

Proceedings submission

Title: *A Study of the Degree of Effectiveness of Microteaching and Reflective Teaching in the Training of Foreign Language Teachers*

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La Microenseñanza y la Enseñanza Reflexiva de Lenguas Extranjeras.

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Resumen

Se presentan los resultados de una investigación realizada en la Facultad de Educación en la Universidad de Concepción. Se estudia el grado de persistencia de once habilidades docentes desarrolladas por alumnos terminales de Francés e Inglés a través de dos programas de entrenamiento docente: la Microenseñanza y la Enseñanza Reflexiva.

Los efectos de la persistencia de las habilidades docentes son evaluados a través del desempeño de los estudiantes durante la Práctica Docente en el sistema educacional. Los videos grabados durante el período de práctica, al comienzo y final del programa (pre y post test), son evaluados por observadores estrenados.

Los datos son analizados a través de un diseño experimental clásico con un grupo control y pre test post test.

Se establece el grado de efectividad de los dos programas de entrenamiento en el desarrollo y persistencia de las habilidades en estudio.

**A Study of the Degree of Effectiveness of Microteaching
and Reflective Teaching in the Training of
Foreign Language Teachers**

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Abstract

The results of an investigation carried out at the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Arts, University of Concepción between 1995 and 1998 are presented.

The degree of persistence of eleven teaching skills developed by terminal students of English and French through two teaching training programs: Microteaching and Reflective is studied. The persistence effects of teaching skills are evaluated by the performance of the students during the Teaching-Practice period in the educational system. The videos recorded during the Teaching-Practice period and at the beginning and end of each program (pre-test/post-test) are evaluated by the observers.

A classic experimental design with control group and pre-test/post-test is used to analyse the data.

The degree of effectiveness of the two training programs in the development and persistence of the skills under study are shown.

A Study of the Degree of Effectiveness of Microteaching and Reflective Teaching in the Training of Foreign Language Teachers

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Introduction

Teacher training, in general, and more specifically, the training of teachers of foreign languages tending to the acquirement of an adequate classroom performance is and has been the main objective of educational institutions.

In spite of the constant revision to which teacher-training plans are being submitted, there has been no consensus, only approximations, on which skills should have priority in tracing an ideal program to achieve such results

An aspect present in most of the plans of study shows a common trait: all plans include a period of teaching practice tending to illustrate the presence (or absence) of the various abilities indispensable for an effective handling of the teaching-learning process in the educational system.

However, it is observed that the plans of study for the preparation of teachers at the Faculty of Education, University of Concepción do not contain clear instances to develop, either specific or general teaching abilities, they do not provide a model of the tools required to fulfill such an aim.

In sum, we may conclude that ideal teaching behaviours are not included in the contents of teacher-training programs.

Such a void in the curriculum of teacher education programs is a source of confusion for the “novice teacher” when the Teacher-Guide intervenes in the evaluation and supervision process. The novice teacher’s perception does not always coincide with that of the University supervisor.

Therefore, the practicing teacher finds himself/herself at a loss regarding what is expected from him in the act of teaching.

Michael Wallace (1989) established three different phases in the existing models for the preparation of teachers: the pre-active phase, the evaluative phase, and the interactive phase. In most cases, the training of teachers has contemplated the first two phases to the exclusion of the third, which mainly refers to all the verbal hints and teaching behaviours which allow putting the teaching process into practice.

Among the models for the preparation of teachers of foreign languages, several procedures had been incorporated to the training programs to develop teaching skills in the “novice teacher”. In the United State, as well as in England, Microteaching is one of the new strategies most commonly used for the above mentioned purposes. Cripwell Geddes(1979), had included it as a permanent component in teacher training in England.

Microteaching technique was first designed at the university of Standford, California in 1953 and was considered as a complete teaching act on a reduced scale.

This technique changes the focus of attention to the “novice teacher” while it was previously centered upon the instructor. Besides, the general goals are replaced by specific aims; isolated skills are substituted by integrated skills; the objectives of the instructor are defined with the participation of the trainee.

The main stages of Microteaching are: basic information, planning, teaching, feedback, reteaching.

The Basic information consists of the information presented to the trainee regarding teaching skills. Such information is concerned with the oral and/or written information provided to the trainee with reference to the skills to be developed within the program.

The planning phase is that in which the objective of the class is defined along with a design of the learning activities, and the corresponding implementation.

The third stage is concerned with teaching, proper. The receptors of teaching can be peers or real students, according to the format selected in each case.

The feedback stage, paramount in this technique, refers to the criticism, observation and discussion of the micro-class. It has been established through research, that when the practicing teacher receives information about his performance – be it through video self-confrontation, instructions from the supervisor, commentaries of his peers, verbal or written suggestions – he is being affected by positive consequences. If the information is positive he receives a social reinforcement which will fortify certain operant behaviours if negative, it will weaken them.

In the teaching of foreign languages, group discussion conducted by the tutor constitutes one of the main feedback methods when accompanied by video recording and the presentation of a model. In addition when a written record is provided to the trainee he/she must register the presence or absence of each behaviour. Valderrama and Martínez (1993)

Griffith (1979) pointed out that video recording, verbal and written corrective instruction provide a feedback that operates significant changes in the behavior of teachers in training.

Finally, the reteaching phase consists basically in repeating the class which has been previously analysed.

The other alternative that seems to respond to most questions, as wells as to the factors that affect the training of teachers of foreign languages, is represented by Reflective Teaching.

This model proposed by Dr. Cruickshank in 1987, placed the problem of teacher training under a new perspective when he pointed to the fact that “although the most obvious purpose of the preparation of the teachers is to prepare the future teacher for an initial practice, the real aim is to prepare them to become lifelong students of teaching”. Cruickshank (1989)

According to Zeichner (1983) Reflective Teaching belongs to one of the four paradigms oriented to teacher training; it states that the teacher must develop habits of self-assessment of this performance leading to problem solving, formulation of hypotheses and action research. In other words, he must develop the habit of thinking about what he is doing and why he is doing it.

Reflective Teaching is a scaled down teaching encounter, similar to Microteaching, but using a different format. Such a format contemplates the development of habits of reflection, through self-monitoring, individual and group reflections, adaptations to various teaching situations, and experimentation concerning teaching performance. By this technique the “novice teacher” assumes alternatively the roles of “designated teacher” and “apprentice” within the group of peers. All designated teachers must teach a real class, the format of which is common to all of them, and the results are evaluated in terms of learner achievement and satisfaction.

The characteristic cycle of Reflective Teaching is planning, teaching, experimenting, and reflecting.

Microteaching as well as Reflective Teaching are the two most promising alternatives for the development of teaching skills. Both strategies are rarely used in the pre-service curriculum in our country, among other things, because they require a costly implementation, time consuming preparation, and particularly, because they demand, from the teacher trainers, a role different from the one they have been used to in the practice of traditional teaching.

Both techniques share the same characteristic in that they constitute scaled down teaching encounters. They give the trainee the possibility to face gradually the teaching experience in controlled situations in the University allowing him to handle all the variables of the teaching-learning process within the real classroom. They correspond however, to different psychological approaches. While Microteaching is based upon behaviourism, using modeling for the acquisition of behaviours, Reflective Teaching is a cognitive process of reconstruction of new meanings through experience.

According to Kolb and Fry (1975) learning, changes of behaviour and growth, become possible through an integrated process which begins by experience, followed by data collection, observation, and reflection on the experience. Once the latter is analyzed, it is used in the modification of behaviours, and in the collection of new experiences.

In Chile, Valderrama (1986), and Valderrama and Martínez (1993), have investigated the effectiveness of Microteaching in the modification of teaching skills. These studies have given rise to various programs that have incorporated this technique in the Method courses of English and French Teaching in our University.

Now, with respect to Reflective Teaching, the present research constitutes the first experiment of its kind in Chile with the hope of contributing to the preparation of teachers in our field. We have been led to carry out this investigation believing that it may signify a

change of focus in the preparation of teachers and a better comprehension of teacher education in general.

Objective of the research

The objective of the present work is to determine the persistence degree of teaching abilities (verbal, motor and interactive skills) developed by means of two teacher-training programs: Microteaching and Reflective Teaching. The experience was conducted at the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Arts, University of Concepcion, with terminal students of English and French.

Method

Independent variables: Teacher training programs

a) Microteaching

This program, as has been already stated, is described as a teaching encounter on a reduced scale, in terms of time, number of students, content, and physical arrangement where the teaching act takes place.

It contemplates video self-confrontation, corrective instructions from the University instructor or supervisor, corrective instructions from the language teacher, and a check list where the student can detect the presence or absence of the behaviours under study.

b) Reflective Teaching

The Reflective Teaching Program used in this research added to the characteristic format of Reflective Teaching, video self-confrontation, without corrective instructions from the supervisor and language teacher.

Dependent variables: Teaching skills

The selection of Teaching skills herein included, was made taking into account the results of our previous investigations (Valderrama and Martínez, 1993).

These skills constitute teaching behaviors that had been proved to be useful within the communicative functional approach in the learning of foreign languages.

The skills selected permitted controlling and registering the behaviour indicators for each one of them. They were grouped in three categories: verbal responses (voice, oral language, formulation of questions, didactic instructions), motor responses (gestures, use of space, manipulation of didactic material) interactive responses (verbal interaction, feedback, reinforcement, focalization).

The dependent variables were measured according to the presence or absence of the behaviours selected in the trainee during the development of a class and to the format which allows the observers to register and control such behaviours.

Design

To develop this research a classic experimental design with a control group, and with a pre- and post-test, was used. The control group is the group of students assigned to the Microteaching program, since this is the habitual way through which students are trained in Method courses in our University.

To determine the entrance behaviour of students, an Observation Chart with the eleven skills being studied was used by the method's course teacher. It was applied previous to the training program as a pre-test. The same Observation Chart was given as a post-test at the end of the training period.

A third evaluation was applied at the beginning of the Teaching practice period through the observation of a class performed at the Teaching Center, with real students.

Finally a fourth evaluation at the end of the Teaching Practice program was carried out. In both instances the same Observation Chart was applied.

The aim of these two evaluations during the process of Teaching Practice (referred to as Practice I and Practice 2) was to determine the persistence of the skills acquired during the training programs.

Three different observers, at different stages of the experiment, were in charge of the evaluation of the "novice teachers". They all used the same Observation Chart which contained the skills under study. Thus, during the training period the students under training were evaluated by the Method's course teacher or supervisor, by the language teacher (English or French Specialist) and during the Teaching Practice period, by the Teacher- Guide. All the video-recorded classes were evaluated by the supervisor and the language teacher, after the realization of the experiment.

Procedure

The sample was constituted by 40 students of the Teaching Method's courses for foreign languages (English and French in this particular case) offered by the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Arts, University of Concepción. The subject (40 students) corresponded to the academic years 95/96, 97/98. To develop this research, the participants were divided into 4 groups as illustrated below.

Sample

Academic Year

	95/96		97//98		Total
	MC	RT	MC	RT	
English	8	8	5	5	26
French	4	5	2	3	14
Total	12	13	7	8	40

MC= Microteaching

RT= Reflective Teaching

One half of the students was randomly assigned to the Microteaching program, and the other half, to the Reflective Teaching program.

The experiment intended to detect the effect of each program (independent variable) upon the persistence and acquisition of teaching skills in each one of the subjects involved.

Two stages can be observed. In the first stage the students undergo a one year training at the University in both programs. They were measured at the beginning and at the end of each stage.

The teaching activities were conducted in a Workshop which exhibited the adequate implementation, equipment, and necessary teaching material to allow the development of the classes, and at the same time to make their video-recording available for later analysis, feedback, and/or reflection--depending on the program.

For the Microteaching program, the receptors were real students from junior high level, followed by a group of freshmen of the English and French majors.

For the Reflective Teaching program one student assumed the role of "designated teacher" and the rest played the role of teaching receptors. Likewise, every "novice teacher" got the opportunity to observe the teaching act from both perspectives: as a teacher and as a student.

For both programs the session had a duration of three hours per week, all along the academic year, beginning in March, and ending in December.

The second stage started after the end of the first year of teacher preparation.

The students were sent to a Teaching-Practice Center. The selection was based upon location, type of dependence of the school (private or governmental school) the assets of the cooperating teacher, number of students in class and the collaboration offered by the school board in terms of their willingness to accept the University's field experienced students. The distribution and assignment of students to the Teaching-Practice Center was done by the University instructor. The same number of students was assigned for each program. Two students of each program taught in parallel courses, in the schools.

In this stage “novice teachers” were permanently supervised by the university instructor, the language teacher and by the Teacher-Guide.

On two occasions, classes were video-recorded in the Teaching-Practice Center: at the beginning and at the end of the Teaching Practice period. The videos were evaluated by the three observers with the use of the observation chart.

Results

To determine the reliability of measurements given by the University supervisor and the language teacher to the various types of behaviours under study, the Spearman Brown correlation coefficient was applied at a 5% probability level ($p=0.05$).

Once the scores were obtained, they were contrasted with the Rho values contained in the Haber Runyon Table.

The values found showed that there is a high degree of correlation between the scores given by both types of observers, in the different situations where students demonstrated their teaching performance, namely, pre-test, and post-test. Practice I and Practice II both in the students of English and in the students of French (see Table N° 1 and Table N° 2).

TABLE N° 1
ANALYSIS OF THE SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENT OF THE TEACHING SKILLS UNDER STUDY.
OBSERVERS 1 AND 2 PRE-TEST/POST-TEST/
PRACTICE 1/PRACTICE 2

ENGLISH				
	BEHAVIOURS	r	N	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
	RV1 VOICE	0,532	130	*
	RV2 ORAL LANGUAGE	0,417	130	*
	RV3 MAKE QUESTIONS	0,467	130	*
	RV4 DIDACTIC INSTRUCT.	0,580	130	*
	RM1 MIMIC	0,585	130	*
	RM2 MOVEMENT	0,529	130	*
	RM3 MANIPULATION OF MATERIALS	0,704	130	*
	RL1 INTERACTION	0,505	104	*
	RL2 FEEDBACK	0,382	123	*
	RL3 REINFORCEMENT	0,309	129	*
	RL4 FOCALIZATION	0,525	130	*

* Correlation exists at a α 5%
 Level of significance ($N = 30$ or $+$) = 0,306

TABLE N° 2

ANALYSIS OF THE SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENT OF THE TEACHING SKILLS UNDER STUDY.
OBSERVERS 1 AND 2 PRE- TEST/POST-TEST/
PRACTICE 1/PRACTICE 2

FRENCH				
	BEHAVIOURS	r	N	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
RV1	VOICE	0,875	52	*
RV2	ORAL LANGUAGE	0,992	52	*
RV3	MAKE QUESTIONS	0,992	52	*
RV4	DIDACTIC INSTRUCT.	0,999	52	*
RM1	MIMIC	0,663	51	*
RM2	MOVEMENT	0,682	51	*
RM3	MANIPULATION OF MATERIALES	0,528	51	*
RL1	INTERACTION	0,997	51	*
RL2	FEEDBACK	0,988	51	*
RL3	REINFORCEMENT	0,992	51	*
RL4	FOCALIZATION	1,000	51	*

* Correlation exists at a α 5%
Level of significance (N= 30 or +) = 0,306

These results showed the reliability of the judgements made by the observers referring to the various teaching skills studied (verbal, motor and interactive).

The test of difference in means for independent groups applied also confirms the results.

With the purpose of determining the effect of the treatment of each training program in the modification of the behaviours under study, the “t” test for dependent groups and small samples was used to analyse the data. In the Reflective Teaching Program (English trainees) only significant differences were found at a probability of 5%. This result referred to the pre-test and post-test scores.

In relation to the performance of the two specialities (English and French) in the various instances of measurement, and once the “t” test of the difference for dependent groups had been applied, we can verify the following: the means (x) of all the skills under study in the speciality of English, in all the instances of evaluation, were considerably higher than those obtained by the students of French.

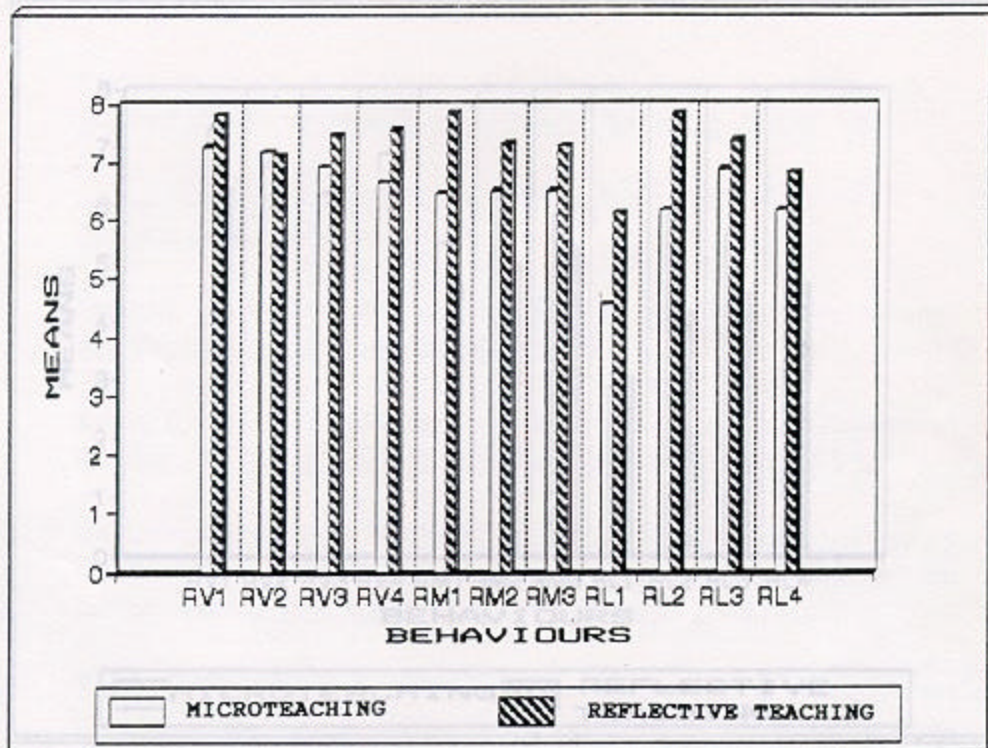
At the same time, the high standard deviation presented by the latter showed the great heterogenousness of this group as compared with the one presented by the English trainees.

Significant differences were also found between the two groups of trainees in some teaching skills, both in the pre-test and Practice I. No significant differences were found in the post-test and Practice II. Nevertheless, a certain tendency towards an increase of each skill observed, was detected in Practice II in the Reflective Teaching Program in the group of English trainees.

The Reflective Teaching Program proved to be more efficient than Microteaching in the development of teaching skills, particularly in the group of students of English. The students of French were not positively affected by either of the two training techniques. They did not show significant improvement in the development of the teaching skills with either of the two programs (see Graphics N° 1 and 2)

GRAPHIC N° 1

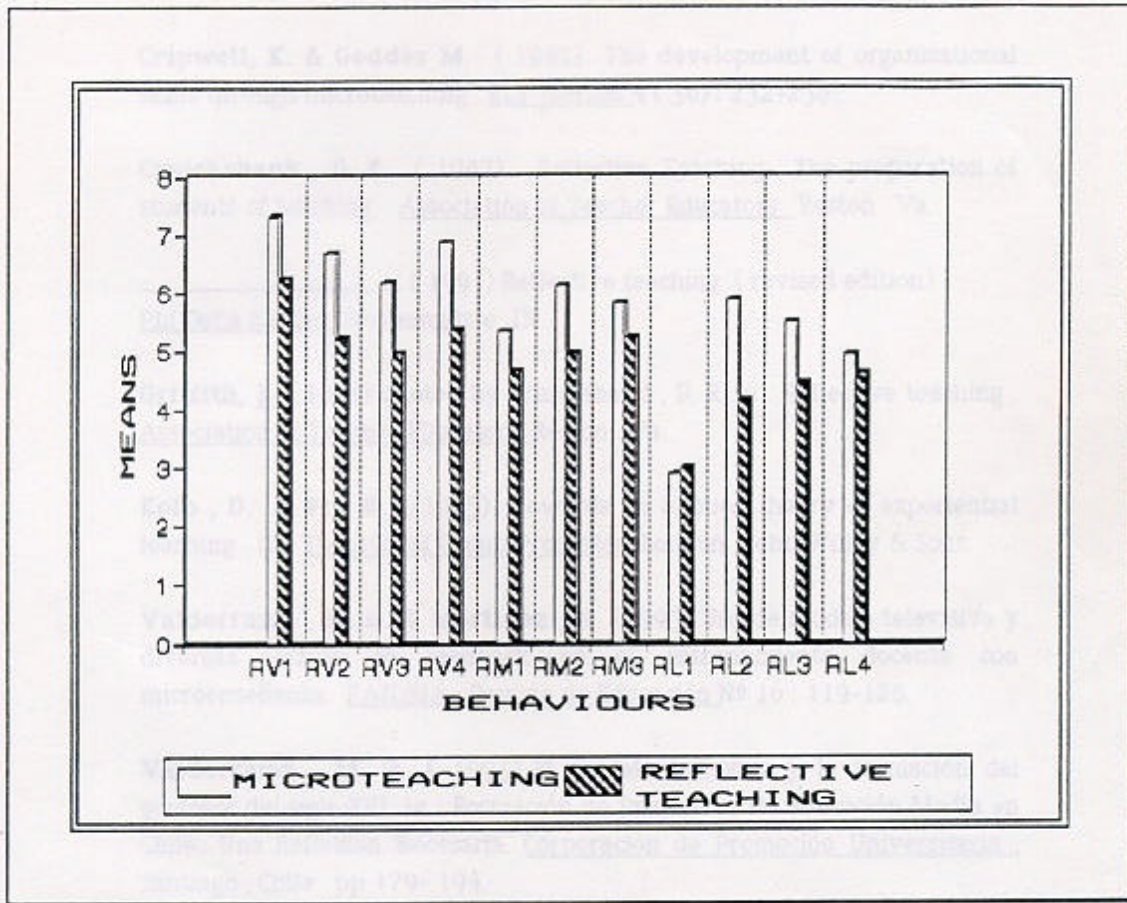
DIFFERENCE IN MEANS
OF THE BEHAVIOURS UNDER STUDY
WITH TERMINAL STUDENTS OF ENGLISH IN
THE MICROTEACHING AND REFLECTIVE
TEACHING PROGRAMS



RV1: VOICE
RV2: ORAL LANGUAGE
RV3: MAKE QUESTIONS
RV4: DIDACTIC INSTRUCTIONS
RM1: MIMIC
RM2: MOVEMENT
RM3: MANIPULATION
OF MATERIALS
RL1: INTERACTION
RL2: FEEDBACK
RL3: REINFORCEMENT
RL4: FOCALIZATION

GRAPHIC N°2

DIFFERENCE IN MEANS
OF THE BEHAVIOURS UNDER STUDY
WITH TERMINAL STUDENTS OF FRENCH IN THE
MICROTEACHING AND REFLECTIVE TEACHING
PROGRAMS



RV1: VOICE	RM1: MIMIC	RL1: INTERACTION
RV2: ORAL LANGUAGE	RM2: MOVEMENT	RL2: FEEDBACK
RV3: MAKE QUESTIONS	RM3: MANIPULATION OF MATERIALS	RL3: REINFORCEMENT
RV4: DIDACTIC INSTRUCTIONS		RL4: FOCALIZATION

See previous page →

Conclusions

- 1) The increase observed in the various skills through the Reflective Teaching training program in the English speciality, allows us to establish the positive influence of this technique in method's courses.

It is necessary to make clear, however, that this type of program requires great dedication on the part of the institution responsible for the preparation of teachers. It also requires an adequate preparation of a permanent group of teacher educators for a prolonged period.

For this reason it is necessary to consider the incorporation of these training instances (Reflective Teaching and others) in the curricula for the preparation of teachers.

- 2) The evidence found places Reflective Teaching as the most effective technique in the formative process of students of English.
- 3) With respect to the persistence degree of teaching skills under study during the Teaching Practice period, we found that although the interactive and verbal skills persisted in the groups submitted to the Reflective Teaching program at the beginning of the Teaching Practice, no evident increase was detected at the end of the period.

This result could be accounted for, among other reasons, by the sudden confrontation of the trainees with all the variables of the teaching-learning process in real classroom situations. This fact suggests that the clinical training of scaled-down encounters in the University should be accompanied by a graded systematic and parallel practice with real groups of the educational system schools.

The study, and specially the incorporation of Reflective Teaching to the training of teachers, allow us to establish the great possibilities of this new technology in the perception of the teaching act, and the types of training required for this effect.

The experience resulting from the present study led us to recommend the inclusion of Reflective Teaching in the preparation of teachers. It enhanced the trainees perception of the teaching act, and signaled the methods required to achieve a successful training of foreign language teachers.

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