gómez (2010), ENM is an educational approach that emphasizes independent learning and student-centered instruction. Rather than having all students follow the same curriculum at the same pace, students in *Escuela Nueva* schools are encouraged to work at their own pace and level. This, considering the climatic conditions of each region, or even some working conditions of peasant students according to the season period that could affect the students' assiduity.

Meanwhile, the pedagogical and methodological component of ENM includes four pillars, according to Gómez (2010): curricular strategies, administrative management, community participation, and teachers training; and a didactic constituent that comprises booklets with units and guides. It is important to clarify that different material has been created to support English teaching in ENM, like English for Colombia:

<https://eco.colombiaaprende.edu.com>; however this material is not part of the guides that teachers in the rural context depicted for this research commonly used. Gómez (2010) also established that this educational model promotes the principles of learning through experience, stimulating children's interests, and allowing the observation and the association between previous and new knowledge.

Additionally, ENM was created to offer primary education in rural areas, which remains characterized by few attendance and multigrade classes. Regarding this, Moreno (2007) referred that multigrade means that the courses are developed into a classroom comprising at least two different grades, in which, according to Gómez (2010), teachers act more as facilitators and guides, rather than lecturers. In that sense, Peirano et. al (2015) agreed on that rural multigrade schools represented a unique place to develop inclusive pedagogies, by recognizing the individual pace of learning of the students.

Community-based Pedagogy

Lastra et al. (2018) defined a community as “the place, the neighborhood, or the block where students belong or live together, share ideas, preferences, buy, sell, or play” (p. 210). The same authors also asserted that “Community-Based Pedagogy (CBP hereafter) involves the knowledge of the local communities, beliefs, constructs, and perceptions that all the people who

belong to that community hold and share through everyday contact” (p. 211). In other words, Lastra et al. exposed how “local knowledge” is closely related to CBP. Local knowledge for its part is defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO - 2004) as “the way that people observe and measure their surroundings, how they solve problems, and validate new information [...]” (as cited in Lastra et. al, 2018, p. 211).

Therefore, as Sharkey & Clavio-Olarte (2012) stated, “the connection between the knowledge, the practices, and the curriculum are under the consideration and appreciation of the community in which schools are located and students and their families inhabit” (as cited in Lastra et al., 2018, p. 211). That is why, Demarest (as cited in Paredes-Mendez et. al, 2021) urged teachers to:

design the curriculum based on local inquiry and to explore places as texts to promote local research. Teachers are called on to discover all the resources local places can offer for their classes, to construct content that is relevant and close to students’ communities, and to challenge students to explore their living environments through inquiry to develop ideas that might contribute to their local settings. (p.127)

Meaningful Learning

Meaningful Learning can be understood as the way humans construct meaning about their world to survive. One reference is made by Ausubel (2000) who stated that “the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows” (as cited in Vallori, 2014, p. 199). Another reference comes from Jonassen and Strobel (2006) who affirmed that “[humans] naturally work in learning and knowledge building communities, exploiting each other’s skills

and appropriating each other's knowledge" (p. 2). Consequently, "meaningful learning occurs when humans relate new concepts to pre-existing familiar concepts" (Vallori, 2014, p. 199).

Furthermore, Howland et. al (2011) affirmed that "educators who intend to offer meaningful educational experiences to their students are invited to contemplate and design teaching and learning around the following attributes: active, constructive, intentional, authentic, cooperative, or relational" (as cited in Mystakidis, 2021, p. 989). In accordance with Mystakidis (2021), Meaningful Learning "depends primarily on course design linking theory and practice with strong experiences where both teachers and students feel free to express their positive or negative emotions" (p. 989). Meaningful Learning aims to be significant, which, in Mystakidis (2021) words means, that "the students' learning generates durable knowledge and can be applied in authentic contexts" (p. 990).

Further, "Meaningful Learning maps a perspective on learning that includes consideration of the learner's personal characteristics, patterns of behavior and the environment" (Agra et al. 2019, p. 252), which in this context is related to nature and food production, a domain that the community knows and that makes part of their lifestyle.

To conclude, CBP was appealed for this research project as a "collaborative model [...] that is socially co-constructed by groups of individuals who are collaboratively focused on the same meaningful task" (Jonassen and Strobel, 2006, p. 6). Also, it is important to consider that previous knowledge, community support on scholar processes, potentially meaningful material and environment, and student's willingness to learn represented "useful tools because it enables real learning, it generates greater retention and it facilitates transferences to other real situations" (Ballester-Vallori, 2014, p. 199).

The purpose of including community into the school dynamics, as set in the ENM, and regarding the English class, was to help students to learn meaningfully about their surrounds, being supported by the community, practicing, and using their ideas and knowledges to solve real situations in their daily life.

Research Question

What are the challenges and the opportunities that the use of Community-based Pedagogy brings to a rural context of Escuela Nueva Model regarding Meaningful Learning of English?

Objectives

Main Objective

To determine which opportunities and challenges could Community-based Pedagogy offer in a rural context of *Escuela Nueva* regarding meaningful learning of English.

Specific Objectives

To collect and analyze information about the involvement of parents and community from the rural area in the educational projects.

To monitor the challenges and opportunities that implementing a Community-based project can have in a rural context of *Escuela Nueva* regarding the students' meaningful learning of English.

Action Plan

As a starting point, a discussion with parents and students took place to socialize the educational community about the project and its purposes, and to share with those different

actors their commitments if they agreed to participate. Moreover, parents were asked to describe the activities they used to do, as working or at home, with the intention of knowing deeper about the activities that make part of the daily life of the community. As Sharkey and Clavijo-Olarte (2012) mentioned, “teachers must emphasize local knowledge and resources as starting points for teaching and learning” (p. 42). Parents were also asked if they found any relevance on the English course. The second action was to adapt the curricula to that context. The topics students were familiar with were included in the lesson plans aiming to make content more meaningful. The third part of the actions was to improve the vegetable garden that students had already started with the Cooperating Teacher, to offer students an authentic experience of English learning related to ecological food production and its benefits.

The data collection means were conversations and interviews, students’ artifacts, and pre-service teacher reflections on journals. The conversations were noted in a notebook -as they were spontaneous-, while the interviews with students, parents and the cooperating teacher were registered. With students two interviews were done, one at the beginning and one at the end of the process. There was only one interview with eight parents and with the Cooperating Teacher at the end of the process. Both conversations and interviews were transcribed and codified. The students' artifacts were collected in their notebooks along the process and through a classification test of listening and speaking at the end of the process, then everything was systematized and codified. Along the process the reflections on the journals were done, and at the end, they were codified. All data was finally analyzed, and after having been assembled into seven different categories, the main challenges and opportunities emerged.

Development of Actions

The first step in the process was to determine which topics the students were more familiar with, from their families to the community at large, to take them into account for the next step of the actions. During the conversation with parents, they shared their working conditions as employees or owners in the local flower enterprises or food factories, as employees or owners of business in the town, and as housewives. Most of them manifested having some animals for their own consumption, and some plantations for helping family feeding, as well. All of them advocated in favor of the relevance of English for the future of their children and were willing to participate in this research project. As part of parents' commitments, they agreed to be engaged in the vegetable garden, mainly, by lending a hand once a week and sending kitchen residues with the students to the school site.

The second action was to introduce the suggestions that emerged as hints from the first action, as they revealed the perceptions of the community, their beliefs, constructs; in brief, the local knowledge. This action implied adapting and synthesizing the contents suggested in the syllabuses by incorporating the emerging proposals in the weekly lesson plans. When the activities or the material were presented to the students, they demonstrated interest in the English class by singing enthusiastically, pronouncing the verse with ease, asking for participating in group activities and going to the board to do the exercises.

The third action was about “relearning” the ways former paysans sowed. This action entailed establishing first what students knew about sowing food plants and preparing fertilizer. Then, the pre-service teacher carried out a series of activities that lead students and the cooperating teacher to keep the vegetable garden in an ecological and sustainable side. They

were appealed for cleaning the vegetable garden by uprooting manually the grass around the few plants in the plot, and to cover the soil with fallen leaves from the nearby forest. Students were also invited to collect cow drooping from the nearby pasture, and to compost it with the kitchen residues they brought weekly. During this third action, students were always willing to participate in the vegetable garden maintenance, they used to ask a lot of questions regarding the plants that could be useful for one or another food preparation, and most of them brought organic residues as a piece of evidence about their commitment. Students could realize that almost everything they needed to make their vegetable garden productive was within their reach.

Findings and Interpretations

This research project looked for unveiling the main challenges and opportunities that emerged from attempting to meaningfully teach English through Community-based Pedagogy (CBP), in a context of Escuela Nueva Model (ENM) in the East region of Antioquia. On the one hand, as for the opportunities, data demonstrated that the authenticity of the content and the strategies implemented, the integration of local knowledge and students' familiar experiences, supported students' meaningful learning of English. On the other hand, the passive participation of the community was the most representative challenge along the process. In the coming paragraphs I will offer evidence and interpretation of those findings.

Opportunities

The Authenticity of the Topics and the Strategies Implemented Made Students' English Learnings Significant and Transferable

Data analysis revealed that authentic experiences, based on a realistic context such as the vegetable garden and strategies like mixed-grade group work, games, and ICTs; helped students

learn the English content in a significant manner. Considering authentic experiences, students confirmed how valuable working in a vegetable garden was for their lives. When I asked them about the importance of working in the vegetable garden, they replied:

Student 1: Porque podemos aprender a sembrar las matas, a cuidarlas, cómo hacerles el abono. Podemos ayudar a nuestras abuelas a sembrar... a nuestras mamás, a nuestros papás...

Student 2: Lo importante de sembrar es para cuidar el medio ambiente, para los animales, para ayudarnos también a nosotros mismos.

Pre-Service Teacher: ¿Cómo?

Student 2: Plantando las verduras, los vegetales, para uno también alimentarse.¹ (Students' interview, October 18th, 2023)

By the same token, parents also validated that, growing vegetables had an impact in their language learning process in terms of significance and transferability. When I asked about the pertinence of the content covered in class, two of them answered: “Tutor 1: Aprende del inglés y aprende del amor por el campo. Parent 1: Y también se animan a hacer huerta en la casa, están pendientes...”² (Parents' Interview, October 20th, 2023). When I asked if they had heard whether their children mentioned English content while they were doing household activities, Parent 2 answered: “A mí, por ejemplo, me pregunta que cómo se dice tal color... porque él sabe entonces me dice a mí a ver si yo también sé y me corrije”³ (Parents' Interview, October 20th, 2023).

Another piece of evidence that supported the importance of authentic experiences in meaningful language learning was the activity in the forest and in the surroundings of the school. The idea of

the activity was to find wild fruits like blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, ‘*lulos*’, and ‘*uvito de monte*’ trying to name them in English as we found them.

One of the students found a weird seed. I was able to recognize the seed but not the tree, anything that I knew was that it was a seed from a tree which is in danger of extinction. I told him, and he had expressed a very deep desire to rescue that seed. He asked me what he had to do, and I explained it to him. When we went back to the school, he immediately put the seed in a dish with a bit of water. The student told me his intention of planting the seed at home. (Journal, August 18th, 2023)

Until the end of the practicum implementation, the student told me he was taking care of the plant, which, in his words, “was growing slowly” (Personal Communication with Student 1, September 27th, 2023, my translation). I clarified to him that forest plants take longer to grow than vegetables.

Regarding the strategies used in class, one of the parents mentioned:

Es la forma en cómo la profesora la hace ver [the English class] para que sea algo que a ellos les guste; de diferentes maneras... Student 1 [referring to her daughter], que ella se interese así en un tema, no. Póngala usted a dibujar y ella es feliz, pero que, en otros temas, no. En cambio, en inglés a ella si se le ve como el interés.⁴ (Parents’ Interview, October 20th, 2023)

Furthermore, the Cooperating Teacher (CT, hereafter) confirmed that, not only the authenticity of the content covered in the English class, but also the strategies used played an important role to make the students’ learning of English significant and transferable. He emphasized the importance of the strategies employed by noticing:

[...] cuando hay algo que se vive con el gusto, cuando se apropia, cuando aprenden jugando, con cantos, con competencias, el hecho de que el de 5° esté con el de 3° y se apoyen, eso hace que el aprendizaje sea más didáctico. [...] Si es divertido para ellos, lo van a recordar siempre.⁵ (CT's Interview, October 20th, 2023)

CT also recalled that students were using the content learned in class in other times or spaces along the week, as occurred frequently in the school restaurant: “Por ejemplo, cuando usted no está y les sirven algo, ellos se han apropiado de ese vocabulario y lo mencionan. Obviamente no diciendo una frase o hablando en inglés, pero si mencionan el vocabulario aprendido”⁶ (CT's Interview, October 20th, 2023).

With the depictions taken from each one of the groups of actors, it could be demonstrated that authentic activities and topics, and different strategies implemented may have helped students learn English meaningfully because they provided real-world context and engaged learners in significant ways. The participants felt involved in the processes of planting to obtain food, naming the foods they were growing and even preserving the nearby forest. They also brought family's knowledge to school and tried to replicate the learnings from the school at home. In a few words, authentic activities reflected the language and tasks that learners could have encountered outside the school, making the learning experience more relevant and practical.

Students' Local Knowledge and Familiar Experiences Facilitated Their Understanding of the Content Taught in Class, and Allowed Them to Use English Easily in Class

The data collected revealed that thanks to students' previous knowledge, and familiar experiences, they were able to recognize, without trouble, most of the fruits and vegetables flashcards shown and, in some cases, “they even knew the names in English” (Journal, August

16th, 2023). From the beginning of the process, I asked the families if the vegetable garden was a topic they were close to. Almost all the families grew some food in their houses, regardless of working in the rural area or in the town. Some of the parents expressed that they also prepared the fertilizer themselves (Personal Communication with Parents, May 10th, 2023, my translation). During the implementation, “I used flashcards and open questions as a strategy to get information from students about what they knew, and that had to do with their families’ relationship with the field” (Journal, August 16th, 2023). When I asked students to mention some characteristics, like colors, “they did it in English as well” (Journal, August 16th, 2023).

To get annotations on the pertinence of the content topics, I asked the CT during the interview about what he thought regarding the impact of my proposal in the students’ learning process of English, to which he replied:

Por ejemplo, las temáticas que usted trabajó con los niños, las situaciones de aprendizaje... ellos saben mucho más que yo. [...] [y] ser capaces de responderle algo que usted está preguntando en inglés. [...] Usted ha visto que en las actividades todos participan, ninguno le hace el quite o le da miedo”.⁷ (CT’s Interview, October 20th, 2023)

In other words, the CT’s perspective on the implementation confirmed that students’ familiar experiences were determinant in supporting students to recalling what they already knew in both, English and the content about planting. The fact that students could easily remember what they already associated with their previous knowledge made them feel comfortable enough to utter what they identified in the foreign language without hinders.

Another evidence of students' appropriation of English content came from the classification test, which was applied at the end of the research process. The test confirmed that the youngest student (pre-school), for instance, was able to:

Say his name when the teacher asks him; understand well when the teacher asked, 'how are you today?', and answer consequently; the vocabulary of emotions, which he differentiates orally; match well the sound with the corresponding image of fruits and vegetables. (Classification Test, October 18th, 2023)

For his part, the oldest student (fifth grade) was able to:

Provide personal information like his name, and his grade; write the whole date, and understand when the teacher asks, 'how are you today?' and answers consequently using the emotions in a complete sentence; differentiate among the emojis of emotions when teacher asks orally; perfectly answer orally 'yes, I am' or 'no, I'm not'; write in an accurate way the expressions 'yes, I am' or 'no, I'm not'; match the sound with the corresponding word and the corresponding image of fruits and vegetables; write the names of the fruits and vegetables; distinguish among the alphabet letters, orally; say whether he likes something or not; describe his favorite fruit using adjectives.

(Classification Test, October 18th, 2023)

What can be concluded was that if teachers tap into students' background knowledge and experiences as proposed in ENM through CBP, students could connect English language learning to their familiar and current context, making their new language learning easily acquired. Consequently, the use of the local knowledge and familiar experiences helped my students make the language learning process more enjoyable and effective. Students could see

the relevance of the material and the content taught to their lives and interests, and they could apply what they were learning in a nearby area, and in a practical way.

Challenges

Community Participation Was Not as Expected

The journals entries, the oral communications with parents and the CT, and the interviews documented that there was a lack of community participation into the English learning process at home and at school when implementing CBP in this context of ENM. Considering the school pedagogical project, families from ENM must participate actively in the processes conducted inside and outside the school, to build knowledge among the students that contribute to the community development (Institutional Handbook, 2016). In this case, referring to English class, parents accepted participation in the vegetable garden project with these two specific tasks: Collecting organic residues at home to be brought to the school, once a week; and going to the school once a month to participate in the improvement of the labor field (Personal Communication with Parents, May 10th, 2023). Plus, parents were tacitly expected to help their children with their homework.

There were mainly three aspects that were found in respect to parents' lack of participation: First, even though five out of six families grew food in their houses or were familiar with the process of cultivating, only three of them contributed sending residues to the school. The task in which parents were envisioned to go to the school once a month had to be omitted. When I shared the project with the principal, she told me that school policies did not allow parents presence into the "classroom", during the classes, so working in the improvement of the labor land with the children was discarded. Second, a huge gap was found regarding the

tacit commitment assumed as parents' attendance and support to students with their homework. And third, although students were willing to practice autonomously, families did not know how to support them.

In the first place, even if families were close to the process of cultivating food in their houses, there was poor commitment on sending organic residues to the school. During the first conversation with parents, four out of six of the families expressed having a vegetable garden at home, or at least cultivating fruit trees or garden plants. Among those, three out of four prepared their own fertilizer (Personal Communication with Parents, May 10th, 2023, my translation). However, the analysis of the conversation with parents unveiled that two out of the total of six families that were expected to participate in this task, contributed sending residues to the school. As a consequence, there was only a class in which a good amount of residues could be gathered to prepare a liquid fertilizer. As the journal entry revealed,

four families sent the residues, allowing students to have enough material to prepare another kind of fertilizer, in which we had to mix everything in the mixer, adding water, and pouring it directly around the baby plants we were transplanting in the field: tomato, carrot, cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, onion, pepper, zucchini. All students were engaged in that task, practicing the names of the plants while they were transplanting them. (Journal, September 13th, 2023)

One possible reason why community participation was not as expected in relation to sending residues could be that their main income came from other kinds of activities, different to growing food. As evidence, parents declared performing different activities like working as a teacher in a school in the town; working in her own bakery, in the town; having a neighborhood

store and selling eggs; and to be managing a floriculture enterprise (Personal Communication with Parents, May 10th, 2023, my translation).

In the second place, community support did not result as expected regarding homework as it was reiterative that students did not bring it at school. One of the possible reasons for the lack of support was that only two out of ten students got presence of their mothers at home after school; other five students were watched by their grandparents; and three of them were completely alone, without any adult supervision after school.

In fact, the information parents shared evidenced that their earnings and their sustenance was not necessarily related the ecological food production. Rather, most of the parents expressed to be employees, inside or outside the rural area, (Personal Communication with Parents, May 10th, 2023, my translation). Concerning this, the CT mentioned that rural families are no longer living from their fields, they prefer to work outside and earn money to buy products they could plant (Personal Communication with CT, September 13th, 2023, my translation). To sum up, none of them depended economically or substantially on planting food in the family ground.

Therefore, seven out of ten of the students got physical accompaniment at home, they were not necessarily supported academically by their parents/tutors. For instance, when I asked the tutors about how they managed homework, one of them, a grandmother, reported:

Tutor 1: Cuando llega la mamá. Él no me deja revisarle cuadernos, que ‘mamita no sea metida’. Y cuando la mamá llega tarde, se queda sin hacer las tareas, porque solamente las hace con ella. Pero muchas veces ella tiene reunión después de que sale del trabajo y viene tardecito.⁹ (Parents’ Interview, October 20th, 2023)

A parent added,

Las más las hacen solas porque yo llego muy tarde, y a veces no las hacen. Cuando se quedan con mi mamá, mi mamá les pregunta si ya hicieron las tareas y ellas dicen que sí, pero mi mamá no les revisa, ella mantiene muy ocupada.¹⁰ (Parents' Interview, October 20th, 2023)

In most of the cases, tutors and parents had other occupations at home such as taking care of animals, preparing the raw materials for the processing products they made, or dispatching orders like in the case of flowers crops ownership or in the arepas' factory (Conversation with Parents, May 10th, 2023).

Finally, the Cooperating Teacher told me in a conversation that three-sibling students arrived recently to the rural area, and her mother had to work for long periods. The kids were not with their parents or tutors after school: Parents leaved houses early in the morning and went back in the late afternoon. They worked in the town, or in the city, or in the flowers' enterprises... (Personal Communication with CT, September 13th, 2023). And I add here a comment he mentioned during the interview: “El hecho de que un niño no traiga el cuaderno o la actividad es porque hubo un papá ausente, que no revisó, que no acompañó.”¹¹ (CT's Interview, October 20th, 2023). With all this panorama, only two out of ten students were with their mother at home after school, and just one of those two assiduously and weekly brought homework.

In the last place, despite children were motivated to continue practicing English at home and given the tools to practice, parents did not know and did not have the resources to help them. In different occasions students asked for material/tools to practice English at home. Once I shared a link through parents' WhatsApp group (Journal, September 20th, 2023). Weeks later, the students reported that “the link did not work, or they had difficulties to stay in the page without

any problem concerning the internet connection...” (Journal, October 4th, 2023), and there was nothing parents/tutors could do about it.

Students’ readiness for practicing the English content at home contrasted with the parents’ availability and competence. Even though students had enough material and practices in class to be able to do what was asked as homework, parents did not have enough English understanding, and did not feel comfortable to help their children. Regarding this, the CT noted:

Si nos referimos a esta comunidad, ninguno de los papás tiene bases en una segunda lengua. Con las bases que [los niños] tienen desde la escuela, con las prácticas, con las actividades que usted hace, el niño tiene los fundamentos para desarrollar las actividades. Pero entonces el papá ¿qué es lo que hace ahí? - Es un apoyo, entonces ‘venga, hay que hacer el trabajo, hay que entregarlos, hay que ser responsable...’.¹² (CT’s Interview, October 20th, 2023).

In fact, it was noticeable that any of the parents had had a friendly proximity with English language, as declared by a parent: “A mí como estudiante, llegaba la clase de inglés y yo decía ¡qué pereza, qué horror!”¹³ (Parents’ Interview, October 20th, 2023).

The hinders for parents to participate in CBP in rural education could be attributed to various factors. The main reasons noticed during the implementation of this project were that parents in rural areas had limited exposure to CBP and its benefits. They may have limited awareness concerning the importance of their contribution to their children’s learning processes. They may also have faced economic challenges and been focused on meeting basic needs, prioritizing other responsibilities or aspects of life over actively participation in their children’s

academic process. Finally, parents may not have the time nor technology, nor educational resources to fostering a supportive engagement in their children's education.

Conclusions and Implications

This research conducted in the context of *Escuela Model* (ENM), aimed at exploring which were the challenges and the opportunities offered by Community-based Pedagogy (CBP) regarding Meaningful Learning of English among students. The analysis of data collected through four different techniques, made emerge two consistent opportunities, demonstrating CBP to be an effective approach that facilitated the students' English learning in a meaningful way. Those were the authenticity of the content, and the strategies implemented which integrated local knowledge and the students' familiar experiences. The data also unveiled a representative challenge which was the passive participation of the community. This last finding invites all the school community to find strategies that could better help pupils in the English acquisition in a meaningful path.

Thereby, this kind of implementation, which includes community participation, encompasses some implications to consider. For instance, teachers need to know well the students' backgrounds and be disposable to adjust the English program to those aspects of students' daily live and, perhaps, needs. It also implies dealing with the strengths and the weaknesses of the participants in CBP, and counting on their availability, willingness, and interests they could have in being active actors in the process. In addition to those, it remains necessary to contemplate the idea of teaching English through Task-based or Content-based approaches, serving to stimulate CBP, in the context of ENM.

My suggestion is addressed to the Ministry of Education, in matter of primary teachers' training in English. It is necessary to introduce policies affording professionals in English to teach in ENM, to primary pupils. That kind of public displays to be desirous to learn a second language and beg to be led by someone able to catch their attention in a foreign language. At least, it is imperative the rural teacher could improve their English level.

Even if this research project could inform about some challenges and opportunities met in a particular context regarding meaningful learning when CBP is used, it remains essential that pre-service English teachers could regularly implement their practices in ENM, thinking on further research. This field is still underestimated, at least concerning English matter. It would be interesting to access far "ruralities" and get information from there, to broad the perspectives regarding the authenticity of the content, the strategies implemented, the knowledge from locals, and the community participation.

Reflection

This program represented an enormous challenge to me, and an accomplished part of my life project, for which I am proud. The years spent inside and outside the campus were nutritious, as they were valuable experiences that helped strengthen myself. For its part, the practicum period symbolized an overestimated step, although it remains necessary. Almost everything I learnt throughout the program was confronted with the real stage of the actual teaching practice. At the end, what really helped me in crucial moments, was my former teaching experiences and the efforts we made as a team, with both advisor and mates. I admit that I did not choose the easiest context, but that was one that has special significance for me. This allowed me to fully engage despite the difficulties of the pedagogical model and the displacement conditions.

Concerning the research, I should say that it was enriching, despite the short term for implementation. I was glad when I felt the students so engaged. I was proud of them when I noticed they were acquiring self-confidence and were losing their shame to speak in a second language. I wish English graduated teachers could apply for official positions in rural context, to support rural teachers with the English curriculum and classes.

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