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Chapter 4   How Can I Train Myself to Be an Expert Teacher? A Teaching Practicum Experience

Abstract: This chapter presents the results of a research study focusing on a training environment designed to foster the language teaching skills of novice teachers. The study is located within the field of video-based training, which in turn forms part of the research and training approach known as activity analysis. The focus of study is a teaching Practicum. Identifying the process through which novice teachers must go to become expert teachers leads us to explore a highly complex and interlinked series of phenomena. The chapter will highlight the specific characteristics of novice teachers' activity, the development of their training, one typical activity linked to language teaching and the need for collaboration agreements between schools and universities.

Keywords: teacher training, activity analysis, self-confrontation, training environment, Teaching Practicum

1. Introduction

The challenge posed by teacher training is how to help students become proficient, professional teachers. For years, the main focus was a knowledge of the subject matter to be taught and traditional teaching theory itself, but this approach is necessarily limited, since teaching can only really be learned through practical experience. Ensuring that novice teachers become quickly familiarised with the practice of teaching requires new effort and orientations. And indeed, this is precisely the aim of this research project[1]: to develop effective methods for helping trainee teachers learn their profession, particularly within the field of language teaching, and to validate and improve said methods through research.

This study is located within the framework of research into training environments. Such research is based on works focusing on cognitive ergonomics (Durand, 2008; Clot et al. 2001), as well as, in general, on a type of initial and lifelong training known as video-based training and the research that has been

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1   HIPREST, the study presented here forms part of the research programme on language teacher training (see Plazaola et al., 2013).

conducted into this method (Gaudin & Chaliès, 2012; Hatch & Grossman, 2009; Lussi Borer et al., 2014; Picard, 2014; Santagata & Yeh, 2015; Seidel et al., 2011; van Es & Sherin, 2008). Within the broad field of research into training, this study falls within the area focused on *work activity*.

In addition to describing an experience which combines novice teachers' Practicums with their End-of-Degree Thesis (EDT), the chapter also outlines the research that has been conducted in relation to the training process itself.

The research questions we seek to answer are as follows:

How do novice teachers act in the classroom? What resources do they find useful in their activity? What does the action mean to them? What would help them improve their performance? How can we help novice teachers become proficient in their profession?

2. Theoretical Orientation: the Study of Human Activity

Research into work, activity and practice has increased over recent years, mainly due to the more pragmatic approach now adopted by Human and Social Sciences (Leontiev, 1979) In turn, these orientations have resulted in major innovations within the field of Education and Training, with working sessions (in this case, novice teachers' classroom Practicums) becoming the subject of analysis. Through this fusion of teacher-student activities, the aim is to move beyond those models that view teacher training as a mere process of knowledge transmission.

Research into teaching is generally based on theories of human action or human activity, including Schütz's theory of social action, Dewey's pragmatism, Varela's enaction theory and the activity theories developed by the Russian schools of philosophy and psychology.

One of the starting points for the theoretical framework used was as follows: in order to understand human action, it is important to explore the meaning the action carried out has for the agent, or in other words, it is important to analyse the agent's own experience. Based on Husserl's work, the theory developed by Schütz focuses on the appropriation of experience and the construction of meaning contexts. Certain aspects of this theory are vital to the research project presented here. The most important are outlined below.

According to Schütz, the agent perceives the action's situations, the actions themselves or the kinds of activity in question in relation to a set of types. Types represent typical ways of dealing with action situations, and offer solutions based on common methods (Cefaï, 1994).

When faced with a specific situation, the agent reflects before acting, revisiting the past in order to identify similar activities from their own experience. This helps them to discern what kind or type of action situation the new situation they are now facing is. This process of reflection is based on the (socially organised) types available to the agent, and on their own accumulated experience. But activity types are not repeated mechanically. When faced with any action situation, an agent must adapt and adjust the characteristics of previous experiences to those of the new situation, as the new situation develops. This is called typification. Typifications, then, are not reasoning processes conducted in accordance with strict formal logic; they are not operations based on abstract knowledge; nor are they based on generalities rooted in specific observation.

Of all the concepts described above, one in particular should be highlighted: the agent's "pre-predictive" experience, i.e. that which comes before its recounting or description, is organised into social activity "types." The agent has recourse to these types and uses them in their experiences, engaging in constant and ongoing typification operations. In the case of teachers, actions such as solving an arithmetic problem, singing as a group or explaining a topic, etc. are all examples of activity types pertaining to the school environment. The memory of completed activities enables what has been done before to be "recovered" in a new situation, thus informing the agent's actions in that situation. This is all aided by previsions based on past experience.

This theoretical outlook highlights the importance of the activities carried out by the agent and their meaning context.

3. Training and Research Methodology

3.1 Methodological Tools for Analysing the Agent's Experience

The chosen training methods seek to encourage novice teachers to gather samples of their activity and then provide them with the necessary conditions for analysing them. To this end, in addition to gathering other kinds of data, a video-based training-research method is proposed which encompasses a range of individual and group observation tools, including (most importantly) self-confrontation, cross-confrontation and group-confrontation interviews. These methodologies provide the agent with the opportunity to observe the development of their own activity, air any doubts that may arise, generate meanings linked to their activity and reflect upon the thoughts provoked by the images.

The agent's experience and the fact that they have to explain it in words help shed light on it and develop it further. Therefore, in addition to being training methods, these tools are also research instruments.

The confrontation methods used were developed by approaches based on the precepts of cognitive ergonomics. The first is the "Technological Research Programme" (Durand, 2008; Theureau, 2010) which, based on the under-standing and analysis of real activity, proposes the generation of new training devices. The second is called "Clinic of Activity" (Clot, 2001) and is based on Vygotsky and Bakhtin's concept of speech activity psychology.

Self-confrontation interviews have different meanings in different theories. In the technological programme (Durand, 2008; Theureau, 2010), one of the basic hypotheses is that of enaction. According to this programme, providing the conditions are right; an agent is at all times capable of presenting, explaining, simulating, recounting and commenting on their activity. A second hypothesis defends the idea of "pre-thought awareness." According to this concept, self-confrontation is a means of tapping into our pre-thought awareness. In other words, self-confrontation forces to the surface not only the asymmetry of the interaction between the agent and their environment, but also the complex time organisation of that same environment.

Underlying the Clinic of Activity approach is another postulate, namely that any action which passes through the thought filter becomes a reflexive action. Thus, according to this approach, work will only truly change through joint action by the agent and their work colleagues. The use of interviews were therefore proposed since, firstly, they enable agents to see their work in a different light, and secondly, they encourage them to take new courses of action into consider-ation (Clot et al., 2001).

In our approach, language itself is seen as a constructive and form-generating element. In self-confrontation interviews, agents typify their activity, speci-fying how they did it, what type of exercise it was, how it transformed, who the participants were and what actions they took, etc. (Alonso et al, 2017; Plazaola and Ruiz Bikandi, 2012; Plazaola et al., 2013).

When used as a training and research method, self-confrontation has a number of specific characteristics. Firstly, it is based on video recordings of classroom activity. Secondly, the researcher must then prompt the agent to analyse the behaviour they are seeing. To this end, it is best to provide clear instructions in order to help the agent to revisit that particular moment in that particular classroom. The aim is to avoid general reflections on teaching, in order to encourage the agent to turn the specific classroom experience they are reliving into discursive form. It is a good idea to engage in a detailed analysis

of what actually happened. The interview that takes place between the agent and the researcher is not a normal interview; the aim is to understand what happened in the classroom from the agent's perspective. The conversation is not, therefore, particularly organised, and the researcher does not follow a pre-prepared script.

Self-confrontation interviews should be held in comfortable, familiar sur-roundings, since this makes it easier for the agent to immerse themselves in their past activities and is more conducive to the kind of discourse required by the situation, i.e. spontaneous reflection and observation. This process enables the development of typification: analysing what has been done, exploring its meanings, identifying limits and coming up with ideas for improvement.

Within this framework, self-confrontation interviews constitute a transfor-mational tool which enables agents to gain greater insight into their experience, thereby providing opportunities to change and develop it.

Taking into account their broad-scale observation of the training process, and using all available samples, the researcher-instructor interprets the novice teacher's trajectory (the physical and symbolic environment in which the activity took place, what the teaching aim and syllabus was, and the agents' (students') participation and the quality of their learning process). This broad-scale obser-vation constitutes the principal tool the instructor-researcher uses to guide the interviews.

3.2 Corpus and Analysis Instruments

This chapter presents a teacher training experience carried out in the Teacher Training School in Donostia-San Sebastián at the University of the Basque Country, during the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 academic years. The project aimed to combine the Practicum of the fourth year of the Primary and Pre-Primary Teacher Training Degree (from here on PIII) and the EDT, in an experi-ence in which students were asked to analyse and reflect upon their own teaching activity.

A total of 31 students from year 4 of the PIII participated in the experience. Of these, 11 were Basque as an education instrument minors and 20 were for-eign language minors. Students' PIIIs lasted 12 weeks and were carried out in a number of different schools.

During the course of the Practicums, students were asked to record a class-room session that they themselves had prepared, and it was during this phase also that the research team began to gather other data. This procedure enabled them to gain a first-hand knowledge of the process and its development, among

other things in order to be able to help participants overcome any obstacles that may arise and to resolve any doubts.

Within a short time after the end of the PIIIs, self-confrontation interviews were arranged between participants and their university tutors. In some cases, group-confrontation interviews were also held.

The whole process of reflecting on and analysing one's own teaching activity then became the backbone of the students' EDTs, in which they were mainly required to focus on issues linked to language teaching. The following are some of the titles of the EDTs submitted by participating students: *Catching and holding attention. A self-analysis of a session. Novice teacher training using video recordings: reading comprehension.*

3.2.1 Corpus

As mentioned earlier, the corpus of the research project comprised the training process samples pertaining to students from two different academic years. Some of these are video recordings, while others are written texts, namely the students' EDTs and posters and the notes taken by instructors during their visits to the placement schools. This chapter presents examples which illustrate the most significant phenomena that emerged during the analysis of the material. The experiences of three students were used for the purposes of this study. The following [Tables 1 and 2] is a detailed breakdown of the corpus:

3.2.2 Analysis Instruments

Interview Script

When a novice teacher watches the recording of their session, and particularly when they do so with their instructor, they believe they are assessing it. This is how this social situation is implicitly interpreted. Therefore, the interview script is designed to encourage a detailed description and analysis of the activity, avoiding assessment and/or justifications as much as possible. As in semi-guided interviews, instructors strive to avoid using the syntactical form *why*?, instead of asking *how*?.

The issues borne in mind by the researcher-instructor conducting the interview are classified as follows:

1. How did the novice teacher adapt their activity? Did they prepare it? What type of action did they engage in? On what did they base their lesson plan?

Table 1: 2013/2014 Corpus

2013/2014 academic year Year 4.	Basque minor / total	English minor / total
Classroom sessions recorded by novice teachers	9 / 9	10 / 15
Self-confrontation interviews mean duration of each session: 60'	8 / 8	10 / 10
Group-confrontation interviews mean duration of each session: 60'	0 / 0	3 /3
EDTs Mean num. of pages: 25	8 / 8	10 / 10
Other materials in the corpus	- Workshop scripts and notes - Videos from the first 'Initiation module' workshop: 2 - Forum themes and notes - Novice teachers' diaries: 10 - Notes from school visits: 18 - PIII reports: 18. (mean num. of pages: 15) - Transcripts: sessions recorded by teachers: 60'; self-confrontation interviews: 80'. - EDT posters: 18.	

What inspired them? Did they use any other activities as a reference? What role did the knowledge they acquired during their university training play in the organisation of the activity? What were their motivation and intentions?

2. What happened? Using the recorded images when necessary, the instructor asks the following questions: what are you doing here? What's happening there? The aim is to draw the novice teacher's attention to specific events.

3. What was the experience like for them? Did they encounter any obstacles, and if so, what did they change or adjust in their activity to overcome them?

4. After doing all this, how do they view their activity now? When watching the recording, how does what happened appear to them? How do they rate what they did? How has analysing the recording affected them?

5. What would help them to improve their performance?

Table 2: 2014/2015 Corpus

2014/2015 academic year Year 4.	Basque minor / total	English minor / total
Classroom sessions recorded by novice teachers	3 / 4	10 / 22
Self-confrontation interviews mean duration of each session: 60'	3 / 3	10 / 10
Group-confrontation interviews mean duration of each session: 60'	0 / 0	4 / 4
EDTs Mean num. of pages: 25	3 / 3	10 / 10
Other materials in the corpus	• Workshop scripts and notes • Forum themes and notes • Novice teachers' diaries: 10 • Notes from school visits: 13 • PIII reports: 13. (mean num. of pages: 15) • Transcripts: sessions recorded by teachers: 20'; self-confrontation interviews: 60' • EDT posters: 13	

These are the issues which inform the researcher-instructor's actions. It is therefore not an interview guided by a pre-established set of questions. In accordance with the research project's theoretical and methodological framework, the interviewer seeks to help change the novice teacher's discourse, since the aim is to encourage them to analyse their teaching activity while watching the video recording, but not solely through the use of reason and logic, i.e. not solely by answering the question *why*?

Analysis of the Action Statement

The focus of the analyses of the images, discourses and texts contained in the corpus were the *action statements* used by agents to describe all the different aspects of their activity. When analysing the activity, both students and instructors engage in secondary typification, i.e. typification that takes place after the activity has been completed. Our analysis focuses on the action statements made during those conversations. The criteria for selecting which statements to analyse include some which are linked to content and others which refer to syntax that reflect the action and the statements themselves (mainly modelisations),

since these reveal the speaker's stance and attitude towards the activity, specifying factors such as capacity, intent and assessment, etc.

To identify the samples pertaining to the novice teachers, and based on the statement and discourse analysis method (Bronckart, 1997), the following instrument is proposed:

1. Identification of the Activity

What activity are they talking about? The one shown in the recording and/or another one taken as a reference: (another activity carried out by the agent, either individually or collectively, one commonly carried out in the classroom, i.e. a prescriptive activity, etc.)?

(This will help us understand, firstly, the *activity type* itself, and secondly, its *typicality*, i.e. what the reference activities are for the agent-group; what, for them, is a paradigmatic activity; and how they group these activities together).

2. Anchoring of the Statement

The time and place of the mentioned activity or activity element in relation to either the moment of the statement or another reference point: prior to the activity, during the activity, or after the activity (e.g. during the interview). The main linguistic indicators here are connectors and verbs.

3. Description of the Activity's Transformation
   - *Adaptation of the activity*: Whether or not it was prepared beforehand, what type of activity it was and its sequence, structure and phase.
   - *Essential agency*: Indicators of agency. Who-to-whom, with whom and for whom was the action taken?
   - *The mental and emotional experiences of the teacher and the students*: The intentions, aims, desires, fears and concerns regarding the activity. These are indicated by the verb lexemes and modelisations linked to the action verb [simple assertion (*they spent around 25 minutes playing*); wish (*I wanted to work a little on vocabulary*); belief (*I assumed the others would try to find it also*); need].
   - *Aspects of the activity environment*: The conditions of the physical and symbolic situation (time, class situation, material, methods, etc.).
   - *Teacher's intentions and motivations*: How the activity fits into the syllabus, didactic and pedagogic content.
4. Assessment of the Activity Carried Out

Positive assessment (Ass+), negative assessment (Ass-) or doubt (Ass?) and the reasons for this: students, learning environment, etc.

Criteria upon which said assessment is based: (in accordance with beliefs, values, rules or tastes): On what is the assessment based? Which aspects of a given activity were good, poor, inadequate, difficult, etc. And why?

5. Other Explanations:

Professional debates, guided recounting of the action, activity-related limits and obstacles, etc.

4. Results of the Analysis

In the cases studied, a number of characteristics were identified that were common to all the Practicum students. This chapter will focus mainly on the following three, which emerged with a fair degree of frequency: the different roles adopted by novice teachers; the changing way in which they study the activity and references to certain aspects of language teaching.

4.1 Unusual Conditions for Novice Teachers

One of the most illustrative common traits identified among 4th year Teacher Training students was that they become novice teachers for a space of three months, and during that time, are obliged to work under what are, for them, unusual conditions, conditions that they have not encountered previously and, in all likelihood, will not encounter again at any other point in their lives. During those twelve weeks, they are neither students nor teachers, or they are both students and teachers at the same time.

4.1.1 Relations with the Class Tutor

The novice teacher role played by teacher training students during the Practicums varied from situation to situation and is influenced by the relationship they establish with their assigned class's tutor or mentor. In some cases, they will often have the opportunity to engage in real teaching, and will prepare and manage their own sessions; in other cases, however, they will be afforded very few opportunities for real participation. Most of the students in our study found that their mentor did their best to help them, but not all class tutors interpret the purpose and nature of a Practicum in the same way, and some students reported feeling undervalued and disregarded. This situation can have a major impact on their activity.

As evident in the example below, one student called Mireia had a number of different experiences during her Practicum. Being able to fully play the role

of teacher made her feel happy and was useful for her development. Novice teachers need to feel trusted to fulfil their role when engaging in their activity, and highlight the need to leave advice and recommendations for later, once the session is over.

Mireia, 2013–2014. Foreign Language: Self-confrontation.
(7:35) M: Well, and then, I got supernervous when the teacher started talking, and, I don't know, I felt a bit. . . buff, I don't know if you understand me, but, as if I were not doing well. . .   *Instructor: As if she were subtracting authority?*   *M: yes, that too, but. . . then I, she did like. . . as produce a doubt, I am not doing well, or I am not explaining well, or. . . and, the truth is that, of course, it is very complicated to say that to a teacher, please, let me do that myself, but, I need to admit that, for me, it was an obstacle.*
(12:58): M: In the other class (...) with another teacher, my participation has been very different, I must admit (...) er. . . well, we haven't done it as all we said at the beginning, prepare the lessons, then compare them with her. . . that wasn't like that, but it was like. . . I don't know, she inspired me much confidence, I can tell you that I have taught the lessons myself, prepared by myself, then we said, we will watch them following the guide no? (...) but, for me, it has been an experience. . . that is, it has made me. . . I have enjoyed a lot and I have prepared a lot of material.

In some cases, concerns were aired regarding the role that novice teachers were supposed to play in the sessions they taught throughout the course of their Practicum. They reflect on this aspect often. On some occasions, having to share the role of teacher with the class tutor gives rise to uncomfortable situations.

At other times, on the other hand, these situations are seen as being highly satisfactory and extremely useful for their training process.

This aspect of the Practicum merits closer attention from those responsible for teacher training; it should be analysed from the perspective of training content in order to ensure a minimum agreement regarding teamwork.

Exploring the distribution of roles between the novice and the expert teacher may serve to enrich the training process.

4.1.2 Unfamiliar Situations

The students in the placement school are also often unsure as to what the novice teacher's specific role and duties are, and this situation often prompts novice teachers to play a role that does not correspond to that of a real teacher. The corpus contains many samples related to this issue. The following example is an illustrative case.

A novice teacher called Maitane explains that the situation was unusual; firstly, because she was acting as the teacher that day rather than the class's normal tutor, and secondly because the activity she proposed was new for the students. Nevertheless, and even though she presented her activity to the class as something special, she did not want the students to see the experience as something unusual.

Maitane, 2014–2015. Foreign Language: Self-Confrontation

> *(8:48) M: They don't see which my role is very clearly, because if they had seen me taking the coursebooks and I don't know what. . . maybe they would have seen me as the other one (the teacher), but, maybe, in this case, perhaps they didn't see me like her.*

She explains the link between the students' role and her role, and clearly understands the plural agency of the activity: "they don't understand my role is very clearly." The fact that the situation is unusual for the students makes her job harder. She expresses the essential agency which characterises the activity using the following pronoun system:

I; My – We (Students – Me) – *They; Them* (Students) – *the Other* (Tutor)

The curious use of "other" indicates a certain degree of tension regarding the similarities and differences she sees between herself and her mentor: "'me and the other," or in other words, the other teacher, the one who usually fulfils the role I'm in now. This suggests similarity, equality. Yet at the same time, it seems that she does not want, does not mean to or cannot imitate her mentor's activity. It is also worth highlighting the fact that the use of "we" in the novice teacher's discourse here refers to herself and the students; by referring to the tutor as "the other" she effectively excludes her from the activity. The normal tutor's activity is described as consisting of "simply picking up the textbook and...."

4.1.3 Perspectives on Teaching

PIII students may be novice teachers, but they still have their own knowledge and criteria regarding teaching. Sometimes, when they come into contact with their mentor's teaching style, they do not agree with what they see (*I don't like it, I don't agree...*), often because what is done at their placement school (the methods used or the habits and customs in place) simply does not coincide with their own teaching theories and criteria. This issue emerges many times in the critical opinions expressed in the corpus.

In the example below, the novice teacher is talking about the autonomy of the students in her class. She compares the practice of letting students do the entire activity alone with that of giving them a kind of "half-completed" exercise to help them along, seeming at some level to realise that the latter practice risks undermining the learning challenge inherent in the activity.

Maitane, 2014–2015. Foreign Language: Self-Confrontation

(34:06): M: I felt it was more motivating and personal, I don't know, instead of giving it like that and making them just write the names. . . but she, for instance, was used to give them everything half done, but she did it with these ones and with 5th graders and 2nd graders. I would prefer letting them do it further. . . to organize it themselves or. . . I don't know if I am explaining myself (...) even if they needed more time, I feel they would be able to write. . .but I explained it to her many many times but. . . (laughing)

Novice teachers also expressed criticism of the methodologies employed in their placement schools, and talked about their desire to do things differently, change the spatial organisation of the classroom or foster a greater degree of interaction, etc.

Gurutze, 2013–2014. Basque as an Education Instrument: EDT

(page 12); G: In my opinion teaching is very guided nowadays, that happens in this class as well and then, I don't agree with that procedure; that is why I tried to do a more open session, setting some instructions but giving kids the chance to express in a free way.

The opinions held by novice teachers regarding teaching are often in conflict with classroom habits and methods: these examples illustrate their concern regarding student autonomy and maintaining the learning challenge posed by exercises. This may be taken as an indication of novice teachers' professional knowledge, even though it sometimes clashes with the opinions and experience of their mentor.

In some of these explanations, the development and evolution of novice teachers' thinking is clearly evident. In other words, they compare what they witnessed during the Practicum with the knowledge acquired previously on their degree course, and draw their own conclusions from this exercise.

Even though these disagreements cannot always be resolved, they nevertheless serve to highlight the importance of teamwork between the instructor and the mentor, and the need to establish a *training agreement*.

4.1.4 Limited Knowledge of the Activity

Since there is no specific procedure for effectively providing PIII students with information about the group of students with whom they are going to be working before they enter the classroom, this task is left up to the mentor. Depending on how this basic information is transmitted, novice teachers are often unaware of the class's true resources and means. When the class's usual tutor proposes an activity, they have a great deal of information on which to base their actions. They are aware, for example, of the class situation and the students' varying capacities and attitudes. They know where the students are, what level they have attained, and novice teachers keenly feel the lack of that information. This situation necessarily impacts the novice teacher's activity.

For example, since novice teachers do not know their students, they often do not fully understand what is going on with them, and this lack of information makes them feel unable to correctly understand and effectively resolve their problems.

The following example shows how novice teachers often need their mentor's help to understand and interpret certain events and, despite their increasing autonomy, to help them draw conclusions about teaching in general and language teaching in particular.

Maitane, 2014–2015. Foreign Language: Diary

(*page 15*) *Sometimes we think that we have the perfect activity that it will work, but actually it is not. Maybe it is not so attractive for students or it is not so appropriate to achieve our aims. Our teachers helped us a lot in that aspect and we have to ask them.*

In the example below, Mireia tries to sum up what a novice teacher's role involves, since a number of different aspects need to be taken into account.

Mireia, 2013–2014. Foreign Language: EDT

> (*page 20*) *Without doubt teaching is a very complex process, specially for novel teachers. Classrooms mean an uncertain challenge that beginners have to face with all their academic background and knowledge, but also with as much intuition, versatility, common sense and flexibility as possible. Every school, every classroom and every student has its own particular needs, and this is an essential feature that should be taken into account.*

4.2 From Judging "Myself" to Analysing the Activity

The change that takes place in students' outlook during the training process carried out at the Teacher Training School is clear. At first, many believe we are there to judge them, to assess their body language or English language level, etc. Later on, they progress from focusing on personal characteristics to focusing those relating to their teaching skills; and later still they make the leap to focusing on their students, and finally, on the activity itself. To our mind, this journey implies passing through a kind of crisis in which students switch roles and gain a measure of maturity.

Once they understand the essence of the analysis environment, novice teachers stop talking so much about how they performed (well or poorly) or whether or not they felt nervous, and start concentrating on how they developed the activity, whether things happened on purpose or by accident and whether or not the activity makes sense for language teaching, etc. From an initial outlook that was purely egocentric, students gradually leave all consideration of their personal characteristics aside, and this often makes them feel much happier. Once they feel calmer about the whole exercise, they begin to shift focus and concentrate on other aspects: they accept the activity's complexity and the need to assume the teacher's role and, consequently, begin to examine their students' attitude (e.g. they take no notice of me), the task itself and its duration, etc. with a more critical gaze.

This evolution is useful for future activities, since it renders novice teachers more aware of what they need to pay attention to next time. Hence the vital importance of the instructor's role (Ruiz Bikandi & Plazaola Giger, 2012; Plazaola & Iriondo, 2014).

In the next example, at the beginning the novice teacher's comments are mainly about herself.

Most of the time, these types of comments are made within the first few minutes of the interview, with the novice teacher seeking their instructor's approval through both body language and eye contact. Later on, the focus tends to shift towards the activity itself and the students. In this example, it is clear that the novice teacher is quite capable of describing the kind of behaviour her students' attitude requires of her, and engages here in a deep and insightful analysis of her teaching activity. In such moments, novice teachers are more aware, freer and more confident.

Here, the novice teacher is talking about managing oral production, a typical classroom activity:

Gurutze, 2013–2014. Basque as an Education Instrument: Self-Confrontation

> (*25:48*): *G: Then, I have also noticed, for example, eeeh, when they all start telling and telling about their lives, I never cut them, for example, I don't say: raise your hands, just once, I think, at the beginning, so that they know that they have to talk. . . (...) maybe what I need there is to interrupt, give each one their turn, to respect...*

Another change is also evident in novice teachers as a result of the training exercise; this time as a consequence of moving from self-confrontation to group-confrontation interviews. Analysing the activity as part of a group is a helpful exercise, especially when carried out after the individual interviews, because the focus is usually firmly on the activity itself. Fellow students' opinions are valuable, since during this educational phase the importance of the group and the role of one's peers in providing secondary confirmation is paramount. Group confrontations are conducted as professional interviews, with peers becoming expert teachers and knowledge being shared within the professional field.

Group-Confrontation Interview with Mireia, Maddi and Lurdes, 2013–2014. Foreign Language

> *(20:50): M: I don't know, now that I see the video again I think we worked on several skills and the class was well prepared, but I don't know. . .*
> *(31:35): Mi: I found this kind of description, this part of the project, a bit out of any context because I don't see the point in learning to describe in a way that they are not going to use. It's not reality, it's not real to describe someone like this and I don't know, when I started to be critical about that methodology, it was something about that point.*
> *(33:20): M: So it's a step to start writing descriptions and once they know how to describe this kind of faces they know how to describe a normal face. It's true that we can start with the normal face and then with the special ones. . . I think it was funny, but that's my point and I think they liked creating their faces, maybe changing the shapes, maybe having two triangles for the eyes and I don't know. . .*

4.2.1 Impact of the Analysis Process

Evidence of the transformation that takes place in novice teachers' outlook is clearly present in the Practicum report and EDT that they draft after the end of the self-confrontation and group-confrontation interviews, during which they reflect upon the process they have just completed. Novice teachers often offer a profound analysis of their training process, underscoring the benefits of the confrontation and analysis procedure.

Mireia, 2013–2014. Foreign Language: PIII Report

> *(page 15) I am really happy about my experience in this practicum at school. But also about this reflecting process that has made me be aware of so many important things that I didn't use to think before, and to give little importance to some others I was obsessed with, and that now I know they are insignificant.*

As evident in the activity samples, the Practicum is an opportunity for examining the problems which novice teachers encounter when attempting to put the theoretical knowledge they have learned into practice. Novice teachers assess their mentors and suggest clear ways of improving their teaching relations.

4.3 About Language Teaching

4.3.1 One Activity Type: the Teacher's Oral Production

The corpus we compiled contains a number of different activity types within the field of Language Teaching which were highlighted by novice teachers in their written texts. One of these activities is oral production, including (among others) the giving of oral instructions for a task or exercise.

Many novice teachers mention how hard they found it to explain an activity to their class. Talking style is often mentioned in relation to this (the importance of speaking slowly, of speaking "like a teacher"), along with the realisation that the language they were using was too hard or too complex for their students. Novice teachers also seem to realise that they tend to talk for too long and have a need to control everything. There is a general realisation that they need to work on learning how to hold students' attention.

When standing in front of an actual class for the first time, novice teachers have many ideas about teaching, some of which have been instilled in them by their university teachers, and while some they impose on themselves. They also have ideas and knowledge about different methods and the proper procedures for certain activity types. Nevertheless, they soon realise that there is a major difference between what they thought teaching would be like and what actually happens in a real classroom, and this prompts the realisation that their knowledge is actually fairly limited. Our analysis focused precisely on that experience, i.e. on how they coped with the gap between what they had prepared and what actually happened. Their preconceived ideas are often idealistic and have little in common with the reality of a classroom situation.

In the excerpts from the self-confrontation interviews below, novice teachers talk about how difficult they sometimes found it to put their pre-prepared activities into practice.

Upon viewing their activity, they realise whether or not the results obtained were those they had hoped for, and this is extremely useful for the teacher training process.

Maitane, 2014–2015. Foreign Language: Self-Confrontation

> *(12:43): M: I found it very very difficult to explain an exercise (...) to give instructions, that is (...) if I see that I am giving instructions and that students are, on top of everything, speaking Basque and I see the ones at the back are not paying attention and then, at the end, I spend ten minutes explaining one thing and then I have to go from one to the other giving the same explanation...*

Gurutze, 2013–2014. Basque as an Education Instrument: Self-Confrontation

> *(31:18): G: I find useful to have another student to give the same explanation in his or her own words (...) when you are a child the way to speak among us is not the same as the teacher's talk.*

In this latter case, the change in the novice teacher's outlook is evident. She realises that it is her responsibility to ensure that students understand, and she casts her mind back to when she was a child in order to decide how to manage the situation as a teacher.

Whenever novice teachers realise themselves how they did something and draw conclusions regarding how they could have done it, or how they could improve, they are much more likely to remember the lesson learned in the future.

These, then, are the results of the research project focusing on the teacher training process of the students.

5. Conclusions: Practicum, the Cornerstone of Teacher Training

This chapter presents a training-research project aimed at developing the training provided to novice teachers and analysing said development. The self-confrontation interviews served to highlight the importance of novice teachers being able to engage in many different classroom tasks and exercises in appropriate conditions during their Practicums. However, this is not enough. Analysing one's own and one's peers' activity helps clarify, enrich and develop one's activity, thus further enhancing the benefits of the Practicum experience. Face-to-face or self-confrontation interviews focusing on each student's teaching

activity help identify aspects not noticed beforehand. Furthermore, in the discourse, by typifying the activity, novice teachers explore its meaning in more depth and begin to imagine new possible ways of doing things. This method enables novice teachers to observe their teaching activity from a different perspective, thus enhancing the *experience* of the Practicum, fostering learning and offering resources for reflecting on one's actions in the future.

From the research perspective also, and in accordance with the theory of social activity, priority is given to the agent's own experience. Rather than concentrating on knowledge or competences, the aim was to focus on experience selection, the connections between action and the typicality of the person and, above all, its meaning. Thanks to the self-confrontation method, novice teachers were able to analyse their training process and observe the *training phenomena* that take place within it. We analysed the difficulties and obstacles encountered by novice teachers, along with their ideas and adaptations and the conflicts and contradictions they were forced to confront and resolve (for example, the distribution of roles between themselves and their mentor). This proved an excellent method of adapting training contents and enriching the training environment, and offered a means of identifying aspects that had previously remained unnoticed.

The study also aimed to assess the impact of the training process on the novice teachers themselves. The chapter describes the training phenomena generated by the training environment created on the basis of action theory.

Rather than limiting students' entire process to isolated sequences, taking place at a single moment in time, thanks to a research method that simulates a more ongoing monitoring process we will be able to identify the keys to turning novice teachers into expert ones. Instructors will therefore be able to draw conclusions regarding how to foster and enrich their students' training process, and will be able to discover new contents for improving the performance of future language teachers. Forming part of a protected digital collection of activities featured in recordings of novice teachers and related explanations leads to a richer training environment for our students (see the *Neopass@ction* platform in France, Leblanc & Ria 2014).

The chapter also explores the complex phenomena which interlink during the process of turning novice teachers into expert ones: the many agents and different institutions involved (mainly the school and the university); the impact of the knowledge developed in each institution; the methods used by instructors and the conditions provided to novice teachers by their mentors; the way teaching roles are distributed in the classroom; connections and disputes regarding classroom management and teaching contents and the characteristics of the students

themselves and the way they view the novice teacher's tasks and duties, etc. The "amalgam" of all this is the novice teacher's experience.

Many different conditions must be met for Practicums to be effective, useful training experiences. The results presented here show that cooperation between the different institutions involved is essential to ensuring that the training method be truly fruitful. The Practicum environment must be organised and prepared jointly by the University and the placement schools, and a *training agreement* should be established in order to ensure a minimum level of adequate teaching experience for novice teachers. Mentors and university instructors should work together to build a training project for the student/novice teacher, establishing and guaranteeing the necessary conditions for its effective imple-mentation. Schools are vital participants in and front-line beneficiaries of the teacher training process. Government Institutions should pay more attention to this task, recognising and strengthening the key role played by mentors and pro-viding appropriate training. Due to the vital role played by teachers in our society, a true, effective pact is required between the different institutions involved in the teacher training process.

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