



**Exploring the Effectiveness of Co-teaching Practices to Increase Motivation
towards English Teaching and Learning
Action Research**

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Dedication

We would like to dedicate this research project to our friends and family for all the support during this complicated process. Without their help, experience and comprehension this would have been a more chaotic experience than it was.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CERF.: Common European Reference of Framework

CTs: Cooperating Teachers

EL: English Language

SDT: Self Determination Theory

LLMB: Language Learning Motivated Behavior

UdeA: Universidad de Antioquia

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

CAT: Content Area Teacher

SPEC: Language Specialist

Els: Language Learners

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Abstract

This action research study carried out in a public institution in Medellin was aimed at exploring the effectiveness of co-teaching practices to increase practicum students, in-service teachers without professional training in English, and students' motivation towards English teaching and learning. Data were collected through practicum students' research journals, focus groups with students, and semi-structured interviews with cooperating teachers and the coordinator. Data analysis showed that the practicum students' self-perception as professionals conduced to horizontal relationships with in-service teachers, which facilitated the implementation of co-teaching strategies that, ultimately, impacted the classroom environment in a positive way. Other key findings were the positive effect of student-teacher rapport on motivation and confidence for learning, and the co-teaching practices as a strategy to encourage English learning as students recognized how the spaces created by the practicum students allowed them to express themselves without fear which facilitated the comprehension of the language. Interestingly, and contrary to what was expected, data analysis also unveiled the demotivation manifested by in-service teachers due to external pressures, and the lack of alignment and communication between the university and the school context. Some limitations that kept us from implementing some action strategies were mostly linked to time constraints and the constant changes in schedules on the part of the institution. Since co-teaching practices proved to have a positive effect at different levels, it would be worth exploring and evaluating them more deeply.

Key words: co-teaching, motivation, student-teacher rapport

Resumen

Esta investigación-acción fue realizada en una institución pública de Medellín y orientada a explorar la efectividad de la co-enseñanza en la motivación hacia la enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés de los estudiantes de práctica, profesoras cooperadoras sin formación en inglés y estudiantes de la institución. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de diarios de campo de los estudiantes de práctica, entrevistas semiestructuradas con las profesoras cooperadoras y el coordinador, y grupos focales con los estudiantes. El análisis de los datos demostró que la percepción propia de los estudiantes de práctica como profesionales pares permitió crear relaciones horizontales con las profesoras cooperadoras, facilitando la implementación de estrategias de co-enseñanza que impactaron de manera positiva el ambiente del aula. Otros hallazgos importantes fueron el efecto positivo de las relaciones estudiante-profesor en la motivación y confianza para aprender, así como la efectividad de las prácticas de co-enseñanza para fomentar el aprendizaje de inglés. Hallazgos evidenciados en el reconocimiento de los estudiantes a los espacios creados por los practicantes ya que les permitieron expresarse sin miedo y facilitaron la comprensión. Contrario a lo esperado, el análisis develó la desmotivación manifestada por las profesoras cooperadoras debido a presiones externas y a la falta de alineación y comunicación entre la universidad y la escuela. Las situaciones que limitaron la implementación de algunas acciones fueron restricciones de tiempo y los cambios constantes de horarios en la institución. Ya que las prácticas de co-enseñanza probaron tener un efecto positivo, valdría la pena explorar y evaluar estos efectos de manera más profunda.

Palabras clave: Co-enseñanza, motivación, conexión estudiante-profesor

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Introduction

Motivation as a major objective for this project was clear from the beginning as practicum student 1, Juan David, had a significant interest in it in educational environments. Based on his earlier academic experiences, he was aware of the frustration and demotivation behind unclear instructions in language classes that would, ultimately, obstruct the learning processes. After visiting the practicum site, having the first meetings with administrators and teachers, and observing some of the Cooperating Teachers' (CTs) classes, the desire to keep working with motivation increased. The lack of motivation of teachers who were forced to teach English without being trained to do so also influenced students and made them lose interest in the subject. At this point, he strongly believed that both students and teachers deserved some support that made them feel they were learning something valuable with the language, and he could make a meaningful contribution in this regard.

In contrast, practicum student 2, Santiago, had a distinct yet complementary perspective about the practicum. He joined the practicum when the implementation was about to start because he was compelled to do so to get the degree. Having already accumulated years of teaching experience in both private and public institutions, he approached the research project in which co-teaching played an important role as a professional development opportunity. His main focus was on the effects of institutional and administrative frameworks, especially those enforced by the university, on the co-teaching experience rather than motivation in and of itself. It became clear as the practicum progressed that external factors were crucial in determining the emotional and professional environments of cooperating teachers and practicum students. Despite the differences and particularities of this experience, they both agreed on supporting each other and providing the practicum site with pedagogical and valuable interventions that, ultimately, would benefit all the parties involved.

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Description of the Context

Institución Educativa San Antonio de Prado is a public school located in Medellín. This institution has 3 venues across this jurisdiction and the one where this project was implemented is the main venue. It is one of the biggest schools in this location, holding up to 917 students and waiting for one more location that is being constructed. The main venue is called “Carlos Betancur”; it is a medium to large sized building consisting of 3 stories, a cement football field, a small library located in an old auditorium, a small restaurant, a teacher’s room and three administrative rooms near the main entrance. As for the resources that this institution has for the English class, there are spacious and clean classrooms with big boards, a TV or a projector and seats that are in good condition.

The mission of the institution is mainly focused on the education of respectful and responsible students through the enhancement of knowledge, the application of ethical and environmental values that contribute to the improvement of the social context. As for the vision, this public institution intends to be recognized as one with a high academic level that also promotes human development through the implementation of a constructivist approach, information and communication technologies, research and creativity for the education of integral citizens.

The teachers of this institution are professionals with higher education degrees from different universities across the country and in different areas such as Spanish, chemistry, physics, mathematics, social sciences and physical education. There is a shortage of English teachers with a teaching degree; consequently, the teachers from different areas are compelled to teach this class to the multiple grades across the institution. As for the English syllabus, it includes the 3 basic dimensions of the communicative competence: linguistics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Each school period has a problematizing question that guides the content, activities and objectives. For 6th grade specifically, some of these questions are “Who am I? “Why is my school important to me?” and “What do we have?”, and the topics studied are vocabulary

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related to professions, family, personalities, and grammatical structures that allow the construction of simple sentences in present and past with the topics just mentioned. This syllabus is constructed following the Basic Learning Rights (Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje) as proposed by the Ministerio de Educación Nacional in Colombia.

The students of this institution all live in San Antonio de Prado with some of them having single parent families, others live far away from the school in the rural area, and their socio-economic strata ranges from 1 to 3. This is a mixed school, with over 900 students, that offers two shifts, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, both for high school students. General activities take place in the soccer field and some students use the space to play football, run or gather around.

Statement of the Problem

Through some initial conversations with the principal and the coordinator of the institution, we discovered that there was a shortage of English teachers and that it has been a recurring problem in recent years. These situations helped us conclude that the teachers who were in charge of the English class needed some guidance to teach confidently. After some meetings with the teachers, we confirmed that they needed this support. Actually, they were excited about having some help from practicum students and the possibility of working together and supporting each other to improve teaching practices through an action research project. In one of the first visits to the school done by practicum student 1, he met the coordinator who was in charge of most of the cultural, academic and administrative activities. He also met two teachers who were in charge of teaching English without having a professional degree in English teaching.

This situation was registered in one of the journal entries in which practicum student 1 reflected on his concern about using the right strategies to teach English to students. Moreover, he noticed that most of the activities done in class depended on the students' comprehension of the topic which, subsequently, affected their motivation towards the class. In one of the journal entries there was evidence of the low motivation to finish a vocabulary workshop that was

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proposed for that day. There was no clear instruction on how to do it, and the cooperating teacher just projected some activities that the students needed to solve and translate without explaining how to do it. By that time, she was busy grading other workshops, and she barely spoke to the students. This was also connected with a journal entry in which he noticed how confused the teacher and the students were while working on the simple present tense. As a result, he identified the necessity of teaching this topic to the teacher and he did, which turned out to be a successful intervention that allowed the teacher to be more confident while teaching.

To provide evidence of this problem, the teachers answered a questionnaire in which they were asked 5 questions regarding their experience teaching and learning English, the challenges they encountered when teaching, and what they would like to learn related to English teaching. In relation to their experience, one of them perceived English as an obstacle throughout her academic career and the other one was a certified B1 teacher in both writing and reading. As for the challenges they encountered, they had to make a great effort to learn what they were going to teach for the class; they felt they needed more knowledge and experience to successfully teach in the right way. With respect to what they wanted to learn, they mentioned: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, didactic sequence design, games design and English strategies for classroom management. Both teachers' interests were similar as they expected some training from the practicum students to find ways to simplify English content so they could teach it without so many limitations.

The sixth-grade groups that the cooperating teacher 1, cooperating teacher 2 and both practicum students were teaching had a range between 34 and 42 students, aged from 10 and 13 years old; some of them failed 6th grade twice and, occasionally, students were moved to other groups of the same grade due to their attitude and disruptive behavior. However, we noticed that students in general showed a positive attitude towards the English language because they were active and liked to work in groups. This was confirmed in a survey they later answered in which they were asked how they felt about the language, the teacher and the class activities. Regarding

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the language, they said they liked it, but they lost interest when they did not understand the topic, or what they were asked to do in class. The teacher was seen as an inspiration and someone who motivated them to learn the language, contrary to what was observed at the beginning when writing the journals. On the contrary, the class activities were not perceived as positive because sometimes the objectives of the class were not clear. Something worth considering after the initial observations was that clear instructions motivated them to work and comply with the different activities proposed. Therefore, this allowed us to conclude that the teachers needed some spaces for learning how to conduct an English class more confidently and successfully.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, we will present the theoretical concepts that guide this action research project. Firstly, we will elaborate on *co-teaching* and its inherent feature of collaborative work, which is the specific strategy that was implemented in this context. Subsequently, we will refer to *motivation* and how it changes due to the actions taken by several teachers working cooperatively.

Co-Teaching

Before engaging in a co-teaching program, professionals should have the opportunity to define their individual goals, ensuring that the approach aligns with the students' needs. This step is crucial, as co-teaching places additional demands on the educators involved and encourages them to reflect on their responsibilities within the school environment. According to Friend and Cook (1995), key arguments in favor of co-teaching include the following: expanding instructional options for all students; increasing the consistency and intensity of educational programs; reducing the stigma often associated with students with special needs; and providing additional support for teachers.

Moreover, co-teaching was suggested as a method for restructuring secondary schools in the United States and England as early as the 1960s, with early references including Trump (1966) and Warwick (1971). During the 1970s, various open-concept schools implemented a

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model of co-teaching known as team teaching, where educators maintained independent instruction but collaborated on lesson planning (Easterby, Smith and Olive, 1984). In the 1990s, the middle school movement and other educational reform initiatives reignited interest in co-teaching models (MacIver, 1990). These historical developments are outlined in the synthesis provided by Friend and Cook (1995).

As educators, we think that co-teaching is a strategy that allows teachers to expand their pedagogical possibilities within the classroom and foster the learning and teaching objectives in their daily practices. Bauer and Walker (1974) as cited in Cook and Friend (1995) stated that co-teaching was more aligned with special education because there was a need to work in constructive and coordinated ways, critical characteristics in the context of our study, in which a model that fulfilled a harmonious relationship between practicum students and the cooperating teachers was implemented.

Furthermore, Friend and Cook (2013) defined the characteristics of the concept, in order to differentiate them from other approaches that implied working collaboratively. One characteristic is related to the number of instructors; there are usually two, one in general education and one in special education, who may be highly trained in both special education and the academic content area (p. 127). Another characteristic is the joint delivery of instruction which means that in order to satisfy the instructional strategies of students with disabilities or other special needs, successful co-teachers should evaluate their methods to make sure that they actually result in greater time and engagement from all of their students. Co-teaching reduces the teacher-to-student ratio, increases the professional competence that can be focused on meeting the diverse needs of students, and enables teachers to effectively respond to those needs (p. 129).

Bearing in mind that one of the purposes of co-teaching is to refine approaches, methods, and strategies in the classroom to improve the students' performance (Boland et al., 2019), it is relevant to implement it. The original model was taken from Cook and Friend (1995) and later on

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redefined by Bacharach, Heck, and Dahlberg (2008). These conducted approaches allowed the practicum students to plan the interventions of all the involved teachers, CTs and us, throughout the semesters and measure the usefulness of co-teaching on a daily basis.

Adding to the previous ideas, Bacharach, Heck, and Dahlberg (2010) state that the co-teaching approach is different from traditional models because it requires structured guidance for everyone involved: the cooperating teacher, the practicum student, and the university advisor, in our case. In traditional models, practicum students are often placed in classrooms with little preparation and unclear expectations. The authors' proposal for the preparation of the practicum students includes clear information about each person's role, ways to plan together, and tools to help build strong professional relationships. Instead of just watching at first, practicum students are introduced as co-teachers from the start, which makes them seem like real teaching partners. This planned integration not only helps the practicum student build their professional identity, but it also makes the classroom a more collaborative place, which improves the whole teaching and learning process (p. 1).

In addition to this structural preparation, co-teaching changes the way student teaching is experienced. In traditional models, one teacher leads and the other watches. In co-teaching, both teachers are actively involved all the time, which lets them pay more attention to each student. The model also directly addresses the power imbalance that naturally exists between cooperating teachers and practicum students. It gives them ways to speak up in shared decision-making processes and encourages them to do so. Practicum students can gradually enhance their teaching and classroom management abilities with the support of the cooperating teacher's continuous modeling and coaching, which makes pedagogical decisions clear and accessible. This collaborative framework is reinforced by initial and follow-up workshops, such as those held at St. Cloud State University, which provide participants with the theoretical underpinnings, co-planning techniques, and relationship-building strategies. This model helps practicum students

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develop their communication and collaborative skills, which are critical in today's classrooms, in addition to preparing them to manage classes (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlberg, 2008).

Co-teaching encompasses various models that enable collaboration between educators to enhance student learning. *One Teaches, One Observes* involves one teacher leading instruction while the other monitors students' behavior and engagement. A variation of this approach, *One Teaches, One Drifts*, allows the second teacher to provide individualized assistance as needed. In *Station Teaching*, instructional content is divided between two educators, and students rotate through different learning stations. *Alternative Teaching* involves both teachers presenting the same content using different approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles. *Team Teaching* requires both educators to be actively involved in delivering instruction simultaneously, fostering a dynamic and interactive classroom environment. *Parallel Teaching* splits the class into two groups, with each teacher responsible for instructing one group. Lastly, *Supplemental Teaching* enables one teacher to support struggling learners while the other works with more advanced students, ensuring that all learners receive targeted instruction. These co-teaching strategies facilitate differentiated learning and create a more inclusive educational experience (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlberg, 2008).

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), co-teaching has gained popularity as a way to satisfy the needs of various student demographics, particularly English language learners (ELs). In the United States, a content area teacher (CAT) and a language specialist (SPEC) teach the general curriculum to mixed groups of students, including English Language Learners (ELs). Instead of being isolated in pull-out programs, this model integrates ELs into regular classes where both teachers share instruction. This approach ensures that ELs always have access to grade-level content and the language support they require, while also promoting inclusion (Williams & Ditch, 2019, p. 23).

However, the degree of cooperation and shared responsibility between the two teachers is a major factor in how well co-teaching works for English language learners. Co-teaching

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requires a purposeful separation of work in coordinating, teaching, and assessing all students, including ELs, as emphasized by Villa et al. (2013) as cited in Williams & Ditch (2019). Williams and Ditch (2019) contend that in order to accomplish this, co-teaching groups need to be specifically trained in crucial areas like co-planning methods, successful EL instructional strategies, and the definition of each teacher's role in the classroom. Building long-term, equitable co-teaching partnerships also requires consistent institutional support and the development of strong interpersonal skills (p. 23).

Co-teaching is closely connected to collaborative work, which has become a key methodology in modern professional development. As Vaillant (2016) notes, collaborative work involves teachers studying, evaluating, and sharing their pedagogical experiences within specific social and educational contexts. It emphasizes working together toward a common goal, strengthening both individual and collective performance. Similarly, Calvo (2013, as cited in Vaillant, 2013) highlights collaborative learning as a strategy where institutions operate as unified systems, integrating actors and processes through reflective practices like learning communities, workshops, and pedagogical projects.

Motivation

According to Brown (2007), “motivation” and “motion” have the same root; that is why motivation implies behavior and energy at the same time. Although this statement may seem assertive and precise, it may still fall short due to the complexity of the concept. Motivation is a multifaceted concept that involves needs, wishes, passion, attitude and demeanor. This author defines motivation, from a psychological perspective, as the dynamic and changing direction, orientation, and depth of an individual's attitudes. Motivation reflects individuals' eagerness and willingness to act, driving them towards goals that may be short or long-term. Unlike motivation, emotions are temporary states that can produce spontaneous actions that do not necessarily coincide with consistent behavioral patterns. Feelings such as anger, grief, or happiness may influence behavior momentarily, but they do not define a person's overall ambition to fulfill their

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objectives (p. 6). Similarly, Madrid (1999) as cited in Buendía and Ortega-Martín (2018) defines motivation as a developmental process which involves the arousal, orientation and duration of behavior. This means that there is a lack of direct observation for motivation that can only be achieved through the observation of behavior, which is directly connected to the motivational states of an individual (p. 30).

In addition, there is a psychological approach to human motivation and identity called the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Ryan, Kuhl, and Deci (1997) as cited in Ryan and Deci (2000). This approach adopts conventional empirical methods that focus on the importance of humans developed inner resources for personality progress and observable self-regulation through behavior. Therefore, SDT's area of investigation is focused on people's inner inclinations and innate psychological demands that are the foundations for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes (p. 1).

Goldberg and Noels (2009) as cited in Muñoz-Restrepo et al. (2020) state that in the language field, SDT offers a classification of four types of extrinsic motivation. *External regulation* takes place when something is done because the students may want to avoid penalizations, get recompensed or their motivation is controlled by external factors. *Introjected regulation* is related to the desire of not being perceived as incapable by other colleagues or professors, mainly to avoid being ridiculed or seek approval from parents. Additionally, we find *identified regulation* where the motivated action is done by the student because of a special reason; for example, when students want to learn English as it will facilitate future communication in a foreign country they want to visit. Finally, *integrated regulation* mixes the value of behavior with personal interests or characteristics of the individual, mostly related to individual objectives (p. 177). In a similar vein, Richards and Schmidt (2013) argue about the difference between motivation and orientation. While motivation refers to a merge of attitudes and willingness to learn a language, orientation refers to the wish to be admired by the language community. This instrumental orientation involves more functional goals such as obtaining a job opportunity or passing an evaluation (p. 354).

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Furthermore, Dörnyei and Schmidt (2001) discuss how motivation serves as a driving force to do something in various contexts. In the context of language learning, motivation is evident through three fundamental actions: by putting effort into learning the language, either by doing homework or seeking new learning opportunities, by showing a strong desire to achieve success, and by enjoying learning the language; although this enjoyment can fluctuate sometimes, there is a positive and enjoyable perspective of learning activities (p. 6).

Ramírez (2017) asserts that when learning a language, motivation plays a key role due to the large number of social and cultural variables that may influence this process. For instance, age, sex, culture, identity, learners' variables, curricula, methodology and even informal interactions between students and teachers may interfere with students' motivation and create predispositions to a language. The author also highlights that without motivation; there is no effort and without effort there are no favorable outcomes when learning a language (p. 697). Similarly, Madrid (1999) states that in a classroom setting, a teacher's regulation of the classroom can cause changes in students' motivation, so, if behavior can be affected by motivation, it can be concluded that a motivated teacher will find alternative ways to always engage students (p. 30).

Regarding the classroom environment, Dörnyei (2001) mentions three motivational strategies that can be applied in the language learning context and that are mandatory as they build the basic foundation of a successful learning environment. First, *appropriate teachers' behavior* can be linked to *modelling*, in which setting an example by extruding eagerness can be used for teaching purposes. Second, a *pleasant and supportive environment in the classroom* is also useful as spaces like these tend to be strict due to the pressure imposed on students when they are using another language code that includes intonation, grammatical structures and inflections at the same time; teachers' rapport with students can avoid language anxiety that can be prominent in these cases. Finally, a *cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms* play an important role in learning environments. In this group, dynamics play an important role in learning environments as cruel words such as "nerd" or hostile labels can obstruct learning

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processes. Both teachers and students have an implicit responsibility with the group's goals creating a community in which students can have a sense of belonging (p. 33).

Additionally, Dörnyei (2001) shows how generating initial motivation enhances conditions and builds the basis for later performance. In this case, a teacher should have in mind how school curricula are linked to societal demands rather than actual learning desires and how attendance to school is naturally mandatory rather than optional. Consequently, students' behavior from the very beginning is affected by external factors by spending hours of their life in a room for many hours of their more energetic years (p. 50). The author then encourages teachers to enhance students' values towards the language as values are usually accompanied by beliefs that determine their preferences. There are three aspects that should be taken into consideration when teaching: the actual process of learning the target language (intrinsic value), the target language itself and its speakers (integrative value), and the consequences and benefits of having learnt the target language (instrumental value) (p. 51).

Furthermore, Dörnyei (2001) states that, teachers should break the monotony of classroom learning by including a large number of materials, activities and ways of communicating the content. In addition, tasks can become more interesting when they are mixed with elements of surprise, challenging and intriguing elements and also personal and fantasy aspects within task content. Furthermore, the presentation of this content is also important as sometimes a teacher can prepare a class and by the time they present it, students can think of it as boring or difficult. Also, even the most experienced teachers can omit the sequence of a task and create confusion, they need to do it as it may provide a bigger picture of the task and relate it to daily life activities. *Whetting the students' appetite* is creating a compelling opening for the students' attention. Using an energetic and positive tone of voice, allowing students to make guesses, allowing them to see the difficult parts of the task and having a surprise while presenting the information are good ways of keeping students engaged. Sequentially, *providing appropriate strategies to do the task* by demonstrating rather than talking can give students a clearer picture of the objective. In this part,

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the teacher should take the position of the student while developing the activity rather than imaging the process. Lastly, *protecting the students' self-esteem and confidence*, which is hard in school contexts as students are still reformulating their personality, and their self-image is a growing practice.

In a similar context such as the Ecuadorian educational system, Andrade-Molina et al. (2022) wanted to explore the source of motivation of 128 senior high-school students going from 16 to 18 years old in an educational environment that is also permeated by the Common European Framework of Reference for the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment of Foreign Languages (CERF) (p. 43). The authors followed a quantitative approach to map language motivation in an institution located in Ibarra, Ecuador. With the help of Cronbach's alpha coefficients, a criterion called Language Learning Motivated Behavior (LLMB) and the following constructs: 1) The Ideal L2 self, the individual vision of the language speaker they would like to be in the future; 2) The Ought-to L2 self, and 3) The L2 Learning Experience (p. 48). After careful examination of the results, the authors concluded that the L2 Self is tightly connected with the *learning experience* at school. By having a meaningful experience in the classroom, students would later have a better and more down-to-earth projection of themselves in the future (p. 52) and also adding that there is a strong correlation between the *learning experience* and students' achievements and consistency in learning English, being generally enduring in ELF backgrounds (p. 54).

Research Question

How can co-teaching practices foster motivation towards English teaching and learning processes among in-service teachers, practicum students and students at a public institution in Medellín?

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Objectives

General Objective

To explore the effectiveness of co-teaching practices to increase motivation towards English teaching and learning among in-service teachers, practicum students and students at a public institution.

Specific Objectives

To engage cooperating teachers, practicum students and students in collaborative activities that foster motivating learning experiences in the English class.

To provide cooperating teachers with the linguistic tools that increase their self-confidence and motivation to teach.

To encourage cooperating teachers to apply the linguistic knowledge taught by practicum students in their actual teaching activities.

To analyze the different outcomes emerging from the project in terms of motivation towards teaching and learning.

Action Plan

In this section we refer to the specific actions that were planned to answer the research question and to comply with the objectives. After identifying the problem in the institution, we firmly believed that the teachers who were in charge of the English class needed support in terms of language knowledge. As a result, we thought that some teaching spaces in which we could work together on aspects related to the language and planning of activities that subsequently could be applied in their classes were necessary. By doing so, students would also benefit from this pedagogical support as they were directly affected by the actions of the teachers in the class.

The space in which we decided to work with the teachers would have 3 different moments that would help them gain more confidence when teaching English. First, we planned a *language moment* that could meet their necessities in the classroom regarding English. This was decided after the teachers answered a questionnaire in which they expressed a clear interest in learning

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the language. For this reason, we considered using these spaces to teach some language content so they could strengthen their practices. Since these teachers had a basic knowledge of the language, we would not develop this class in English as it would only obstruct the learning process; we planned to directly explain the different grammatical structures through their mother tongue. In addition, we planned a *teaching moment* in which their voice would be heard, and they could have the opportunity to create their own ways of teaching diverse topics taking into account that, although they were not professionally trained in English teaching, they still had a lot of experience. Finally, we thought of a *design space* as we wanted active participation from the teachers and a space for them to create their own class artifacts. This would ultimately be a great opportunity to know how their creativity allowed them to produce or modify new material properly adjusted to their class necessities. Collaboration on our part was also important as shared opinions would likely enhance the quality of the different ideas.

Considering the ethical dimensions of the research project, we created a consent form and shared it with both teachers and students. This consent form would let the participants be informed on the details and the action strategies from the practicum students. A socialization would help us to avoid confusions regarding the research project and the participants to be aware of what would be implemented. Furthermore, the data we planned to collect for analysis purposes were semi-structured interviews with the cooperating teachers to know from their perspective what they thought about the spaces proposed, two focus groups with 10 students each as they would also be able to provide their own insights in relation to the implemented actions, one semi-structured interview with the coordinator to have another voice in relation to the project, and two research journals from the practicum students as this would provide us with useful information regarding the classes, students, teachers, ourselves and our actions.

Development of Actions

The original action plan was created by practicum student 1, Juan David, while in the development of the action plan, practicum student 2, Santiago joined the project and made an

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effort to integrate in the research project. In this part of the project, both practicum students tried to follow the original action plan, but different situations forced them to change and adapt some activities. This is important to mention because it shows the unpredictability of public institutions and the difficulties students and teachers face on a daily basis, and in our particular case how it affected the data collection and the teaching activities.

The meetings we proposed with the teachers to address the linguistic component and pedagogical aspects in the school were scheduled for Wednesdays at the end of the shift. In July 2024, we developed a timetable with the content of the classes and its possible activities, but in the middle of August we had to restructure it and make adjustments in terms of the curricula because there were a lot of topics that were not sequenced, and we had little time to develop them. Although we had scheduled 16 meetings every week, we could only have 2 because of personal situations with the cooperating teachers, unexpected classroom activities and administrative issues that affected the development of the students' classes, and consequently the development of the planned activities. Despite having only 2 sessions with them, the communication between the CTs and us as practicum students, was not affected because we kept working together and ended up doing co-teaching activities. The three moments we intended to develop did not take place as we proposed in the action plan, but somehow, we did have them in the co-teaching moments in our respective classrooms. For example, teacher 1 was enthralled when practicum student 1 taught her the rule for the third person in simple present as she was not able to understand why it worked like that. After some time, she was able to comprehend it and she even did online exercises to reinforce what was taught, by the end of the day she was very happy with this little but important improvement.

We handed out the consent form to the CTs, the coordinator and the students who participated in the focus groups. Through this document we shared the objective of the research and invited them to freely and voluntarily participate and share their opinions about the interventions carried out by the practicum students and the co-teaching process. The socialization

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of the research proposal was done with the coordinator and the CTs; the principal was invited but his agenda did not allow him to participate. Therefore, the advisor and practicum students shared their timetable and the general objectives. All participants agreed to continue with the project and worked towards the proposed objectives. That same day, the advisor clarified that each practitioner needed to comply with 8 hours in the institution. Four of those eight hours were planned for direct teaching activities with the CTs, and the other four were intended to support the institution according to the current necessities.

The data were collected from the following sources. The first step was the elaboration of the research journals, which were digital documents where a summary of the day-to-day experiences were written down, along with a reflection on them. The original idea was to register this information per week, but due to the diverse dynamics of the public institution, we decided to do it per day. It was also relevant to consider registering the situations that happened in the hours of teaching support, because they would help deepen the analysis. Secondly, we conducted a semi-structured interview with the CTs with the purpose of gathering information regarding the achievements of the goals that we proposed. The focus groups were designed with the purpose of collecting the perceptions, ideas and emotions of the students who participated in the classes taught by practicum students and the CTs. For this purpose, we chose some students from the four groups in which the interventions were developed. Since each researcher was in charge of two groups, the focus groups were conducted by the researcher who had not worked directly with the students interviewed. This methodological decision allowed minimizing possible biases and favoring more honest and spontaneous responses from the participants. Although this was not originally planned, the coordinator was also interviewed, because after analyzing the journals and the interview with the cooperating teachers, we decided to include another voice from the school community, someone who had supported the process, and could provide valuable insights.

Data Analysis

Following The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers provided by Saldaña (2013), we decided to create codes and categories that, ultimately, resulted in the creation of theoretical concepts for this research project. According to the author, a code is a significant piece of information, either a short sentence or a single word, that tries to summarize the most important information regarding a topic. The author also illustrates how codes are systematized in a way that can be organized into different groups or categories. By reorganizing them and finding patterns, you can find broader classifications and create meaning with the initial codes (p. 3). Our coding process began with the journals and the focus groups. Each practicum student analyzed his own data; that is, his individual journal and the focus groups implemented. This approach was conceived to ensure that the journal entries preserved the personal voice of each researcher, while the focus groups remained impartial by being conducted with students not directly taught by the practicum student. Subsequently, both semi-structured interviews with the cooperating teachers and the coordinator, were jointly coded by the two practicum students.

After the initial coding phase, we proceeded to create a chart that grouped the codes based on their internal connections and similarities. In this first stage, each practicum student proposed different codes according to the instruments they analyzed. However, once both practicum student collaborated to analyze the semi-structured interviews, they agreed upon a shared set of codes and their theoretical connections. Using charts in Microsoft Word throughout the entire process allowed us to identify emerging patterns and relationships between codes, which were then organized into broader categories. In the second phase of the analysis, after all the data had been coded, the practicum student decided to revise and refine the initial code-category chart to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, specifically, the fluctuating motivation observed among students, cooperating teachers, and practicum student, as well as how the co-teaching strategy was implemented and perceived by all members involved.

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Finally, the coded data was triangulated using a chart in Microsoft Word. The codes and categories that appeared consistently across different instruments allowed practicum student to identify several key findings. This chart included five columns: source, evidence, code, category, and finding. By organizing the data in this way, we were able to validate and consolidate the information once the analysis was complete.

Findings and Interpretations

The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of co-teaching practices to increase practicum students, cooperating teachers and students' motivation towards learning and teaching. After the implementation of the action plan, the collection of data and their subsequent analysis, four main findings emerged: there was a *positive impact of horizontal relations of co-teaching on the classroom environment*, as well as a *positive effect of student-teacher rapport on motivation and confidence for learning*. Additionally, the practices of *co-teaching became a good strategy to encourage English learning*, but there was also an unforeseen *demotivation as a result of external pressures*. The evidence of these findings will be shown and interpreted in light of the theoretical fundamentals of this action research project.

Positive Impact of Horizontal Relations of Co-teaching on the Classroom Environment

Practicum student's 2 self-perceptions, as a teacher, played a key role in shaping his co-teaching experience. Unlike many practicum students who are perceived as novices in need of guidance, practicum student 2 approached the practicum as an in-service teacher, openly demonstrating his six-year teaching experience. This self-perception allowed him to establish a horizontal relation with the cooperating teachers, school coordinator, and students as a professional peer, rather than as a subordinate in training. Evidence of this is found in his research journal in which he expressed how he realized the need of positioning as authentic teachers rather than as preservice teachers. He points out that it could be beneficial to establish a genuine relationship with the CTs so that a supportive classroom environment is created and their participation and confidence are fostered. This self-perception was so evident that the coordinator

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was able to recognize it during the semi-structured interview¹ in which he highlighted the practicum student's 2 previous experiences, portrayed in how he taught his classes, how he used the board, how he moved around the classroom to carefully observe the development of the class, and how he got involved with the students, among other qualities.

This perception fostered mutual respect and a higher degree of trust, particularly when handling real-life classroom challenges. It was precisely this sense of equality that allowed practicum student 2 to build a strong rapport and navigate the practice more effectively. This finding suggests that allowing practicum students to act according to their actual experience and capabilities can lead to more productive and motivating co-teaching relationships. This shift in positioning also influenced the experience of practicum student 1, who similarly felt the confidence generated due to the horizontal relationship created between him and the cooperating teachers. This confidence was evident in one of his journal entries, in which he recorded his desire to teach a class by himself to test what he had learned throughout the practicum stage, and how his CT allowed him to do so and provided him with the necessary pedagogical tools and trust to conduct the class, creating a stronger relationship between them and a supportive learning environment.

The different models of co-teaching used in the classes proposed by Bacharach, Heck, and Dahlberg (2008) had a positive impact on the classroom environment in terms of collaborative work, students' behavior and teaching strategies. Some examples of these co-teaching practices are *One Teaches, One Drifts* which is evidenced in one of the focus groups when one of the students expressed that, "several times they worked together; Juan David explained the ones who were in-need how they had to do the activity while the cooperating teacher complemented and helped him with classroom management". Moreover, *alternative teaching* was used by

¹ The information collected through interviews and focus groups was translated by the authors.

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practicum student 1 when it was necessary to “re-teach” in another way, the most important aspects of the topic because the first explanation was not clear enough.

In line with this, the strategy *One Teaches, One Observes* in which one teacher taught something and the other observed discipline issues, was noticed by the students who mentioned in the focus groups that this strategy, instead of making them feel uncomfortable, actually facilitated the development of class activities as responsibilities were distributed; they recognized how this strategy positively helped the classroom relations between teachers and students. In addition, they perceived that CT 1 and practicum student 1 had such a reciprocal academic relationship that they looked like close friends that could anticipate each other’s actions to work better in the classroom. Both of them were tightly connected when working together and this showed students a healthy relationship when teaching together, creating a better classroom environment for all. One example of this is when students mentioned in one of the focus groups how well both teachers complemented each other when teaching a numbers activity in which CT 1 was busy grading and practicum student 1 explained the activity, then the CT contributed with what she thought was necessary. This provides evidence that the students’ perception of both teachers was not hierarchical; on the contrary, they saw them equally important which shows how horizontal co-teaching dynamics can shift classroom culture and redefine the practicum experience.

The Effect of Student-Teacher Rapport on Motivation and Confidence for Learning

Another key finding was the positive effect of the emotional rapport between students and teachers on motivation and confidence for learning. While behavioral issues were often attributed to students’ lack of interest in the subject or their resistance to rules, further analysis revealed that poor classroom attention also stemmed from weak emotional connections with teachers. Once practicum student 2 established a trusting relationship with the students, classroom dynamics improved significantly. Students became more attentive, participative, and willing to ask questions, which deepened their understanding of the subject matter. This was evinced in one of

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the focus groups in which a student stated that, “Classes with Santiago were funny, he tried to have fun talks, and the teacher brought a smile to one's face when one was sad”. This level of empathy and emotional support fostered a sense of trust between the students and the practicum student. As a result, students felt that personal or interpersonal problems could be addressed safely and respectfully with the teacher. This helped them detach emotionally from conflicts and redirect their focus toward learning activities, knowing that a space, sometimes in the four support hours the practicum student needed to comply with in the institution, was guaranteed for conflict resolution.

In addition, the CTs shared the idea of students getting more connected to the class, as they said that students displayed affection towards the practicum students when they arrived to the classroom, and also the fact that students preferred to seek guidance from them because they knew they would obtain different responses from their usual ones (Semi-structured interview, CT 1). The previous information is related to what Dörnyei (2001) states: the way a teacher organizes and handles a classroom can directly affect students' motivation and how they relate with other people. Not only classroom emotional and physical display help to nurture a positive relationship between students and practicum students, but the cooperating teacher also as a mediator had a meaningful impact on the students' motivation, too. Evidence of this was found in the practicum students' journals in which practicum student 2 expressed how he successfully handled a sensitive situation in which a fight broke out among several students. Addressing this emotional conflict with empathy led to a significant shift in group behavior and a more respectful relationship between students and teachers. This highlights how emotional rapport is not only supportive, but fundamental in building a psychologically safe learning environment. When students feel emotionally secure and respected, they are more likely to take risks, participate actively, and engage with the subject matter. In this case, empathy functioned as a classroom management tool that restructured the learning space around mutual respect and trust, rather than fear or punishment.

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Similarly, practicum student 1 developed his own strategies to create rapport with students. As mentioned in the focus groups, his subtle and alternative ways of handling classroom situations made students feel calmer and more aware of their misbehavior. For example, when students ate in the classroom, practicum student 1 would tell them with hand signs to stop doing it and to put it back in their backpack as a first warning; this would not create a big scene among students, as opposed to what they said CT 1 did: screaming and punishing the students without any negotiation or warning. Even though students misbehaved, they were conscious of it and how this affected CT 1, so having another teacher who dealt with emotions differently helped gain emotional reassurance in this space. Finally, students mentioned in this focus group how the “fun” element added to the classes had a positive effect on the way students created bonds with the class and the practicum student. The creativity of activities generated favorable outcomes in creating better relations between teachers and students as breaking the routine of the day with creative tasks favorably influenced students.

Madrid (1999) mentions how there is a necessity for teachers to have students engage with the class, either by positively stimulating class contexts or creating new activities. We found evidence of this in the focus groups in which one of the students mentioned the importance of having a patient teacher in the classroom. Other students mentioned how being able to ask with no fear of being reprimanded helped them change their perspective towards the class and the language. This was shown in participation in class activities, asking for translations of words or sentences, and questions and clarifications to the teachers. In the classrooms, speaking English was seen as something scary and almost shameful as they were not certain on how to pronounce some words which significantly increased pressure on them. The arrival of both practicum students permitted the creation of a safer environment with the language, as Dörnyei (2001) explains protecting the students’ self-esteem and confidence to maintain motivation becomes a necessity due to the difficult contexts the students inhabit, and how their self-perception needs to be positively enhanced by constructing spaces that facilitate their educational process. This

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finding challenges the traditional focus on discipline in classroom management and suggests that rapport-building and emotional safety should be central to language pedagogy, especially in vulnerable contexts.

Co-teaching as a Strategy to Encourage English Learning

In addition to the positive perception of the CTs, students were excited for the introduction of new activities. Considering what Andrade-Molina et al. (2022) state, the *learning experience* that students have in a classroom is directly linked to the achievements and consistency in learning English. Two successful activities led by practicum student 2 included creating a clock to learn how to tell time and another where students identified simple key words by listening to a song. These two activities were very well received by them. Students emphasized on how the combination of two teachers in a classroom was effective as they could understand better English related explanations and the class environment was positively influenced. Proof of this is the students' recognition, in one of the focus groups, that having CT 1 working alone limited the class due to students' indiscipline. Motivation was also visible by one of the CTs as she mentioned in the interview how different the students' attitudes were towards teachers. She added how students were constantly seeking help from practicum students rather than her.

After the initial motivation was constructed with students, Dörnyei (2001) highlights the importance of keeping this motivation stable. He mentions how making learning refreshing and pleasant is key to maintaining a level of motivational attitudes in the classroom. Either by disrupting the monotony of a classroom or bringing new ideas and materials, a teacher can surprise, dare, or fascinate students. This is the case when students in the focus groups called the class "fun" as, for example, practicum student 2 was keener to speak English in the classroom and let them know it was also possible for them to do so. In one of the classes conducted by practicum student 1, students were thrilled to see how both CT and the practicum students worked together to help them in the class. One student referred to how different tips shown by practicum student 1 were clear to solve class tasks. This new dynamic surprised the students and they were

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more inclined to ask questions without fear and with the certainty that if one teacher could not answer their questions, the other could.

As discussed, motivation can be found in a large number of ways, we could also identify in practicum student's 1 journal how students were motivated by extrinsic reasons and showed how other students reacted to our interventions. Within the SDT, Muñoz, Ramirez et al. (2020) as cited in Goldberg and Noels (2020) mention how extrinsic motivation can be fragmented into external regulation. Although it is mainly instrumental as it is related to the avoidance of penalties or getting rewarded by external actors, it is still motivation just from a different perspective. This external motivation was mostly observable in students who were either failing the class and did not want to do reinforcement workshops or in students who just wanted to finish the task and be left alone. This was mostly visible at the end of each school period, as students were beginning to realize that their grades were not as good as they thought, so they were motivated to change this at least for this moment.

Despite the challenges posed by untrained cooperating teachers and fluctuating motivation levels, co-teaching proved to be an effective strategy to enhance student engagement. By combining the strengths of both the practicum students' and cooperating teachers', the teaching and learning processes became more dynamic, supportive, and emotionally safe, encouraging active participation and improving English learning outcomes.

Demotivation Towards English Teaching as a Result of External Pressures

Although co-teaching did not substantially increase the motivation of the in-service teachers or practicum student 2, it still fulfilled its purpose as an effective strategy. The cooperating teachers and practicum student 2 were able to build meaningful rapport by recognizing that both parties were engaging in the practice out of obligation: while practicum student 2 was required to complete a practicum, the cooperating teachers had to teach English despite not being specialists, simply to keep their positions. This was first reflected in practicum student's 2 journal, where he shared that the teacher confessed, she knew by firsthand how awful, demotivating, and

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exhausting a practicum could be. That is why he connected emotionally with her, in this process she was a reasonable and empathetic person and later on it was reassured by the CT's, one cooperating teacher expressed uncertainty about the criteria used to select the practicum center and the teachers, highlighting that many were assigned to teach English despite lacking specialization, which could influence teaching quality and, consequently, student engagement (Semi-structured interview). This mutual recognition of vulnerability created a space where both parties acted as sources of support for one another. By comprehending each other's struggles and working collaboratively, they centered their efforts on providing quality education for the students.

Another unexpected but important finding that emerged from the co-teaching experience was the demotivating effect caused by a lack of alignment and communication between the university and the public school context. While the practicum was meant to be a collaborative space for growth and mutual learning, it was often overshadowed by external expectations that were not fully adapted to the realities of the school. This disconnection, rather than fostering motivation, generated tension, emotional fatigue, and a general sense of discouragement among participants, particularly practicum student 2 and the cooperating teachers. Similarly, practicum student 1 expresses this situation in his journal entry 4, on August 19th in which he described a challenge that became evident when one of the CTs expressed her concern about the high number of students failing English. She explained that more than 20 students had not passed, and many others had barely passed the subject. Her concern was not only academic, but also administrative as she felt pressure from the school administration, anticipating corrective meetings where they would be held accountable. In this case, school-level requirements added a layer of stress that limited space for pedagogical reflection and innovation.

At the same time, CT 2 expressed discomfort about her role in the practicum. In the semi-structured interview, a teacher openly acknowledged feeling demotivated after observing practicum student's 2 English teaching practices. She reflected that instead of gaining confidence

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from the collaboration, the comparison highlighted her own perceived shortcomings: “I felt like I was deceiving the students. I became more aware of my weaknesses. I think I speak for both of us when I say our motivation decreased”. While the intention was never to create discomfort, this quote illustrates how emotional responses can emerge when responsibilities do not match teachers’ training or areas of expertise. Similarly, CT 1 shared: “We are not prepared yet. We still have a lot to learn. Yes, we have more tools now, but ... to say we are ready? No” (CT 1, Semi-structured interview). These reflections do not express resistance to improvement, but rather a sense of vulnerability that surfaced due to unclear expectations and insufficient support for the unique demands of co-teaching in a foreign language. In the same interview, both CTs questioned whether the placement of practicum students in this school had fully considered the background of the cooperating teachers, who were assigned English not because of their training, but due to institutional needs. Rather than pointing to failure, this comment calls attention to the importance of communication between the university and practicum sites, so that roles, expectations, and support systems are clearly defined from the beginning.

Practicum student 2 also documented the emotional consequences of this disconnect in his journal. After meeting with his department head, career coordinators, and university administrative staff, researcher 2 explained he was struggling to continue due to his full-time job. He wrote: “I felt compelled to look for the spaces I was missing” suggesting that the focus had shifted from meaningful teaching to checking procedural boxes. In a later journal entry, he also reported how the university had not shown enough understanding of the school’s day-to-day challenges, noting that although space and time constraints had been discussed, “the university does not understand very well and it is not being comprehensible at all about the situation of the school or their daily life”

A moment of tension arose between university staff and the cooperating teachers. In an effort to mediate, practicum student 2 noted: “I felt unheard again, my cooperating teachers were angry with the tone my advisor had used, they felt disconnected from the university staff. I had

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warned multiple times that this situation could happen, and despite my efforts to calm both sides, it didn't work" (Journal Entry 15). This situation illustrates how the absence of ongoing, open communication can strain relationships and hinder the collaborative purpose of co-teaching.

These findings reveal that for co-teaching to be truly effective, it must be supported by institutional coherence, empathetic dialogue, and realistic expectations. Without these, motivation fades, and the practicum risks becoming a procedural formality rather than a space for meaningful professional growth.

Conclusions

The Colombian educational system has faced a prolonged shortage of English teachers, and it still affects both students and teachers. The main goal of this research was to explore how effective co-teaching could be in order to increase motivation among all members involved in the learning and teaching processes, unveiling the importance of having enough English language teachers at public institutions in Colombia, as it can increase the level of participation, motivation and learning in the area. The results of this research project were mostly positive, and it showed the positive impact practicum students made in this institution –mostly with students– in a short period of time, demonstrating how small actions from universities and their students can positively influence contexts in need.

This project shed light on how teachers who are not professionally trained in English can significantly modify their view on the language. Teachers realized the arduous task teaching English requires and how it can affect their life. Although teachers of the institution were thankful for the help both practicum students and the institutional coordination provided, this was not enough and made them aware of how unfair this was for students and also for them; they were mostly teaching because it was scheduled for them, and very little motivation was gained from this. As for students, they could shift their vision of the language and gather a more positive view of the language. The new strategies and material proposed by the practicum students had a

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meaningful impact on them as they were motivated to learn the language and they were able to understand the reasons behind the problematic the school faces with shortages of teachers.

It is also important to reflect on three key insights that emerged throughout the process. First, the university bears an essential responsibility to adapt its practicum structures to the real contexts of public schools. A lack of communication or contextual awareness cannot only create logistical challenges but also foster tensions that ultimately demotivate those involved in the process. More intentional coordination and empathy from academic institutions are necessary to prevent such outcomes. Moreover, horizontal relationships between practicum students and cooperating teachers are indeed possible, but they depend on specific conditions. In our case, the prior professional experience of practicum student 2 contributed to a more balanced dynamic. This suggests that power hierarchies can be softened when trust and mutual respect are present, yet these outcomes are not guaranteed without the right relational and contextual factors.

Finally, we would like to restate the usefulness of co-teaching and motivation as concepts that can work together if the context demands it. Only motivational changes in a classroom setting or working separately with co-teaching may make researchers miss useful information that can be found if you mix these two approaches together. Motivation permeates every aspect of educational environments so it is very broad and to have a concept such as co-teaching to delimit it and have better research results is very important.

Recommendations

Bearing in mind the conclusions drawn, we suggest that the practicum become more flexible with all participants involved in the process. While encouraging students to learn English was a valuable goal, the analysis of the factors that led both cooperating teachers and practicum student 2 to feel demotivated highlights a key issue: high expectations imposed without consideration of the real teaching context can obstruct meaningful progress and weaken the collective effort toward shared objectives. Furthermore, communication among all participants must be reinforced to foster a positive environment and strengthen the relationships, essential to

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successful co-teaching. When challenges arise, practicum students, cooperating teachers, and university advisors should be able to engage in assertive and honest dialogue to address difficulties constructively.

Finally, it is essential to revise the practicum curriculum. Although it is presented as responsive to the needs of institutions, our experience demonstrates the need for ongoing adjustments to ensure it truly meets those needs. Additionally, the absence of a clear regulation or framework defining the responsibilities and expectations of each participant significantly hinders the process. Establishing such guidelines would provide clarity and shared direction from the outset.

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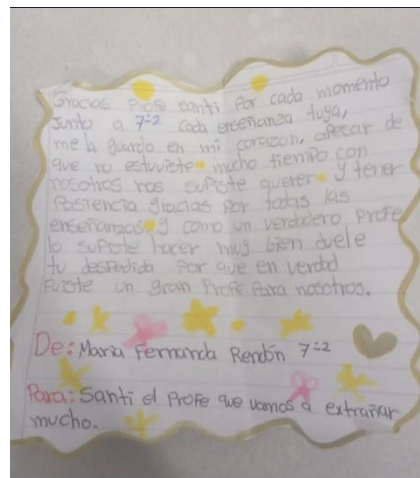
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Appendix

Appendix A Images taken as evidence of the second finding



Appendix B Evidence of the third finding

