EXPLORING THE CURRICULUM OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION (SLTE) IN CHILE: A CASE STUDY

EXPLORACIÓN DEL CURRÍCULO DE LA FORMACIÓN INICIAL DE PROFESORES DE SEGUNDA LENGUA EN CHILE: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO

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Abstract

This paper explores SLTE curriculum and specifically examines the course structure of a teacher education program in Chile. This examination is done through a Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) lens. CHAT is a theory of human development, which sees learning as a collective and mediated activity. This study used a qualitative research design analysing a complex data set. The analysis of documents and participants' perceptions on the course structure revealed a constant tension between a developmental curricular model and a training model in which content knowledge competed with practical pedagogical knowledge. The findings also confirm the tendency of English proficiency as the most prominent knowledge in this context.

Keywords: Assessment, assessment tasks, students, reflections, Chile.

Resumen

El siguiente artículo explora el currículo de una carrera de pedagogía en inglés en Chile. Específicamente, este trabajo reporta el estudio cualitativo con una perspectiva sociocultural del modelo curricular examinando documentos y la percepción de la comunidad perteneciente al programa estudiado. Los resultados revelan un conflicto entre un modelo curricular basado en el desarrollo de habilidades y un modelo en la transmisión y adquisición de conocimientos. Asimismo, los resultados sustentan la tendencia de prominencia del dominio del inglés como el conocimiento fundamental en el currículo del futuro profesor de inglés.

Palabras claves: Evaluación, instrumentos de evaluación, estudiantes secundarios, reflexiones, Chile.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Chile boasts a long tradition of SLTE[1]. However, it is only over the last two decades that SLTE has experienced rapid development that has led to an increase in the number of programs offered in the country. This development is the conflation of a number of factors including the implementation of a free market model in higher education, national educational reforms and the growing pressure for competent English speakers who can participate more actively in a globalised world (Matear, 2008).

Historically, SLTE programs in Chile have followed an applied linguistic tradition. However, SLTE programs have recently reformed their curricula integrating different types of knowledge including pedagogical knowledge, and an increase of sequential school-based experiences (Díaz & Bastías, 2012; Montecinos, Walker, Rittershaussen, Nuñez, Contreras & Solís, 2011). With the inclusion of sequential teaching practices, SLTE programs have started to integrate formal alternatives of reflection for pre-service teachers to improve their own practice (Tagle, 2011). Moreover, as Tagle, Del Valle, Flores and Ackley (2012) argue, these curricular changes would require further research to understand why teachers of English in Chile seem not to be effective. This confirms the persistent concern around curriculum with a focus on English language proficiency.

In an attempt to address this concern, this paper reports on a case study which examined the course structure and participants' perceptions of a Chilean SLTE program. It will also consider relevant literature regarding curricular design.

2. SLTE CURRICULUM

2.1 Models of SLTE curriculum

Historically, SLTE curricular design has attempted to balance the development of language knowledge and language teaching and learning with the development of professional teaching competence. The main models applied in SLTE are the craft model, the applied science and the reflective model. These models of curriculum reflect different conceptions of what teaching is and how teachers learn to teach EFL. They are summarised in more detail in Table 1.

The craft model views learning as an imitation process in which the pre-service teacher is required to replicate the teacher mentor's doing (Randall & Thornton, 2001). Though for the practicum, the apprenticeship model can be beneficial for pre-service teachers, it is not enough. This model does not encourage a change of teaching practices, but an accommodating attitude. Conversely, the applied science model sees learning to teach as the application of theory into the school context. This view is especially followed in English as foreign language (EFL) contexts in

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[1] Although this paper is about English as a Foreign Language Teacher education, the term SLTE is being used as it has dominated the current literature as an umbrella term to refer to TESOL, ELT and EFL teaching contexts (Wright, 2010). This means that when I use SLTE, I actually refer to EFL teacher education, especially in the Chilean context.

which English language proficiency and applied linguistics are the subject content knowledge and the core of the curriculum (Nguyen, 2013)

The curricular model proposed by Wallace (1991) disrupts both the craft model and applied science model. It is based on the assumption that teachers develop professional competence through reflection on their own practice (Bailey, 1997). The reflective process is a mediating tool that enables pre-service teachers to tackle teaching problems, evaluate past experiences and take some action.

Tabla 1
Models of curricular design in SLTE

Models	Views of teaching	Learning to teach	Role of the practicum	Views of pre-service teachers
The craft model (an apprenticeship model)	Teaching as doing	Learning by imitating all the teaching techniques used by the experienced teacher. Knowledge is acquired as a result of observation, instruction, and practice	The practicum is a way to introduce the pre-service teacher into the profession. The pre-service teacher learns the profession from a school teacher	An apprentice is a trainee (pre-service teacher) under the supervision of an expert teacher
The applied science model (a theory to practice model)	Teaching is a science and as such can be examined rationally and objectively (thinking and doing)	Learning to teach is the application of the theory learnt	The practicum is seen as a laboratory. Pre-service teachers learn in a controlled environment with ideal conditions and excellent professionals. They apply what they had learnt at university	Teachers are educated when they become proficient enough to apply these theories in practice Passive role of learners
The reflective model	Teaching as knowing what to do	Teachers learn by reflecting on their own practice	The practicum is a place where student teachers encounter a large number of authentic cases in order to learn how to identify resemblances and distinctive traits. They learn how to interpret and analyse cases in the light of research, theory and experience	Student teachers are decision-makers. They have an active role as teacher learners

Source: The table is my own doing based on Wallace (1991), Freeman (1991) and Mattson, Eilersten & Rorrison (2011).

These models are in use in SLTE programs internationally. It is rare to see a SLTE program which relies only on one curricular type. The current trends of curricula in

EFL contexts seem to use more integrative models in which different types of knowledge is integrated through the curriculum. Currently, SLTE programs in Chile usually follow a hybrid model in which characteristics of the three models are evidenced. This has been triggered by recent policy expectations articulated in accreditation criteria, national standards and national curriculum. Thus, SLTE programs tend to structure their curriculum towards a developmental approach, i.e., teacher education aims at teachers to be prepared "for the contingencies of unforeseen future teaching situations" (Ely, 1994, p. 336).

The move towards a developmental model for teacher education in Chile has presented challenges to its implementation (Ormeño, 2009). This is the reason why it is useful to broaden the discussion of curricular models and review two alternative models which could offer some different answers.

2.1.2 Towards a model of critical SLTE

Alternative models are proposed by Norton (2005) and Kumaradivelu (2012). Norton's model offers a method to bridge the historic divide of theory and practice, and educate future teachers who can be social agents capable to "promote equitable relations of power in different sites of learning and teaching" (Norton, 2005, p. 12).

Norton's (2005) model of critical language teacher education was informed by the teaching practices in China, Canada and the USA in pre-service and in-service teacher contexts. Norton's proposal sought to introduce innovation and a concern for social change in language teacher education. Her proposal lies under the assumption that a teacher education program should help "student teachers relate to their practice from a position of strength rather than weakness, and to utilize diverse resources to effect educational and social change" (Norton, 2005, p. 16). To do so, this author suggests that student teachers need to negotiate different identities, and that the array of identities is constructed through language immersed in different communities of practice.

Norton's model suggests that a teacher education program should go beyond content and teaching methods. Instead, the focus should be given to the reasons why specific content is taught and how it is taught. Here it is important to consider pre-service teachers' backgrounds, their future goals, and the communities and learners they want to teach. Thus, this model incorporates a wider sociocultural community in which "there is frequently unequal access to power and possibility" (Norton, 2005, p. 17). Consequently, the program should provide future teachers with a wider range of identity options that would enable teachers to be legitimate members of their communities, and enhance the teaching and learning of a language.

Within the same broad domain as Norton's lies Kumaradivelu's (2012) proposal. Kumaradivelu proposes a radical restructure of SLTE to educate future teachers to be "strategic thinkers, exploratory researchers and transformative intellectuals" (p. x).

Thus, he argues that SLTE should help teachers develop a holistic understanding of classrooms, learners and teaching. This is the underlying assumption of his curricular model based on the integration of the modules of knowing, analysing, recognising, doing, and seeing. These modules operate on the basis of particularity, practicality, and possibility. The particularity principle refers to "the lived experiences" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 13) of teachers. Practicality refers to the divide between theory and practice. This principle intends to enable teachers to theorise their practice. The last principle, possibility, is based on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (1972) and aims at social transformation rather than knowledge transmission. These principles work in an integrated way with the componential modules. Kumaravadivelu proposes a "cyclical, interactive and integrative" (2012, p. 18) curricular model to educate language teachers in a globalised world who can not only develop their knowledge base, but who can recognise their identities and beliefs, analyse their teaching context, create dialogues with the community, teach accordingly and monitor their own teaching.

Both alternative models presented here critically question the divide between what to teach and how to teach, and advocate for a critical stance towards the knowledge base and methods of language teaching and learning. Whilst the Norton and Kumaravadivelu models propose an original base to design a SLTE curriculum, there is little research on how much success these models can have on teachers' learning. These models are relevant to this study as they can provide a framework to introduce curricular innovations in the Chilean context.

As pointed out in the previous section, what to teach and how to teach are core elements in SLTE curriculum. To answer these questions we need to examine the knowledge base of SLTE curriculum.

2.2 The knowledge base of SLTE

2.2.1 Is Language acquisition the core of SLTE knowledge base?

In the EFL contexts the knowledge base of teachers has been dominated by English language proficiency. In Asia and South America, in which English is learnt as a foreign language driven by economic or communicative purposes, language acquisition is a priority in the formation of future teachers of English. In this setting, the challenge for curriculum designers seems to be bigger and more complex. How can the curriculum provide opportunities to pre-service teachers to appropriate pedagogical knowledge and language proficiency concurrently?

Although there is a clear need for prospective EFL teachers to master the foreign language, this is not the only knowledge required. Shulman's proposal (1987) had an important implication on SLTE curriculum design as it provides a complex framework of what the knowledge base of language teaching is. According to Shulman, the knowledge base is a complex array of different types of knowledge supported by the underlying assumption of teachers as "active mediators of knowledge and constructors of new knowledge" (Hüttner, Reichl, & Schiftner, 2012,

p. xiv). Shulman's proposal (1987) went beyond the subject matter knowledge and the pedagogical component addressing the gap between theory and practice in an innovative way (Richards, 2008). Shulman's model is made up of the following six categories: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of the learner, and knowledge of educational goals and their philosophical bases.

The first category, content knowledge, has to do with being knowledgeable about subject matter. In the context of EFL teaching, content knowledge is what teachers teach, that is, English. The second, general pedagogical knowledge is explained as the general set of methodologies and strategies that the teacher needs to know in order to carry out the teaching activity. The third component, pedagogical content knowledge, refers to the knowledge of what language is teachable and how it can be represented to learners (Golombek, 1998). The fourth category, curricular knowledge, is described as the teachers' acquaintance of the curricular program of the school and how they make use of it to favour their students' teaching learning processes. The fifth, knowledge of the learner, refers to the teachers' engagement with the students' processes, considering their physical, psychological and cognitive characteristics. The last component of Shulman's model refers to knowledge of educational goals and their philosophical bases. This component implies that teachers inquire about the educational system principles and the social expectations they are required to sort out as educators.

Shulman's proposal is also coherent with Freeman and Johnson's reconceptualisation of SLTE knowledge base (1998). They argued that how teachers learn to teach should be seen as the activity of learning to teach. This means that learning to teach is "a long-term, complex, developmental process, that operates through participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 402). This reconceptualisation of the knowledge base of SLTE integrates the teacher as a learner, social contexts, and the pedagogical process. Understanding the teacher as a learner of language teaching (and not of a language) provides with a holistic understanding of what learning to teach is. This also comprises the necessary socialisation that teachers need to go through at the schools, and the pedagogical issues regarding the teaching and learning of a language process. These domains are part of a complex system of knowledge base in which the domains are in constant interdependence.

Thus, this perspective challenges SLTE curriculum as a competence with a set of skills and knowledge. In short, knowledge base in this study is understood as:

> Normative and lifelong, as emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts: as learners in classrooms and schools, as participants in professional teacher education programs, and later as teachers in the settings where they work (Johnson, 2006, p. 239).
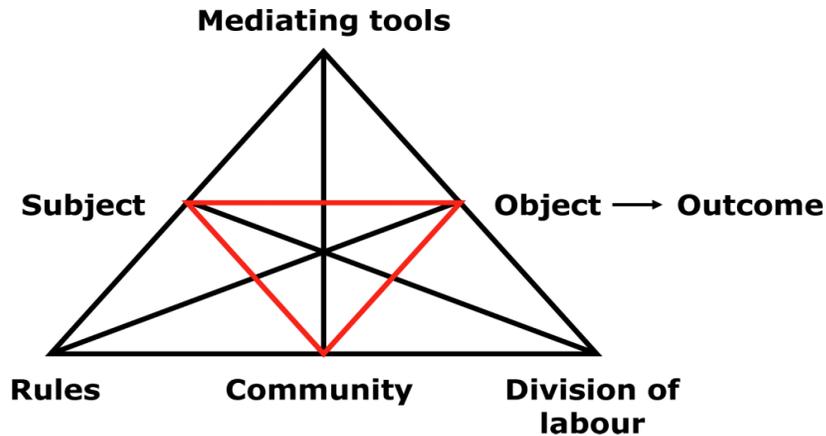
3. THE STUDY

3.1 Purpose

The study reported here reports on critical findings of my PhD research project: Understanding *EFL teacher education in Chile: A CHAT perspective*. The study focused on how a group of 24 late stage Chilean pre-service teachers of English learnt to teach English in a university teacher education program in Chile. In this paper, how the curriculum of the program mediated pre-service teachers' learning to teach will be detailed.

3.2 CHAT Approach

This paper explores the curriculum of a specific teacher education program in Santiago, Chile. This examination is done from a Cultural Historical Activity theory perspective, CHAT[2]. CHAT is a research tradition which sees culture as crucial in learning and development (Wells & Claxton, 2002). This theory is founded on the seminal work of Vygotsky (1978) and later developments of Leont'ev's (1978) and Engeström's activity theory (1987, 2001). CHAT provides an understanding that "human development relies on the appropriation of pre-existing cultural tools and that this appropriation occurs through social interchange" (Ellis, Edwards, & Smagorinsky, 2010, p. 4).

Activity theory, based on Vygotsky's understanding of learning, sees learning as a collective activity mediated by tools and contextual conditions. Figure 4.3 below is a representation of the structure of human activity. According to Engeström (1987), the upper level of the activity is driven by an object-related motive; the middle level of individual (or group) action is driven by a conscious goal; and the bottom level of automatic operation is driven by the conditions and tools of the action (Engeström 1987).

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[2] Post Vygotskian developments have been variously characterised as sociocultural theory. However, the name cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) is preferred over sociocultural theory or activity theory in psychology and educational contexts. Conversely, in the SLA literature, the term sociocultural seems to be preferred. Therefore, as this paper has an educational focus I use CHAT to refer to sociocultural developments with activity theory underpinnings.

Figure 1. The structure of Human Activity

Source: adapted from Engeström, 1987 p.78.

Mediation is crucial in any activity. Mediation occurs between the various components of the activity system through third parties (Kuutti, 1996). The relationship between community and subject is mediated by rules of behaviour which are explicit and implicit norms and conventions governing social interaction. The relationship between community and object is mediated by the division of labour which is "the explicit and implicit organisation of a community as related to the transformation process of the object into the outcome" (Issroff & Scanlon, 2002, p. 78). The components of community, rules and the division of labour shows how human behaviour is socially bound and depicts the unification of consciousness and activity or thinking and doing. This means that acting and learning are tightly bound together (Jonassen, 2000).

In this study I adopt a perspective of learning coherent with a CHAT perspective. This implies that the activity of learning to teach EFL is the unit of analysis that allows me to understand how pre-service teachers learn to teach EFL by analysing individual actions in relation to the collective activity they are part of. This is the reason why the analysis considers elements from the Chilean national curriculum and standards together with participants' perceptions of their own experience of learning to teach EFL. The analysis of the data uses the triangle representation above (see Figure 1) to illustrate the activity.

3.3 Research questions and Methods

The research study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How does the curriculum of the SLTE program mediate pre-service teachers' learning to teach English?

2. What is the type of teacher that the SLTE program is designed to educate?

3. What are the formal learning opportunities that the program provides to pre-service teachers to learn to teach EFL?

To answer these questions, a qualitative research design was adopted. The design of this research reflects the perspective of CHAT as a conceptual framework which allows us to understand the complex activity of learning to teach EFL including how the curriculum mediated pre-service teachers' learning This examination was undertaken through a data set that captured the complexity of the activity, including semi-structured interviews to pre-service teachers and teacher educators, together with the analysis of the written curriculum, accreditation criteria and reports and national standards. The data reported in this paper specifically emerged from: the Chilean national curriculum, national standards (before 2014), the SLTE program's curriculum; semi-structured interviews to 15 pre-service teachers (S1-15_I[3]) and 8 teacher educators.

3.3.1 Context of the study

The institutional context

The study took place in a SLTE program in a young private university in Santiago. The SLTE program became operational in 2005 and was a response to the Ministry of Education identification of the need for teachers of English in the country. The program investigated had an enrolment of 300 pre-service teachers in five different years when the data were collected (2011). The research reported here focused on fifth year pre-service teachers because at that stage, they had already been in the program for four years, and in this final year they were completing their last teaching practice and action research project.

Participants

Pre-service teachers: These students enrolled in the program in either 2007 or 2008. The average age of the group was 21 years old and it was female dominated (with only 4 male participants). They were to become the second generation of graduates of the program. Most of the pre-service teachers came from low-middle socio-economic backgrounds and came from public or subsidised schools. Their entry level of English to the program was elementary.

Teacher educators: Eight teachers were interviewed from different disciplines (English, linguistics, practicum supervisors, reflection seminars, and assessment) who had worked in the program for at least two years. Most of these teacher educators held a Master's degree and were experienced language teachers. These teacher educators showed a generally high level of commitment with the program.

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3   This corresponds to the coding system I used to classify the data obtained from participants: pre-service teachers' interviews (S1-15_I), and teacher educators' interviews (TE1-8-I).

3.4 Data Analysis

Two strategies were used for the data analysis. Firstly, the data were thematically coded. The data were analysed identifying primary codes. The codes identified in the data were grouped into themes. After reading the different data sources several times, words, sentences, and paragraphs were further coded and categorised.

Table 2
Summary of themes of document analysis

Document Type	Themes
Corse structure	Meaningful activities: school-based experiences, discussion seminars, English classes, language methodology classes. Obstacles: heavy academic load, rules, theory vs practice Experience as students Knowledge appropriation
National curriculum of English	Goals: instrumental use of English: economic drive History: Changes from receptive skills to a more integrated curriculum
National standards for teachers of English	Subject content knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, knowledge and the learner, and knowledge of educational goals

Source: Own source

Table 3
Summary of themes from Interviews-categories students

Categories	Themes
Type of teacher	Social change agents; language teachers
Meaningful learning activities of the program	English classes; reflection seminars, language methodology classes, school-based experiences, program community
Obstacles	Pre-service teachers' previous experiences as learners; institutional constrains
Purpose of school base experiences	Crucial to become a teacher/ opportunity to apply knowledge

Source: Own source

Secondly, the themes were used to outline the activity of learning to teach EFL mediated by the curriculum of the program. Thus, activity theory categories (subject, object, tools, rules, community and division of labour) were applied onto the themes as shown in Table 4 below. The activity will be illustrated later in section 4.5.

Table 4

Summary of Activity Theory categories

Activity theory categories	Themes	Codes
Subjects	Pre-service teachers'	Socio-economic background, motives into teaching and beliefs about language teaching and learning
Objects	Pre-service teachers' identity Mastery of knowledge and skills Subject content knowledge Pedagogical content knowledge Personal future goals	Becoming an educator; a language teacher, a social agent Knowledge of grammar, lexicon and pronunciation; English competence; classroom management skills Language teaching skills, knowledge about students; lesson planning; developing instructional material; using ICT Teacher at public schools; teacher at tertiary level; other jobs
Mediational tools	Course structure	Meaningful activities of the program: lectures, workshops, seminars: school-based experiences
Division of labour	Roles of participants Power relationship between pre-service teachers and teacher educators	Pre-service teachers as students, as teachers Teacher educators as guides, supervisors and colleagues Allocation of teaching tasks; supervision of teaching tasks
Community	Peers Teacher educators-school-teachers	Committed and hardworking classmates Positive/negative role models
Rules	Explicit and implicit rules of the SLTE program Professional rules	Expectations as students and as teachers Expectations for EFL teachers in Chile

Source: Own source

The next section presents and discusses the results of the analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I examined the curriculum of the program following Wright's (2010) understanding of what a SLTE curriculum should answer to, focusing on the program's goals and the instructional practices offered to the pre-service teachers. I also used Shulman's (1987) categories of the different types of knowledge base (see 2.2.1) to examine the course structure of the program.

4.1 What is the type of teacher that the SLTE program is preparing?

The analysis of the documents: program goals, course structure and the program regulation reflect that the institutional discourse is directed to educate professionals that are socially committed to Chilean society. The SLTE_program as part of a

religious university intends to educate a socially committed teacher who would contribute to end inequality in the Chilean society.

To understand the reasons underpinning the goals of this program, it is necessary to examine the origins and history of the program. As observed in the justification of the program document, the SLTE program studied became operational as a response to: 1) the shortage of teachers of English, especially at primary schools, and 2) a new national policy towards better standards for graduate teachers of English. In this context, the program was founded with the commitment to offer a course which educates future teachers with a proficient level of English as well as with the necessary methodological skills to be able to teach the language to both children and teenagers.

The analysis of the program goals suggests that the program seeks to educate a teacher of English who is qualified to teach English to children and teenagers at both levels: primary and secondary. The documentation also suggests that these future teachers are being empowered through the program so that they can make necessary changes in the curriculum they have to enact at schools. Regarding English language teaching, the program states that it sees language learning as a tool for social change. The program expects that these future teachers acquire a good command of the language to use it in the classroom as a vehicle to contribute to the education of responsible citizens. The SLTE program discourse is very strong regarding the social commitment that they expect from their future teachers. Words such as poverty, inequality, social justice, critical thinkers, and responsible citizens are highly repeated in documents such as: the course structure, and corresponding course syllabuses and outlines.

4.2 The course structure[4]

The SLTE program studied contains around 44 compulsory courses, plus the school-based experiences. The first two years are focused on the provision of language classes aimed at English language proficiency. These two years also aim at providing foundational knowledge of philosophy and education. It is important to note that more than 50% of the academic load of the first two years corresponds to the English language lessons. Thus, content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge have been privileged on the curricular design.

The next three years is structured in five areas: English language, linguistics, culture and literature, language methodology and school based experiences and disciplinary pedagogical and ethical knowledge. Three of these areas are related to English language acquisition and knowledge of the language. These three years are also characterised by the sequential inclusion of school-based experiences and the accompanying reflection seminars and methodology classes. Thus, content

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[4]   The course structure analysed here was slightly changed in 2013. The new course structure adopted an integrated curriculum on language proficiency and deleted subjects such as Phonology and grammar. Reflective workshops were intensified to go concurrently with all the school based experiences from third year onwards.

knowledge is still predominant in the course structure. Curricular knowledge, knowledge of the learner and knowledge of educational goals are mostly covered as part of different courses, but appear to have a less weight in the whole structure.

From the analysis of the course structure of the program it is apparent that this curriculum aims to be aligned with the accreditation requirements and the national standards before the changes of 2014. It is evidenced through the different domains of the course structure that the design includes the provision of subject matter knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and practical knowledge. However, as it will be seen through the participants' voices, English language proficiency was the most prominent types of knowledge base they reported as crucial for a future teacher of English.

The next section explores how participants' experiences have been shaped by the SLTE curriculum.

4.3 Participants' perceptions of the SLTE curriculum

4.3.1 Teacher educators

The analysis of the teacher educators' interviews report that most of them firmly believed they were educating a teacher of English to work in public schools. The majority of teacher educators identified that they expected most of their graduates to be working at under-resourced schools. They explained this phenomenon as part of the social commitment they had been developing in them and a great personal desire to be change agents. A teacher educator insight was a typical example of teacher educators' views on the future of their graduates:

> I think that most of our graduates are going to work in the public sector. **They do want to change the system**. They are so willing to do it (TE7, I).

Most teacher educators reported that they expected their graduates to be change agents at the schools. Teacher educators not only sought that their graduates applied what they learnt at university, but also that they became part of the school community and made changes in that context. Teacher educators somewhat either ignored the school reality or they saw these future graduates as heroes who could make changes by themselves in a short period of time. This challenge of enculturation is not straight forward, it requires not only time, but lots of skills and a powerful teacher identity that allows them to work professionally and make decisions of their own regarding teaching and learning. As seen in the excerpt below, teacher educators acknowledged that Chilean classrooms needed change and the ones called to make the changes are their graduates.

> **A teacher aware of the school reality, critical**, able to be part of that and not be consumed by the system, but on the contrary be able to change it (TE5-I).

The data analysis also revealed the type of knowledge base that teacher educators expected from their graduates.

4.3.1 Knowledge base

Most of teacher educators reported English language proficiency as the most important feature for a teacher of English. This implies that the knowledge base of a future teacher must be predominantly given by English language proficiency. This is based on the perception that Chilean teachers of English level of proficiency is very low (Abrahams & Farías, 2009). This would be the apparent cause for the lack of use of English in the classroom. Teacher educators reported that their graduates should be able to teach English in English, and to overcome the challenges of the classroom to do so. As another teacher educator observed, the intent is that pre-service teachers not only master the language, but can use it as a means of instruction in the classroom. This implies that the knowledge base should include not only subject matter knowledge, but pedagogical content knowledge as well.

> **And speaking English while teaching**. That is something not all teachers do, then I always ask them [pre-service teachers] how much of the lesson is spoken in English, and I ask them to try to speak in English. I don't want them to say "It just didn't work", I want them to insist, insist, insist. **I don't want them to get down because of the environment,** … (TE8-I).

As stated at the beginning of this section, teacher educators reported that they were training not only good teachers of English, but also teachers who were change agents. Teacher educators showed high expectations for their graduates. They expected to educate a teacher who goes beyond just teaching English. This view can be clearly seen in the following observation from another teacher educator.

> The profile of our students is very different to the expected outcome. **We expect a professional who is very good at the discipline**, teaching English, but also **we want other traits that go beyond English.** We want a free thinker, critical, a change agent (TE3-I).

The analysis of teacher educators' interviews evidenced that most teacher educators perceived the intent of the curriculum of the program as training of teachers of English who could be change agents at the schools. Notwithstanding, the English language was signalled as the core of the program. Most teacher educators saw very positively that the discipline, English, was provided together with didactics, and school-based experiences. The experiential learning approach was seen as crucial in the course structure together with English.

4.3.2 Pre-service teachers' perceptions

For most pre-service teachers, teaching was seen as a social mission; a teacher who can help other people, influence people's lives, and shape students' character. The comment below was characteristic of an important number of pre-service teachers' interviews.

> But I'm not just teaching subjects but educating people. That is crucial to me. You have to say "I'm not educating you in order to make you able to speak English in no time. No, I'm educating you to make of you a good person who is also able to speak English. (S1-I).

As pre-service teachers reflected on the type of teachers they were becoming, the discourse as change agents became apparent. From the interviews and self-reflection reports most of the pre-service teachers stated that being an educator is more important and relevant than a teacher of any discipline.

Regarding the goals of the program, pre-service teachers agreed with teacher educators. They saw themselves as teachers with a mission to change ineffective social practices at schools.

4.3.2.1 Pre-service teachers' perceptions of knowledge base

The data set strongly suggested that pre-service teachers learnt English above everything else. Though pre-service teachers acknowledged they had learnt a great deal from numerous significant disciplines, represented in the different subjects of the program such as psychology, educational theories, and child development, they identified the acquisition of English as the core of their learning in the program. This finding is coherent with the literature regarding teachers who are non-native speakers of English and demonstrated in recent studies such as the ones by Sakamuto (2004) Beckett and Stiefvater (2009) and Lee (2010) that have shown how non-native teachers of English value language proficiency as the most important characteristic of a teacher of English. As a student poignantly observed:

> I have learnt lots of things here, but **what I have learnt the most is English**. Though my English is not perfect, it is definitely my strongest (S1-I).

Though pre-service teachers recognised their progress in the language, some of them still felt they needed to continue learning. Furthermore, they reported a great concern and lack of confidence or low self-esteem about their level of proficiency in English. Most pre-service teachers reported that their English could be better. Some of them even thought about taking up English classes when they graduated.

> I couldn't speak any English at the beginning, and **the progress I have made is amazing, however, I still make mistakes**. I guess when I graduate I'll take a course to improve

> my speaking. I need to improve my English to be a good
> teacher (S4-I).

These perceptions coincide with the literature regarding non-native teachers of English who usually show problems of self-confidence regarding the language used (Kamhi-Stein, 2009). This lack of confidence impacts directly on teaching, and in some cases, this can be related to teachers not using the target language.

Another recurrent theme in the data set regarding knowledge base was using English as the means of instruction in the classroom. Pre-service teachers commented that they had learnt English in English, and they aspired to do the same as teachers.

> **Learning English here has been awesome**. I remember the
> first classes of English that I didn't understand, and could not
> respond. But by mid-year, I understood everything, and I could
> speak some English. **If I learnt without Spanish, my students
> will be able to, as well** (S6-I).

The analysis of the interviews also suggested that pre-service teachers acknowledged that the role of grammar in the English class is peripheral. The curriculum had a strong orientation to a communicative language teaching method and a task-based approach. Most pre-service teachers supported that they had learnt that teaching English goes beyond teaching grammar and more on the development of skills or on communication.

> **We have learnt English for communication**. Especially at the
> beginning, we did lots of role-plays, projects and fun activities.
> Our English classes haven't been focused on grammar at all
> (S10-I).

Pre-service teachers' reflections on the type of teacher they were becoming and their views regarding the knowledge base they acquired reflected an alignment with the written curriculum of the program and the teacher educators' views. This implies that pre-service teachers saw themselves as teachers with a solid knowledge base in English as well as change agents at the schools.

4.4 What are the formal learning experiences that the program considers for pre-service teachers?

The SLTE program's goals sought to educate a teacher of English, who is critical, socially committed, and qualified to teach English at primary and secondary levels. To achieve these goals, the program designed a course structure with elements of a developmental curricular model, but mostly based on a training model. This is evidenced as the course is structured with a significant number of teaching practices, but with a major component aiming at the provision of the necessary knowledge to be applied as a teacher.

The learning experiences included a variety of activities. The data analysis revealed that the courses varied not only in terms of the discipline, but also in their mode of delivery. While theoretical courses such as psychology, education, history and linguistics were lecture-based, English lessons were usually hands-on workshops. Communicative and task-based approaches were used in most of the English classes; therefore, typical tasks included role-plays, games, task-based projects, and sketches

The program also provided a sequential number of school-based experiences and practicum. They comprised eight school-based experiences during the third and fourth years. The practicum (2) took place in the fifth year of the program. The activities that pre-service teachers did in each experience varied from observation to actual teaching. The practicum consisted of taking up the work of a teacher of English at an assigned school.

The school-based experiences were in parallel with language methodology classes. The language methodology classes included both theoretical and practical issues regarding teaching English. Pre-service teachers were introduced to different language teaching methods, and they were expected to apply these methods and techniques in microteaching, and also in their experiences at the schools.

Another interesting mode of teaching was the reflective workshops (discussion seminars) which were paralleled to the school-based experiences. Participants highlighted these seminars as beneficial not only for the content provided, but also for its didactics. This consisted of discussions about educational issues grounded in practical experience. The experience came from both pre-service teachers' at schools, and related literature. Most pre-service teachers commented that the first seminar was crucial for their learning to be a teacher.

4.4.1 Meaningful learning experiences for pre-service teachers

The analysis of pre-service teachers' interviews showed a high level of appreciation towards the program. The analysis suggested that pre-service teachers viewed the course structure as a solid unit which combined English and education well. Pre-service teachers valued the experiential learning of the program; they commented on the school-based experiences as the most meaningful learning experiences of the program. Most pre-service teachers supported the sequential school-based experiences and the practicum as the capstone experience. They reported that though school-based experiences in some cases were upsetting they could develop teaching skills that were useful as they did their practicum.

> The school-based experiences have been favourable. **I notice my changes as a teacher with every teaching experience.** In the first one I was a bit shy because I was afraid of the children's opinion. They could laugh at my height, I mean they could have said things like "I'm taller than you and you come here to teach me things". Then it's rewarding when you get the attitude and you say "I'm not your friend here, I'm your

> teacher" and they look at you in a different way. And, as I told you, **there are kind of steps to follow in these teaching practices and you go from observing to standing before a class**. (S1-I).

Another key element of the program that most pre-service teachers identified as meaningful was the discussion seminars as stated above. These seminars acted as support groups for pre-service teachers facing the sometimes shocking school reality. Pre-service teachers reported that these seminars were very meaningful because they were opportunities to discuss what they were going through at the schools, together with an understanding of the classroom phenomenon in the light of educational theories.

> **I think that the discussion seminars was the most relevant subject in the program for me.** It made me understand what teaching is, and what the difference is between being an authority, I mean, being authoritarian and being a teacher. (S4-I).
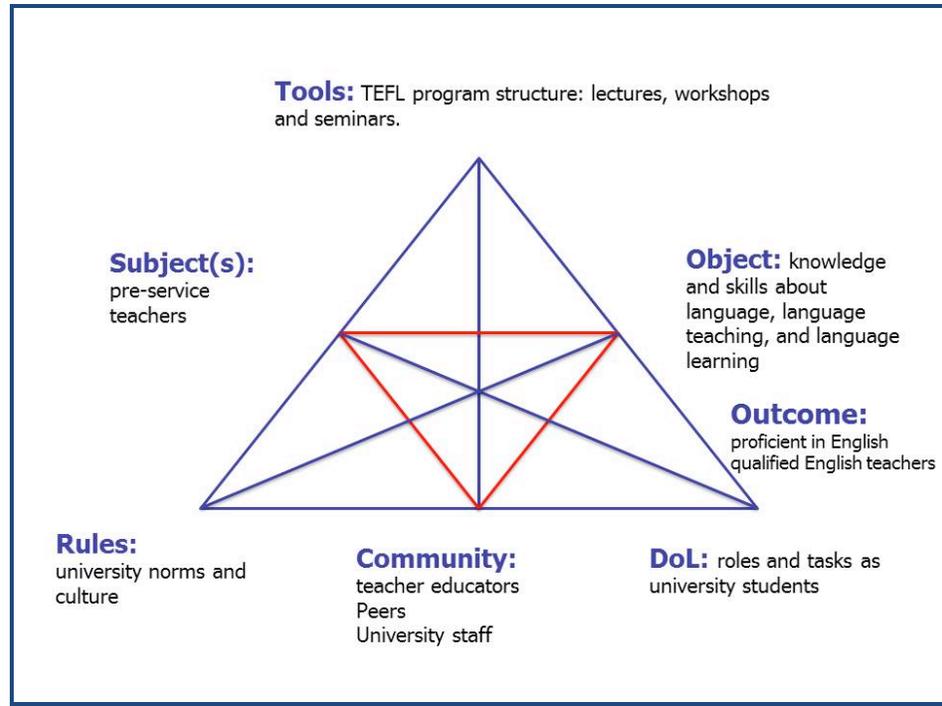
Another meaningful aspect of the course structure reported by most participants was learning English, especially at the beginning of the program. They reported that it was a huge achievement to have overcome the first two years. Pre-service teachers acknowledged that learning English was difficult, but motivating and engaging.

> In the beginning it was challenging because I knew I knew just basic English, …but now my English is not perfect, but pretty good. It is gratifying. (S4-I).

In summary, pre-service teachers' views on the course structure reflected positive perceptions of the curriculum about the balance achieved between English proficiency and language teaching methodology. Pre-service teachers regarded the school-based experiences and discussion seminars as key in their training as teachers of English. This coincides with the extensive literature pointing that school-based experiences are key in learning to teach (Atputhasamy, 2005; Legutke & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, 2009; Luebbers, 2010). Language oriented classes and the significant amount of time spent learning English were highly valued by pre-service teachers. This again confirms the strong belief that being a good teacher of English means to be proficient in the English language. Other courses such as language methodology, psychology, and applied linguistics were mentioned as relevant in their learning, but with much less impact than English language learning.

4.5 The activity of learning to teach EFL mediated by the curriculum

Drawing the analysis of the course structure and the participants' views of the curriculum together, a tension between the acquisition of English and learning to teach English became apparent. As pre-service teachers enrolled with very little knowledge of English; they went through the experience of learning English and learning to teach it concurrently.

Figure 2. The activity of learning to teach EFL mediated by the curriculum

Source: based on Engestrom (1987).

As illustrated in Figure 2 above, the curriculum mediated pre-service teachers' learning. The object was the appropriation of practical tools and knowledge about language teaching. This knowledge and skills was also strongly shaped by situational contexts. Learning to teach is not a solo activity but a confluence of the pre-service teachers' personal histories (for example, no English, poor schools), the culture of the university (diverse and socially committed), and the nature of the pre-service teacher education program (critical, and change agents). This understanding reveals the complexity of the activity of learning to teach EFL, and questions the possibility of having a single outcome as a teacher. This is specially so, if this object is not shared by the whole community.

Pre-service teachers were mostly orientated towards the provision of knowledge in different areas, especially English and though they had subjects on language teaching methodology, learning to teach EFL was left to the school-based experiences. It was assumed that learning to teach EFL would come with experience, and they had to endure the life at school. Little scaffolding was provided regarding school-based experiences, and teacher educators got really frustrated when they saw that pre-service teachers "copied" what school teachers did, despite what they had received as part of their training. This was especially evident regarding the use of English in the classroom. My observations confirmed that most

of the pre-service teachers of this cohort showed an appropriate level of English, they did not necessarily use it as they were teaching. Though, this raises the question if the reason to not use English in the classroom really lies in the level of English of teachers.

The university coursework emphasised the importance of teaching English in English, communicatively, not grammar focused, and critically. Conversely, pre-service teachers were conflicted when they had to put theory into practice, because they realised that it is not a clean and smooth process as studied in class. In the school context, pre-service teachers questioned the "laws" they were supposed to apply, they were conflicted on what to teach and how to teach in the light of their classroom realities. This is coherent with what other Chilean researchers have argued for more opportunities for reflection in action are still necessary to educate critical and socially committed teachers (Díaz, Sanhueza, Martínez, & Roa, 2011; Tagle, 2011).

5. CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the curriculum of the SLTE program studied mediated pre-service teachers' learning to teach English. A key element in the course structure of the program was the focus on English proficiency together with the experiential learning opportunities at schools. These experiences aimed not only at the integration of theory into practice, but also to the development of teaching skills. Although the curriculum of the SLTE program can be characterised following a developmental approach because of the graded school-based experiences, it also contains a very strong component on training. It was expected that pre-service teachers transferred the knowledge they had acquired at university in the school context without much questioning or adaptation.

One of the implications of this study lies on curricular design for SLTE. This study suggests that the SLTE program studied could consider some critical curricular models such as Norton's (2005) or Kamaradavileu's (2012) and organise their course structure in a way that allows pre-service teachers more time to reflect on their own teaching practices. This could be achieved if there is a more balanced structure between learning English and the educational disciplines. From the analysis, it seems that the academic load tended to be overwhelming for pre-service teachers pushing them to do too many things at the same time. This sometimes led to a superficial level of task achievement without much time for reflection. It also undermined their capabilities as future teachers and consolidated a dependent relationship with the program. Both critical models presented in this paper advocate for a critical stance towards the knowledge base and methods of language teaching and learning. They argue for teacher training that enables future teachers to become social agents in their communities. This seems to be more aligned with the goals of the program.

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