Developing Reflective and Investigative Skills in Teacher Preparation Programs: The design and implementation of the Classroom Research Component at the Foreign Language Program of Universidad del Valle

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ABSTRACT

In this article we want to describe our process and experience in studying, designing, planning and implementing the Classroom Research Component in the first five semesters of the Licenciatura program at the School of Language Science, Universidad del Valle. We want to stress the role of Classroom Research in our students' initial training and in our own professional development. We also want to show the importance of preparing students and future teachers who possess not only linguistic competence in the foreign languages, but also competences that allow them to reflect, analyze and find ways of improving their professional practice.

The description of this experience leads us to share our achievements, difficulties and plans for future development.

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RESUMEN

En este articulo se describe el proceso y la experiencia de diseño, planificación e implementación del componente de investigación en el aula en los primeros cinco semestres de la Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras de la Universidad del Valle. Queremos resaltar el papel de la investigación en el aula en la formación inicial de nuestros estudiantes y en nuestro desarrollo profesional como docentes. Además queremos mostrar la importancia de preparar a los futuros profesores no solo en el desarrollo de competencia lingüística en las lenguas extranjeras sino también de competencias que les permitan reflexionar, analizar y encontrar maneras de mejorar su práctica profesional.

La descripción de esta experiencia busca compartir nuestros logros, dificultades y planes de desarrollo futuro.

RESUMÉ

Cet article entend présenter le processus de dessin, de planification et de mise en oeuvre de la composante de recherche en salle de classe des cinq premiers semestres du programme de Langues Étrangères de l'Université du Valle. Nous voudrions souligner le rôle de la recherche en éducation dans la formation initiale de nos étudiants et dans notre propre développement professionnel. Nous voudrions également montrer l'importance de la qualification des futurs professeurs non seulement dans le développement de compétences lingüistiques en langues étrangères, mais aussi de compétences qui favorisent la réflexion, l'analyse et la quête de moyens de perfectionnement de leur pratique professionnelle.

La présentation de cette expérience nous mène à partager nos accomplissements, nos difficultés et les projets que nous souhaiterions entreprendre prochainement.

Key words: classroom research, reflection, teacher preparation, foreign language programs, research component, curriculum.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to share with readers our experience in the design, planning and implementation of the Classroom Research component of our *Licenciatura* Program at Universidad del Valle, in Cali.

Our experience stemmed from two main aims: First, we wanted to increase our students' awareness and understanding of educational institutions, of their learning processes, of our teaching processes and of classroom teaching and learning in general, with the purpose of improving their practice and the teaching profession. Our second aim was for us to learn and grow as teachers and researchers through a better understanding of learning and teaching, and through study, practice and discovery of research related issues.

This experience allows us to address our students' needs in pre-service traininng and our own in in-service training through self-planning, collaborative development, and cyclic reflective evaluation. As a result, our curriculum is renewed, and we and our students prepare to be lifelong learners and better teachers to suit our changing times.

2.THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 What is Classroom Research?

Modern classrooms have new needs and, necessarily, new ways of meeting them. More and more teachers are looking into their practice – both in their classrooms and their educational institutions- to solve the problems they find or to improve their practice and their students' learning processes. They are resorting to research as an informed way to lead action and change. For about two decades now teachers have tried to find, by themselves, the answer to questions of what happens in educational institutions, taking distance from the psycho-statistical tradition of agricultural botany initiated by Fisher in 1935. This growing interest in describing, analyzing and understanding the every-day reality of the classroom and the educational institution has lead to what has been known as classroom research.

According to Nunan (1990: 1) "...classroom research is research that is carried out in the classroom for the purpose of answering important questions about the learning and teaching of foreign languages." This definition can be

expanded to answer any important question about school happenings, be it related to learning, teaching, relations, or to activities that make part of institutional life, materials, impact of education in the community, etc.

Hopkins, in 1985 proposed two possibilities of research for teachers: the **socio-anthropological tradition** (ethnographic research) and **action research**. Both use mainly qualitative methods of data collection and usually draw conclusions based on observations, interviews, and descriptions of what they study. However, action research does not exclude the use of quantitative methods; research processes can include both types of methods for a more complete collection of information at different stages of their development.

Ethnographic, socio-anthropological research, (from the Greek *ethnos,* which means *people* or *culture)* tries to understand a social situation and derive hypotheses according to its description, analysis and interpretation. It takes into account the people, culture, events, customs, situations, behavior, beliefs and attitudes of the group studied. The description is based on the viewpoint of people who belong to the culture itself. The analysis and interpretation is done from the perspective of the researcher.

It is important to look closely at the concept of culture in order to understand the adequacy of ethnographic research in education. Franz Boas (1940: 12) defined culture as something that " embraces all the manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives, and the products of human activity as determined by these habits."

More recently, anthropologist William D. Haviland (1991) defined culture in the following fashion: "Culture consists of the abstract values, belief, and perceptions of the world that lie behind people's behavior and that their behavior reflects. These are shared by the members of society, and when acted upon, they produce behavior considered acceptable within that society." He asserted that "Cultures are learned, largely through the medium of language, rather than inherited biologically, and the parts of a culture function as an integrated whole" (Haviland, 1991, p. 279). Also, he emphasized values, beliefs and perceptions over behavior. For him, "culture is not observable behavior, but rather the values and beliefs that people use to interpret experience and generate behavior" (p. 280).

In our context, Avila proposed the definition of culture as " the gathering of

symbolic structures that regulate every-day life and, consequently, interaction among subjects. (Avila 1994, in Munévar, Gómez & Quintero 1994: 21).

From these definitions we can argue that elements such as every-day interaction in a community, the habits that generate as a result of it, the values, beliefs and perceptions the community share and the 'integrated whole' the culture represents, closely resemble what happens in educational institutions: there is a group of people who share goals, rules, principles and traditions which are transmitted by teachers and administrators and regulate the every-day life of students, teachers and administrators themselves for a given number of years. If we consider the educational institution and the classroom as a culture, we find that ethnographic research is a very appropriate way of studying and understanding them. It is a good way of obtaining very detailed information which can lead to longer and more specific studies.

In what concerns action research, it allows us to intervene, to act upon problems and situations and to solve or change them. Nunan (1992) refers to Action Research as research carried out by teachers, individually or in groups; this research usually leads to changes in the institution or in the practice of teachers. Kemmis and Henry (1989) refer to action research as self-reflective inquiry carried out by participants in social situations, the purpose of which is to improve the rationality and understanding of their practice and of the situation in which the practice happens. Action research is situational (it is carried out in a given institution or classroom, in order to solve a specific situation), sometimes collaborative, always participatory, because the researcher or researchers get involved in the whole process. It is also cyclical and self-evaluative.

Both ethnographic research and action research follow similar steps,
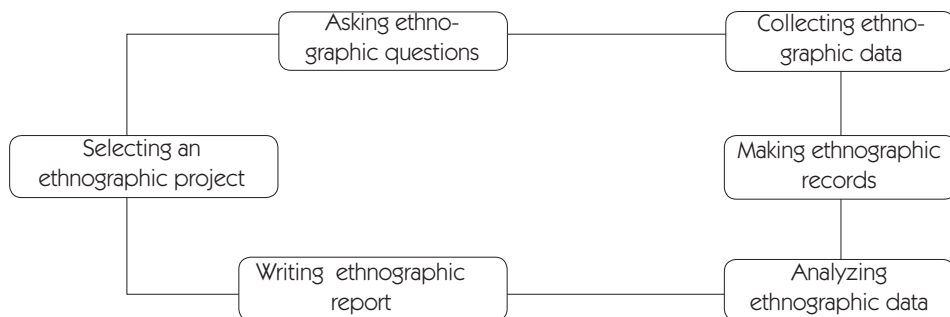
although the initial approach may be different. In ethnographic research, the

investigator usually does not start with a hypothesis, has no preconceptions, typologies or definitions he seeks to find in the community. He starts exploring the area guided only by a general idea and proceeds to work in a cyclical fashion which has been described by Spradley (1980).

Figure 1: Spradley´s ethnographic research cycle **(In Munévar, Gómez & Quintero 1995: 47)**

Action researchers usually identify a question and decide to take action to find the answer to it. Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1985) propose an action research cycle which includes planning, action, systematic observation and reflection. At this point the initial plan is revised and the steps are repeated as many times as the researchers deem it necessary, until they find the answers to their initial question or until the process produces the changes they seek .

2.2 Why Classroom research?

Although the importance of classroom research for teachers seems self-evident, we can mention here some arguments that stress its importance, both for pre-service and in-service teachers.

a. Classroom research allows teachers and future teachers to improve their professional practice because it gives them the opportunity to look at the teaching profession from inside and with autonomy (Stenhouse 1983: 4). Also, it responds to a "pressing need" for contextualized research,… research that is carried out in real classrooms, not in simulated environments that are constituted for the purposes, not of teaching and learning, but of research." (Nunan 1990: 2)

b. Classroom Research permits teachers and students to determine the impact and evolution of their teaching and learning processes.

c. It allows them to make their job more professional by facilitating an *informed* dialogue among teachers. Its results, even if they respond to very specific situations, can show patterns and lead to the construction of theory which benefit teachers, students, educational institutions and society in general.

d. Classroom research is the perfect complement to the repertoire of

knowledge and skills that the present-day teacher needs.

e. Classroom research is a constant task. It is a cycle that allows teachers and students to look into an always changing environment, changing situations and changing individuals. It is lifelong learning.

3. THE RESEARCH COMPONENT OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM.

3.1 Its History

The *Licenciatura* program at Universidad del Valle has been in constant modification for the last ten years, taking into account internal needs and trends and the participation of the University in the Colombian Framework for English project (COFE). The greatest changes were included in the curriculum that was approved by the *Consejo Nacional de Acreditación* (CNA); it gave origin to a new program which was called *Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras*. This program has a strong component of Classroom Research, which had been proposed by a group of participants in the COFE project in 1994 and was included in the curriculum with some modifications.

3.2 Its Structure

The structure of the classroom research component includes different types of activities in different semesters. Starting in first semester, the students and the teachers of English and French I use 'self-reports' in the form of diaries of their learning and teaching experiences, as a way of reflection. In second semester diaries are also kept, but a new element, observation, is added. At this time it focuses on several aspects of what happens in the classrooms and information is recorded on specific charts. Both activities are also carried out in third semester; however, observation during this semester is not recorded using charts, but is collected through field notes. Students add a new element to their practice with data collection instruments. Interviews about aspects that emerge in the observations are designed and carried out. In fourth semester students take Classroom Research Seminar I, in which they start dealing with the theory of research and concentrate mainly on ethnography. The activities in this semester include visits to different types of educational institutions in Cali. In fifth semester -Classroom Research Seminar II- students keep their associa-

tion with one institution to design and carry out a mini-research project.

Up to the present time one group of students (those who started in August 2000) has completed the two phases of the component A second group, the one which started in August 2001, has worked on the practical aspects dealt with in language courses (Integrated skills I and II in English and French) and has started the second cycle. A new group of students started the process in August 2002 .

The original proposal included 3 phases, with activities for eight semesters. The component, as it was included in the new program, has only two phases in five semesters. As there is a tradition of research in linguistics and other disciplines in the School of Language Sciences, from sixth semester onwards the students have the chance to take three core seminars on research
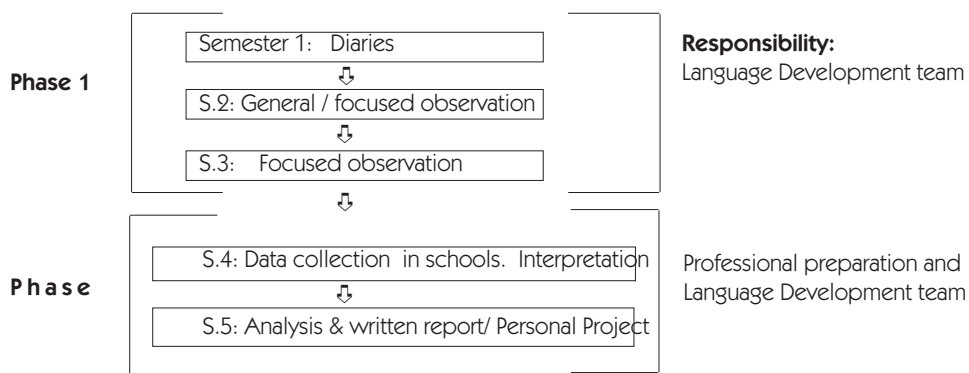
Phase 1

| Semester 1:   Diaries |
| ⇩ |
| S.2: General / focused observation |
| ⇩ |
| S.3:   Focused observation |

Responsibility:
Language Development team

⇩

P h a s e

| S.4: Data collection in schools. Interpretation |
| ⇩ |
| S.5: Analysis & written report/ Personal Project |

Professional preparation and Language Development team

Figure 3. Classroom Research component of the Licenciatura Program. **Adapted from Aparicio, B. et al. 1994.**

Phase 3

| S 6:   General Research Seminar |

Professional preparation and Linguistics teams

P h a s e 4

| S 9: Monograph   Seminar |
| S.10 :   Monograph |

Language, linguistics and professional preparation teams

Figure 4. Complement for the General Research component of the Licenciatura Program

in general, some elective courses about research in other areas and their monograph (*Trabajo de Grado*) . There are, in total, eight courses or seminars devoted to the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills to undertake research in the curriculum of our Foreign Language *licenciatura* program.

3.3 Its articulation with the rest of the curriculum

The classroom research component of our program is naturally linked with the specific pedagogical component which is handled at the School of Language Sciences. There is also a general pedagogical component, which is handled by the *Instituto de Educación y Pedagogía* and the School of Language Sciences. The specific pedagogical component starts with the Applied Linguistics Seminar, which deals with language-related theoretical aspects and their implication in language teaching; it continues with two Foreign Language Methodology courses and two Teaching Practicum courses.

The knowledge and experience that students acquire through reflection in the language courses, the discussion of the teacher's work, the handling of data collection instruments in the Seminars, and the design and implementation of their own mini-research at the school they select, necessarily boosts their skills and confidence as researchers. They get to know and understand educational institutions better, not only people who are part of them but also their activities; they develop familiarity with the language classroom at the elementary and high school levels; they are better equipped to understand the topics that make up the Applied Linguistics Seminar and the practical matters dealt with in the Foreign Language Methodology courses. With all this background, students will necessarily be prepared to carry out quality processes in their Teaching Practicum and in the final research task at the undergraduate level: their *Trabajo de grado*.

3.4 Organization of a study group

To start our preparation for the design and implementation of this component in our curriculum, a study group was organized. It was made up of 15 English and French teachers of the basic levels and other teachers who had an interest in this type of work. Few teachers had experience in classroom research. They joined the group to share what they knew and, as everybody else, to expand their knowledge. When the group started meeting, its objectives

were two-fold: to learn about classroom research and to plan and develop in detail, as well as implement, the activities of the component. The first semester (January- June 2000) was mostly devoted to studying and planning. A bibliography about research in general was selected and shared. Sessions were carried out once a week and proposals for the activities were presented and discussed. The group has naturally changed, with loses and additions to it, but continues to meet twice a month. When there is a special topic to discuss or when the time to discuss topics is insufficient, weekly meetings are held. In the next section we will give a detailed account of the group experience.

4. THE EXPERIENCE

4.1 Phase one:

This section briefly summarizes the experience of the first three semesters (carried out in the English and French courses - *Habilidades Integradas* I, II y III); this corresponds to the first phase of the classroom research component.

In this first phase the students gained familiarity in the use of data collection instruments, which also served the purpose of helping them to reflect about their learning processes. They began with introspection and reflection, keeping diaries of their experiences in first semester. Students were not given a choice as to whether they wanted to keep the diary or not, because this was an important part of the experience and of the process of reflection. At the end of each session they had to write an entry about the way they felt in class regarding the topics, their learning difficulties, their interaction with others, the work of their teachers and their own feelings and emotions. Teachers also kept a diary and shared some entries with their students when the situation required it.

In the second semester, students added general observations to introspection. They started recording classroom processes involving their teachers, their classmates and the activities carried out in class. Specific topics involved group work, praise, correction, interaction and presentation of new items. Observations were recorded in charts selected, adapted and tried by the teacher before being used by the students. Once each one of the aspects was observed, students and teachers discussed the data obtained and drew some conclusions. Students also evaluated their experience as observers.

In the third semester observations became more focused and more systematic. They dealt with selected moments of the class which were recorded in diaries. Each week, groups of five students observed a specific aspect of the class for twenty minutes. The results of their observations were shared with the rest of the class and the points of interest (doubts, questions or comments) were the basis of interviews that they designed and did to their teachers or classmates.

In this first phase students went from introspection and reflection to analysis and interpretation of the data collected through diaries, observations and interviews. It prepared them to deal with more theoretical aspects in the seminars to come. It also helped them to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their learning processes, their patterns of interaction, as well as their attitudes, learning strategies and learning habits. Finally, students gained awareness of all the tapestry of elements that make up a classroom, and this fact took them a step closer to the real work of a teacher. **(See appendix 1)**

4.2 PHASE TWO:

4.2.1 Classroom Research Seminar I

This is a seminar which combines theory and practice; it intends to initiate students in the educational research processes and familiarize them with the different kinds of educational institutions, their participants, educational processes and the variety of foreign language classrooms. In its initial stages, students started reading and making group discussions about educational research approaches, language teaching approaches and methods of data collection and analysis. The next step was to proceed to the practical phase of this seminar. In groups of three, students visited two institutions, a private one and public one. Forty six students of the two seminar groups (parallel groups) visited 25 institutions in total. The experience they had in the first three semesters regarding observation and diary writing was very useful because it allowed them to understand better the theoretical aspects, to become better observers and to make a good start as researchers, which implies that they should be able to collect data through observation and interviewing and to describe and categorize the information they collect.

Students observed the life of the schools for two months and a half; they

kept their records as field notes, which took into account descriptive and in-terpretive aspects. They complemented their observations with interviews to different people, according to the issues they found interesting while reviewing and analyzing their field notes. The class sessions in the seminar continued to provide the students with theoretical aspects, with practice in the design of instruments of data collection and with the support they needed to deal with the practical difficulties they encountered in their work.

As all researchers know, the stage of data analysis is a difficult one. In our bibliographic search and study, we realized that although most books contain a section in which they mention ways of analyzing data, research reports said very little about the way they dealt with their own information. We were very conscious of the need to guide students in this task. To do this, we selected chapters from books and articles from magazines that presented data analysis through the use of categorization, classification and description. In our class sessions we discussed these materials and guided our students in the process of categorizing the information they had collected. Some of the authors used in this stage include Bertley 2000, chapter 2; Martinez 1991, appendices; Cardona and Quintero 1996, chapter 3; Muñoz, Quintero & Munevar 2000, appendix 2; Florez & Tobon, 2000, chapter 7. We also produced and used our own guide.

In its final stage, students produced two reports; the first one was de-scriptive of the institutions they visited. It contained data obtained through observations and interviews. The preliminary analysis of their observational records showed six relevant aspects which they categorized and developed into their final projects; these were interpretive of the relevant aspects observed in the institutions. These aspects dealt with types of institutions, types of people (students, teachers, administrators and parents), types of activities, levels of socialization, satisfaction with the institution and sense of belonging, discipline and conflicts. The students worked in six groups and each of them categorized, interpreted and analyzed one of the aspects mentioned above. Our students also needed to learn the formal way of presenting a report; therefore, we gave them research reports to read. This information and practice was provided by the last sessions of the seminar.

The seminar helped students and teachers to find the links between the practical experience we had in the French and English I, II, II classes (Integrated

skills I,II and III) and the theoretical aspects introduced in this seminar. On the one hand, it required students to put into practice the knowledge acquired in the classroom and allowed them to be in contact with a real educational setting and be conscious of the wide perspectives that the pedagogical world offers. On the other hand, teachers in charge of the seminar made of the planning, preparation and implementation of each of the activities, a learning experience to complement the knowledge acquired through the work in the classroom research group and to project the future work around the research component.

4.2.2 Classroom Research Seminar II

In this seminar the students go deeper into two of the most frequent types of research used in education nowadays: ethnographic research and action research. They also expand their knowledge of methods and instruments of data collection, get some practice in their design and analyze the data they collect using the appropriate methods such as grounded theory and thematic analysis. Nevertheless, the main goal of this seminar is for the students to carry out a mini-research project, in small groups or individually, in one of the institutions they previously visited. All the theoretical and practical aspects dealt with in the seminar are the preparation for the development of this project, for their performance in the pedagogical and research components later in their studies, and for their professional life as teachers and researchers.

The topics our students selected were generated in the analysis of the data obtained in the visits to the educational institutions the previous semester. These topics show a wide variety, ranging from classroom topics related to language teaching to institutional aspects such as projects carried out in the institutions, problems the students face, the use institutions make of their resources, etc. Although most of the projects are ethnographic, some of them are action research projects. There were several reasons why most students decided to develop ethnographic projects. The familiarity with the institution that they had gained the previous semester involved general aspects more than specific classroom situations; we also considered that the time we had to complete the projects was too short and it was better to draw upon descriptive aspects that had already been initiated. A final, but very important consideration is that the students lacked the familiarity that a classroom teacher has

with her/his environment, from which the knowledge and conscience of the need for change and action research originate. The students who worked on this type of projects only finished one cycle of the action research spiral. A list of the projects is presented in **appendix 2**.

The nature of the analysis the students had to carry out this time was similar to the one they had used in the first seminar; nevertheless, we felt the need to go deeper into this aspect and, as we had advanced in our own study of the topic, we expanded the bibliographic information we gave to our students. We produced a second guide to the process. Some of the material distributed to our students included Berteley, 2000, chapter 3; Muñoz, Quintero & Munevar 2000, chapter 7; Briones, 1998, module 1, complementary reading No. 4; module 2, chapter 5 and complementary reading No. 4. From the internet, we used information about Grounded theory and Thematic analysis by Kinach, 1995; Haig, 1995; Rose, Burwood, 2000; Aronson, 1994; Byrne, 2001 and Vavoula, 2001. Again, we discussed the guide and the most relevant aspects of the material in class. We practised categorization with data from diaries, interviews and observational records. Some of these data had been collected for the purpose of the exercise from the bibliography above mentioned. However, the most important source of data for this exercise came from their own dairies and from observations and interviews that were part of their own projects.

Following the procedures of thematic analysis, the students read and reread their data looking for emerging patterns. They identified examples of categories using color codes, and labelled their categories. They used color flashcards to organize the information. Most of this process was done in class. We also held individual advisory sessions to help them through this stage.

We want to stress the use of the diary as a key element in this seminar for both students and teachers. The objectives of keeping diaries are to use them as instruments of reflection of our learning and teaching processes, and for the students to keep records of their projects in the educational institutions. In this way, teachers and students have the opportunity to inform, evaluate, review and change the course of their actions if necessary. The dialogue maintained through the diaries facilitates knowledge of the state of projects on the part of the teachers and permits constant feedback, which replace individual advisory sessions; otherwise, it would be impossible for the teachers to keep up with this type of work because there are more than twenty students in each seminar.

Appendix 3 shows examples of students' diary entries in this phase.

5. EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE

The experience of reflecting and describing in the first three semesters by means of diaries, observations and interviews was fruitful, in spite of the difficulties we faced. Among the positive outcomes, we can mention the recognition by students and teachers of the role of the diary as a facilitator of open and honest communication and the identification of recurrent patterns in different aspects of class activities such as interaction, methodological aspects and learning processes. The weak aspects that surfaced in this process were the lack of a systematic recording of entries and the absence of introspection, which gave way to an excessive description of teachers' activities. Another aspect which affected the process was the reluctance of some students and teachers to keep the diary. In an evaluation of the experience, a few students manifested that the fact that the diary was compulsory took the motivation and interest in the task away from them; in spite of this, most of them kept the diary.

Observations also produced positive and weak outcomes, as it is expressed in the description of phase 1. By using observation charts students became aware of aspects of the classroom life that they had not noticed before, such as their own reactions towards activities, procedures and interactions. They also contributed to show the students there are other ways of recording and describing classroom life and reflecting upon it. The shortcomings of observations included the artificiality that seemed to be present in the classroom when a given task was to be observed; it was noticed that teachers seemed to act differently and had to prepare special tasks to be observed by the students. Besides, some student-observers experienced difficulties in concentrating on the aspects to be observed because they felt they were missing part of what they needed to learn. In an evaluation of the experience, teachers found out that observations had somehow diverted from the patterns shown by the diaries. This fact meant that they did not contribute, as they should have, to a better understanding of some difficulties detected by the diary study.

As a result of the evaluation above mentioned, a change in the procedure was made to focus our attention on aspects that had been shown by the diary study, such as students' learning strategies and habits. To this purpose, students were asked to write their autobiographies as language learners and we made

a survey of their learning habits by means of a questionnaire. Although the results of these activities were shared among teachers, there was no follow-up or further exploration or documentation of the findings. An aspect that contributed to this was the irregular situations that our universities face, which does not allow the completion of tasks and the closure of cycles in some processes. Interviews were not used extensively as to yield significant insight.

The difficulties found in the development of the seminars are of a different kind. One kind is related to the time assigned for the seminar -three hours a week- which is insufficient to carry out all the activities: reading and discussing bibliographic and class material which is usually analysed and exemplified through practice in the sessions, practicing the design of instruments of data collection, trying and proving the instruments, visiting schools to establish links and, later, to collect data, meeting with the teachers to discuss difficulties and writing the reports. To all this we add the changes in schedule and activities that most schools make and which affect the normal development of students' work. Finally, another complication is the fact that academic terms at the university do not usually match those of schools.

The second kind of difficulty is related to the links with the educational institutions. We still have to work out institutional agreements and make schools understand the nature of the work we are doing, to ease their apprehension and the refusal of some of them to accept observers. The goal is to establish long terms relations with at least 30 institutions which can also collaborate with us in practicum and the final research process (*Trabajo de grado*).

Students of the foreign language program seem to have benefited from this research component in many ways. To begin with, the constant process of reflection upon their own learning has made them question their learning habits, their autonomy in the learning process and has helped them focus on what best suits their purposes and interests as learners. Also, they are more aware of the way they distribute their time to deal with their learning tasks and their responsibilities in the courses. They have gained awareness of the resources which are available in the different learning and resource centers on campus and in the city. Finally, they feel themselves well prepared to face the writing of a monograph at the end of their studies.

As far as gains on the part of the teachers, we can mention awareness and knowledge as the main benefits derived from the experience. Most teachers, but especially the four who have been in charge of the Research Seminars, have expanded their knowledge about educational and classroom research as a result of the planning and preparation of lessons. Along with this knowledge, we have developed awareness of all the topics and areas we still have to explore,

expand and research. We have also gained understanding of our students' learning processes, of our teaching styles and strategies and of the way we can communicate better with our students. Our experience has been shared in three different national Conferences and the preparation of these presentations has allowed us to systematize information and, as Quintero (2002) expresses it, to generate 'pedagogic knowledge'. Another very important outcome of this experience is the establishment of closer ties and collaboration between English and French teachers, which has produced better communication, sharing of ideas and procedures, the planning and production of presentations and articles and, in general, a more collaborative environment. **(See appendix 4)**

6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Our experience in the design, planning and implementation of the Classroom Research component of our *Licenciatura* program has been very fruitful. As it was mentioned earlier in this section, we have learned from our mistakes and our gains, from our students' experiences, from our sharing in meetings, from our study sessions, our arguments, and, evidently, from our seminar planning and preparation. Each step has been enriching and empowering. The natural course of action and development for our study group will be to go into actual classroom research. As a research team, we will constitute one of the research lines of the EILA (*Equipo de Iinvestigación en Linguistica Aplicada*) a research group that has institutional recognition.

We are already planning what will be our first research projects together. An on- going documentation and evaluation of the implementation of the component in the *Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras* and the study of the Practicum and final research work of our students in the *Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas* are the most urgent tasks to be undertaken. The results of these projects will allow us to establish comparisons between the processes in the students of the two programs and determine the impact of the research component on our students' preparation.

Some other concerns and interests which stem from the experience of designing and implementing this component are related to diary studies, development of observational skills and the design of individual research projects to study and solve problems or difficulties which arise in our own professional practice.

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APPENDIX 1

Excerpts from students' diaries and from the evaluation of the experience in semesters I, II and III. (Phase 1)

"La experiencia de llevar las anotaciones de los progresos, observaciones generales y dificultades a traves de este diario me ha parecido muy fructífera. Es la primera vez en mi vida estudiantil que me siento a reflexionar sobre como estoy afrontando mi papel como estudiante, de interesarme y ver realmente como estoy aprendiendo y si los procedimientos llevados durante la clase están aportando realmente a ese aprendizaje. El llevar un diario permite apropiarse del papel de estudiante y a reconocer que el profesor no es el que tiene la responsabilidad de nuestro aprendizaje." (Diary entry November18, 2000)

" En las vacaciones pasadas, teniendo en cuenta la conciencia que tenemos sobre nuestro nivel en francés, organizamos un grupo de estudio con algunos compañeros para repasar y tratar de hablar en francés." (Diary entry)

"Como en el diario debía escribir mis fortalezas y debilidades, una vez consciente de estas últimas era más fácil saber en lo que debía enfocarme para mejorarlo." (Evaluation of the experience)

"A través del diario me di cuenta de que podía ser mas fácil expresar mis ideas de las clases que en las clases mismas. Me di cuenta de que podía decir en que estaba fallando y con los consejos de la profesora podía trabajar eso con más ejercicios..." (Evaluation of the experience)

"Me ayudó a encontrar nuevos métodos de estudio porque después de la reflexión me di cuenta que debía cambiar un método de estudio o la forma de llevar apuntes."

(Evaluation of the experience)

APPENDIX 2

List of students' projects

PROJECT

1. Socialización: Relaciones entre hombres y mujeres en dos grupos de 10 grado y como incide en el rendimiento.
2. Incidencia del uso de material didáctico en la clase de inglés de un grupo de 3er grado.
3. Conflictos entre estudiantes y entre estudiantes y profesores en un grupo de 10 grado: su manejo y su incidencia en el rendimiento académico.
4. Actitud pedagógica del maestro frente al error del alumno en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera.
5. Factores que inciden en el tabaquismo en los estudiantes de los grados 10 y 11.
6. Implementación de actividades lúdicas como un aporte al desarrollo de competencias en el área de Castellano en 4° grado.
7. Descripción del proceso de elaboración de un Proyecto Productivo dentro del Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial en un contexto urbano.
8. Descripción de la implementación de un proyecto de control de la agresividad a través del arte en una institución de educación básica primaria.
9. Descripción del estilo coloquial de expresión de los jóvenes de 9o grado dentro del aula de clase.
10. El concepto de libertad dentro de la metodología Waldorf : Cómo influye en el comportamiento de los estudiantes.
11. Cómo influyen los estímulos utilizados por el profesor en la participación de los estudiantes.
12. La influencia de los principios religiosos de un colegio en los estudiantes de primaria de un colegio de Cali.
13. Uso y contribución de la biblioteca a los procesos educativos en dos colegios de Cali.

14.	Influencia de la Pedagogía Waldorf en la actitud de los estudiantes de un colegio de Cali.
15.	Definición de las características propias de los buenos estudiantes.
16.	Descripción de la actitud de los estudiantes y docentes de una institución de básica secundaria ante el tipo de educación que allí se imparte y recibe.
17.	Interacción maestro-estudiante en el aula de clase de dos grupos de grado 11 en un colegio de Cali.
18.	Actividades que favorecen la participación e interacción de los estudiantes en la clase de inglés.
19.	Descripción de la metodología empleada para la enseñanza del inglés a niños en una institución educativa de Cali.
20.	Efectos de la metodología desarrollada en la enseñanza del inglés, en el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes de grado once de un colegio de Cali.
21.	Implementación de actividades orales y de escucha en inglés en el grado séptimo.
22.	Implementación de actividades para la enseñanza de L2 en una escuela del sector oficial grado séptimo.
23.	Efectos de la disciplina en el proceso de aprendizaje.

APPENDIX 3

Diary entries of students in phase II

"…el diario me sirve para plasmar mi pensamiento sobre el desarrollo de estrategias meta cognitivas en mi vida de estudiante; con esto me estaré dando cuenta (que) la forma de llegar el mundo cognitivo está dejando sus secuelas en mi, lo cual es lo que anhelo." **(Evaluation of the experience)**

"Ya se ha culminado este trayecto y esta experiencia que fue muy enriquecedora para mi, tanto en mi formación intelectual como personal. Esta investigación o más bien esta asignatura es muy importante porque van despertando el espíritu investigador que cada docente debe tener, y es muy importante que nos inculquen esto y nos motiven a convertirnos en investigadores de nuestra propia aula para detectar a tiempo las falencias que se presenten y hallarles una inmediata solución a través de una investigación." (December 18, 2002)

" Realizando una evaluación acerca del avance que he tenido en mi formación como investigadora, ahora me siento mucho más capacitada para planear y realizar proyectos. He aprendido a observar y a interpretar y elaborar hipótesis, he aprendido a llevar un diario de campo y a valorar cada una de las observaciones que hago ahí... puedo decir que pese a los problemas y contratiempos que tuvimos en estos dos semestres, llevar a cabo este proyecto ha sido una de las experiencias mas fascinantes que he tenido en mi vida estudiantil y profesional pues se que hay profesores que en toda su vida profesional no han aprendido lo que yo he aprendido en este período de tiempo, ya sea porque no tuvieron la oportunidad de vivir este proceso o porque no les interesaba." (December 2002)

" Me atrevería a decir que la primera vez que realizo un diario en serio...es esta. Pero no sabría explicar por que ahora siento más motivación de escribir en el diario que antes. Puede ser que ahora conozco la importancia del diario; en este proceso investigativo se que es un diario..." (November 5, 2002)

"La gran experiencia del Congreso de Lingüística no puede quedar por fuera del mundo de mi diario. Es mi primer congreso! Es realmente fascinante. Cuantas investigaciones! Por fin un lugar donde escucho lo que quiero oír, personas que adelantan investigaciones en escuelas, colegios, estudios de pregrado. Verdaderamente, esto le sigue dando a uno más y más animo para continuar con este proceso investigativo. Uno muchas veces escucha a los profesores hablar sobre investigaciones, sobre ponencias, pero eso queda allí.. Pero cuando uno llega a este congreso, empieza a valorar de verdad todo lo

que los profesores nos brindan, y que nosotros a menudo no aprovechamos."
(November 8, 2002)

" Manos a la Obra... Lo primero que hice fue formar dos grupos: 1. registros de información

2. encuestas y entrevistas. Comencé por leer el grupo numero dos y extraje los aspectos más relevantes y forme unas categorías

- Actividad escolar

- Relaciones estudiante-estudiante

- Rendimiento académico

Estas categorías fueron la conclusión de mucho leer y releer cada fuente. Luego leí los registros y seguí el proceso hecho en clase: colorear, darle nombre a los grupos más comunes encontrados y categorizar.

De este paso resultaron estas categorías:

- Actividades en clase
  – relación estudiante – estudiante
  –   trabajos en grupo
  – participación
  – Actividades fuera de clase
  – trabajos en grupo
  – relación estudiante-estudiante
- Actividades deportivas
  – juegos en la cancha

Debo aclarar que las categorías antes mencionadas son el resultado de muchísimas más categorías, grupos y subgrupos que habían resultado en un principio. En estas últimas categorías se encuentran agrupadas todas las iniciales.

Acto seguido compare los dos grupos de categorías que surgieron y las adapté en cada categoría. Las resultantes del grupo 1 fueron contenidas en las categorías del grupo 2, exceptuando "actividad escolar" que permaneció como una sola categoría al contener información diferente a las demás y que por ende, no se pudo relacionar con ellas. Posteriormente, en las fichas da-

das por la profesora en clase, consigné las categorías y los datos de cada una para tener un orden preciso al momento de redactar el informe, subrayando los ejemplos más claros que me podían ser "útiles..."

(Diary entry about the process of data analysis.)

APPENDIX 4

Entries from teachers' diaries

"Nos sentimos super emocionadas y apropiadas de nuestros papeles. Da satisfacción poder mostrar en forma organizada y sustentada lo que se ha

hecho y como se ha hecho. Todo ese conocimiento construido a través del tiempo, esperando ser socializado con unos participantes activos como son los estudiantes. Estos apreciaron el trabajo y la propuesta de socialización. Expresaron la importancia de conocer todo el componente al inicio de la carrera." (Entry related to the presentation of the research component to the new seminar groups. January 23, 2003)

"... Luego pasamos a la experiencia actual, la importancia que ven en el ejercicio, que lo hace diferente de lo que hicieron los tres primeros semestres. El resumen de lo que dijeron lo pegaré en el diario. En general, los comentarios sobre lo que el diario aporta fueron positivos. Sin embargo aún quedan algunos que confiesan tener mucha dificultad para escribir. Este análisis de la experiencia me ayudó a entender mejor a los que tienen dificultades para escribir. La oportunidad de reflexionar sobre lo que les sucede y lo que se hace en clase, así como la facilidad para establecer un diálogo con la profesora son, en general, los aspectos que más aprecian los estudiantes; no hay ninguno que, a este punto, considere que no es valido, positivo y de gran ayuda llevar el diario. Pienso que nosotros los profesores podemos empezar, como grupo, una evaluación documentada de esta experiencia en los tres niveles (alrededor de 12 grupos) que la han vivido." (Entry related to the evaluation of diary use with the students. October 28, 2002)

" ...Todo el grupo parece estar, a pesar de las dificultades que encuentran en el proceso, completamente satisfecho con el seminario en sus contenidos, metodología, sistema de evaluación acordado, relaciones, etc. Este hallazgo es altamente satisfactorio para mi (aunque no me ciega ante lo que yo creo que no estoy haciendo suficientemente bien, ni me hace olvidar que debo fortalecer mis bases teóricas y mi práctica como investigadora), ya que la preparación del curso, sobre todo con el poco tiempo que tenemos, es todo un reto." (About the mid-term evaluation of the Seminar. October 21, 2002)

"... La otra cosa es la necesidad, cada vez más apremiante, que siento de estudiar sobre investigación y, más específicamente, acerca de los métodos de análisis de investigación cualitativa. Sueño con poder ir a Inglaterra un verano para tomar un curso solo de investigación, que sea teórico-práctico y que me ayude a construir la seguridad que necesito." (November 4, 2002)

"... Los contactos con las instituciones son asombrosamente consumidores de tiempo. Espero tener la firmeza necesaria para defender ante quien

corresponda la necesidad de un poco más de tiempo asignado a este seminario, no solo por quienes lo tenemos ahora sino para cualquiera que lo asuma. También pienso en dejar la 'historia' del curso lo más documentada y sistematizada posible para facilitar el seminario en el futuro" (February 27, 2003)

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