Development professional program in teaching grammar: (re)construction of EFL teacher’s pedagogical practices

Vagner Matias da Silva


Resumo

O ensino de gramática em aulas de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira, como ferramenta para solucionar uma tarefa tem sido um assunto discutido em muitos estudos, particularmente naquelas baseadas em perspectivas em que os elementos sistêmicos são trabalhados pragmaticamente. Nessa perspectiva, livros didáticos e outros materiais têm sido desenvolvidos para o ensino de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira, no entanto, é evidente que há uma deficiência no que diz respeito às atividades cujo objetivo é construir conhecimento sobre os aspectos sistêmicos da língua-alvo. Com base nessas constatações, este estudo propôs a aplicação do “PSTDP Essentials” em um grupo de professores de Inglês das redes públicas estadual e municipal da região histórica do Vale do Paraíba a fim de investigar quais as mudanças nas crenças e prática pedagógicas de professores de Inglês durante um curso de formação contínua com base no ensino de gramática. Para alcançar o objetivo desta pesquisa, primeiramente foi discutido a construção do conhecimento nas aulas de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira (LE) à luz da perspectiva Vygotskiana, pontuando como acontecem os estágios de reflexão pelos quais os participantes do processo passam. Após isso, apresentamos “PSTDP Essentials”, um curso de formação contínua baseado no ensino de gramática, e finalmente, foi feito um estudo sobre a linguística sistêmico-funcional como ferramenta de análise do discurso. Os resultados revelaram que os professores tiveram suas crenças modificadas na forma como suas práticas pedagógicas são construídas, durante o curso, em quatro diferentes momentos.

Palavras-chave

Programa de formação contínua; ensino de gramática; construção do conhecimento.

Abstract

Teaching grammar in EFL classes as a tool to solve tasks has been the topic discussed in many studies, particularly grounded in perspectives in which the systemic elements are worked pragmatically. In this perspectives, textbooks and other class materials have been developed, however, it is seen there has been a lack of activities whose aim is to construct knowledge on the systemic aspects of the language. Based upon these observations, this study proposed application of PSTDP Essentials to a group of English teachers of the state and municipal schools of the historical region of Paraíba Valley in order to investigate what changes in EFL teacher’s pedagogical beliefs and practices are through a Professional Development Course based on teaching of grammar. To achieve the objective of this research, at first, it was discussed the construction of knowledge in EFL classes in the light of the Vygotskian perspective, pointing out how the stages of concern which the participants of the process go through happen. After that, we presented PSTDP Essentials, a professional development program grounded in teaching grammar, and finally, there was a study on systemic functional linguistics as tool to analyze discourse. The results revealed that the teachers who participated of PSTDP Essentials have had their beliefs changed on the way their pedagogical practices are constructed, during the course, in four different moments.

Key words

Professional Development Program, Teaching of grammar, construction of knowledge.
Introduction

Language teachers have their professional development formation much before going to a major in languages, i.e., they start constituting discursively from their experience as students much before beginning their pedagogical practice (LARSEN-FREEMAN, 1983; BAILEY, et al. 1997), this, therefore, does not take into account the experiences teachers have had, which is a rich source to develop their teaching skills. Furthermore, many Professional (Development) Teaching Courses have its dogma grounded in the transmission of knowledge which does not enable the (future) teachers to establish a relationship between theory and practice (CASTRO & ROMERO, 2006), i.e., critical thinking is not considered in the constitution of knowledge on their teaching practice.

In the same perspective, studies on how teachers should evaluate their classroom context (CASTRO & ROMERO, 2006; HARSHBARGER, 2012; JOHNSON, 1999; LARSEN-FREEMAN, 1983; REID, 2012; RICHARDS, 2008;) have focused on how language can be taught, what teachers need to do so as to evaluate how effective their teaching is and what they can do to (re)construct their posture to adequate their context needs. In these studies it is clearly important both the knowledge on the target language and the way it is taught.

Grounded in the socioconstructivism approach, the documents which guide and organize the educational system in Brazil (BRASIL, 1998 and 2006) and the curriculum of the Educational Board of São Paulo (SÃO PAULO, 2010) (SEE) mention that the teaching and learning process of English as Foreign Language (EFL) must be centered in the discursive engagement of the learner, considering his/her social, cultural and political position. In this perspective, in which teachers and learners are the protagonists, the SEE (SÃO PAULO, 2010) and the National State Standards (NSS) (BRASIL, 1998 and 2006) suggest the language must be taught through activities socially relevant, considering besides all the language functions, aspects such as the context of production where a specific piece of language is produced, the textual organization of it and its systemic elements. This way, it is assumed learners can understand better why and what for they study a particular element of the foreign language (FL).

The Regional Language Office in Brazil (RELO) developed a course – Public School Teacher Development (PSTDP) Essentials - which brings EFL teachers subsidies to improve their language skills and also ways to reflect upon the teaching of grammar in a communicative way. This course offers strategies to teach some grammar points which are quintessential to understand language. Furthermore, it helps the teachers to realize ways to teach grammar in their classes in order to support their students more effectively to use the language appropriately in a communicative way. Therefore, we can assume that the subsidies provided by the RELO have to do with the needs of both teachers and students of public schools as they have the tools to apply in their teaching and learning contexts, assuming this is the concept suggested by the documents which guide and organize the basic education in Brazil (BRASIL, 1998 and 2006; SÃO PAULO, 2010).

Based on these views, this paper proposed the application of PSTDP Essentials to a group of English teachers of the state and municipal schools of the historical region of Paraíba Valley in order to investigate the following issue:

What are the changes in EFL teacher’s pedagogical beliefs and practices through a Professional Development Course based on teaching of grammar?

To achieve the objective of this study, at first, it was gathered as theoretical background on construction of knowledge in the light of the historical and social vygotskian approach, and inside of it, studies on stages of concern (REID, 2012), which depict the stages
Construction of knowledge in EFL classes

The knowledge is constructed in social interactions which occur in activities the individuals take part of, and the language is the instrument which mediates this process. According to Vygotsky (1934/2005), the language is the means by which people convey meanings when they interact with others. During the negotiation of meanings which occur in social interactions, the participants construct new concepts, which is a result from the synthesis between the knowledge they already possessed and the new ones.

Vygotsky (1934/2005) claims that there are two types of concepts: spontaneous and scientific. The former, according to the author, is constructed based on the experiences acquired during the life. The second is gained during schooling period. Both concepts develop at the same time, since they relate and influence each other constantly; being part of the same process, in which inner and outer factors have a quintessential role in their formation (VYGOTSKY, 1934/2005).

In contexts of professional development, such as the teachers’ one, the process of construction of knowledge enables teachers to (re)build their own posture and practice in EFL classes, since through language they can rethink their routine in classes as well as describe, analyze, and interpret their own practice (MAGALHÃES, 2004).

In consonance with the social-historical vygotskian perspective, Reid (2010) argues that changes in language classroom are a continuous and ongoing process which is a result of the changes in participants’ background knowledge and experiences. The author mentions that changes in language classroom contexts are dependent on the choices participants make during the teaching and learning process. When “we choose to change, we recognize the benefits of the change, and we realize that our choice involves both responsibility and consequences” (REID, 2010). This concept, therefore, has to do with how teachers can (re)build their practice in EFL classes, assuming that language has an important role in the construction of knowledge, since it is an instrument which does not only transmit messages and information, yet provokes, awakes, constitutes and changes thoughts, actions, even identities (CASTRO & ROMERO, 2006).

In her studies, Reid (2010) points out that when participants can remember, practice and motivate themselves with the new information, they are aware of the benefits of change. In professional development course, for example, teachers are given the possibility of practice the ideas of teaching and learning process in the context and check whether they are worthy or not and try other possibilities.

Grounded in Hord et al (1987), Reid (2012) indicates the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) as an applicable sample to promote changes in language classrooms. This pattern has shown that there are seven stages of concern in the change process, which occur when participants faces a new concept. This pattern, then, has to do with the concept of construction of knowledge (VYGOTSKY, 1934/2005) as the stages show the relationship between spontaneous and scientific knowledge.

According to Hord et al (1987 apud REID, 2012) there are 7 stages which participants go through so as to promote changes: awareness, information, personal, management, consequences, collaboration, refocusing.

In the first two stages, awareness and information, the introduction of new information is the focus. In this moment, it is expected to raise the participants’ awareness of the construction of knowledge. Then, there is the description of PSTDP Essentials. Finally, it is presented the Systemic Functional Linguistic as a tool of discourse analysis.
besides establishing credibility and trust among them (REID, 2012). As this happens through interaction, it is assumed participants take roles in providing and requesting information (VYGOTSKY, 1934/2005), therefore, one is responsible to interest the other in learning the information, and, on the other hand, this other only need to be interested and willing to learn (REID, 2012). The third stage of concern, personal, “occurs after the individual has learned about change but before the individual has committed to that change” (REID, 2012, p.11). According to the author, this is a crucial moment of learning process because it is filled with reluctance, frustration, even resentment. Reid (2012, p.11) argues that when participants “have opportunities to practice and receive feedback on their work, they will probably find the acquisition of new knowledge – the change – beneficial and thereby will commit to that change”. This is likely to happen because, according to NSS (BRASIL, 1998) during the construction of knowledge on the language, participants can reflect on how, why and what for they are learning in such way. The fourth stage, management, happens when students have committed to the change. In this moment, it is expected time- and effort-management. Reid (2012) mentions that the amount of work seems overwhelming, the time spent doing the work seems endless, and there is an inability to prioritize or to complete work. Our language students are often in the same predicament: added with many changes in their lives, having very little perspective about long-term objectives and even less understanding of the prioritizing of work and skills, they feel helpless, and, as a result, they may even retreat to the personal stage of concern.

The fifth state of concern, consequences, shows how the student can assume responsibility on their learning process which, according to Reid (2012, p .12) “can have a significant impact on the class, since the result is a commitment by the students to independent and long-term learning.” The author mentions that in this moment of the learning process, learners know how to manage their learning because “they have the self-confidence to embark, individually, on work within the specific change area and, importantly, to evaluate how well their skills, strategies, knowledge, and the products associated with the knowledge constructed” (REID, 2012, p. 12). The last two stages of concern, collaboration and refocusing, are entirely the responsibility of the students as Reid (2012) advocates. It is in this moment participants “put their knowledge to work, adapt it to fit specific situations outside the classroom, and modify it to fit their own needs” (REID, 2012, p.12).

Afterwards, we can say that all these seven stage of concerns occur in context of teaching and learning through the interaction of the participants. These participants share social, political and historical beliefs and thoughts (VYGOTSKY, 1934/2005) which establish the construction of the knowledge on the target language and the development of psychological mechanisms, such as conscious control of the behavior, voluntary attention and remembrance, memorization, abstract thought, deductive reasoning, capacity of planning.

**PSTDP Essentials**

The Public School Teacher Development Program (PSTDP) Essentials is a project devised by the Regional Language Office in Brazil (RELO), which is part of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, and sponsored by the American Embassy. The program focuses specifically on improving the way grammar is taught, assuming it as a linguistic tool to solve tasks in the target language. As for its goals, PSTDP Essentials aims to improve the English language classroom practices and to increase the English language proficiency of public school English language teachers. To achieve both of these, through experiential learning and short video clips which is a concise grammar
instruction, the teachers study different elements of English Language Teaching (ELT) methodology. Moreover, they participate in reflective discussions and encouraged to practice these elements in their own classrooms and produce short reports. The course is taught using a communicative approach with engaging activities so that teachers have a teaching model that encourages reflection and inspiration of their own teaching practices. Learning activities were based upon 4 components: Experience; Reflection; Analysis and; Application. For the experience and reflection components, participants were in the role of “language learner”. For the analysis and application components, participants were in the role of “language teachers”.

PSTDP Essentials in Aparecida/SP had 5 meetings of 6 hours each, which took place every Saturdays. In the first meeting, teachers were exposed to ELT methodologies and critical thinking studies, through which they were led to discuss about and associate these studies with their teaching practices. Besides that, they took part of activities which illustrated these methodologies and how the course would be carried out. From the second meeting onwards, the course was divided into three parts: a) Discussion on their class reports; b) Engaging in new activities and grammar studies and; c) Discussion on the applicability of the new activities.

In the first part, discussion on their class reports, teachers were engaged to discuss the applicability of the activities they were in contact with in previous classes. They were motivated to say what worked or not in their classes, and what they would do differently. In the second part, engaging in new activities and grammar studies, teachers took part in activities grounded in ELT methodologies they previously studied and in a new grammar content. After each activity they experienced, a discussion about what they liked on the experience they had was carried out. In the last part, discussion on the applicability of the new activities, the group reflected on the applicability of the activities they had just experienced.

**Systemic Functional Linguistic**

It is clear that since very early, when we are still acquiring the language, we realize that its composition and structure are never the same; they change when they are used in different situations (BUTT et al., 2001). When the participants of an interaction use the language to say what it is happening, we can realize that the organizational and linguistic choices change according to the subject which they are treating and who they are treating with (BUTT et al., 2001). From the moment our experiences expand, we can realize other subtle differences in the usage of the language, and we recognize that there are subsets within the oral and written variants “when we realize exactly how these changes occur, we're having a functional view of language” (BUTT et al., 2001, p. 10).

According to Butt et al (2001), as a speaker of a language, we sharpen the capacity of using the adequate language to different political, historical and social moments and for different purposes. "We are aware, even if only subconsciously, that certain aspects of the contexts in which the language is used influence on linguistic choices” (BUTT et al., 2001, p.10). The authors urge that discrimination has been constructed from our accumulated experiences of the different situations and the linguistic choices made within (BUTT et al., 2001). According to the authors, when participants produce texts, orally or written, they make meanings through it, which can be described grounded in three main functions, since they, together, will materialize the meanings (BUTT et al., 2001).

Halliday calls these main functions as metafunctions: Ideational, interpersonal and textual. According to Butt et al (2001, p.13), the ideational metafunction uses the language to encode our experiences of the world and transmit a figure of the reality, i.e., create ideational meanings. “In fact, ideational meanings are divided in experiential meanings which encode
experiences and logical meanings which connect these experiences.” The interpersonal metafunction “uses the language to encode the interaction and show how we find defensible or receivable our propositions or proposes, i.e., make interpersonal meanings.” And the textual metafunction “uses the language to organize our experiential, logical and interpersonal meanings in a coherent text.”

Since the objective of this study is to investigate what the changes in EFL teacher’s critical thinking are through a Professional Development Course based on teaching of grammar, the choice of ideational metafunction to analyze the teachers’ utterance is appropriate as through the subsidies provided by this tool of realizing the language can show the meanings made by the participant of the course with regard to the way they perceive the role of the critical thinking in their professional development.

When the participants of an interaction are talking about a specific subject, they establish the position they take when they are interacting. This is only possible because they are talking about a particular subject. The interaction constructed by these participants reflect representations or experiential meanings (EGGINS, 2004). According to Eggins (2004), these meanings can be described from lexicogrammatical elements labeled as processes, which can be featured in six different categories: material, mental, behavioral, verbal, existential and relational.

When it is described processes of doing, generally concrete, tangible and real actions, this linguistic element is featured as material process. The elementary meaning which this process brings itself is that one does something, takes some action (EGGINS, 2004). When in a verbal interaction the subject treated is what we think or feel, the processes which convey such situations are called mental ones, whose meanings encode thoughts and feelings (EGGINS, 2004). Another type of process has its meaning made between material and mental processes. The behavioral process, as it is called by Eggins (2004), is in part related to action, nevertheless, it has to be made by a conscious being. According to the author, this process is typically physiological and psychological behaviors. A fourth type of process is called by Eggins (2004) as verbal, which is related to verbal actions: say and other synonyms. According to Eggins (2004), there are two other types of processes which encode meanings about being: existential and relational processes. The existential processes, according to the author, determine simply the existence of a situation, object, etc. “Existential process represents the experience stating that there was/is something” (EGGINS, 2004, p. 255). The last process, relational one, is described by Eggins (2004) as that in which being can be conveyed in clauses. The author claims that this process “establishes a relationship between two terms, which is conveyed by the verb be or other synonym” (EGGINS, 2004, p. 256). And, semantically, suggests definition” (EGGINS, 2004, p. 258).

If all these processes are responsible to convey experiences of the world, it is expected, therefore, that these situations involve participants, which can be recognized from nominal groups (EGGINS, 2004).

**Discussion**

This article aimed to investigate what changes in EFL teacher’s critical thinking are through a Professional Development Course based on teaching of grammar. To achieve that, studies on the construction of knowledge have been made grounded in the social and historical vygotskian concept and inside of it, the stages of concerns stated by Reid (2012). To analyze the data, we were grounded in the systemic functional linguistic to interpret the meanings which were chosen by the respondents. So as to understand how the processes were identified, it was determined the following strategy:
Mental process – *italic*  
Relational process – **bold**  
Material process - *underlined*Behavioral process – *italic and underlined*

The analysis of the result has suggested that there has been a change in the way teachers analyze their language class contexts. This change can be seen in four different moments.

In a first moment, when the teachers were exposed to various ELT methodologies and experienced how this theoretical background would be used for the rest of the course, most of the processes chosen by the participants were mental and relational. This has suggested that when they responded to what they liked about the activities and why, the respondents were probably reflecting on the contributions of the activities. However, the participants of these processes are all regarded to the teachers, which explains they were focusing on their own learning or how they could make useful those theories studied in that day. Regarding the relational processes chosen by the teachers, we can assume the respondents wanted to evaluate the activities and the topics studied, and considering the attributes of these processes, they presented a positive outcome for the class, as you can see in the answers below:

| **S8:** I *liked* most of the activities because they *provided* us an opportunity to *be* in the students’ place. I mean, we could *do* the activities students *do* and *reflect* about the importance of them in the teaching context. |
| **S7:** I *liked* most of the activities because they *are* very useful and *fulfill* the needs that we *have* in teaching grammar in the classroom. |
| **S1:** Very interesting and agile. I *found* them so exciting. |
| **S2:** The explanations *were* very clear and understandable. I *felt* comfortable to *learn* and to *interact*. The activities *are* very helpful. |
| **S3:** I *liked* the activities because people *interacted*. It *was* a way to *learn* about Simple Present and hours, *joying* us. |
| **S4:** I *liked* all activities because I *want* to *improve* my English and I *think* it *is* an opportunity. |
| **S5:** I *liked* because it *was* funny and different. The teacher *is* very good, too. |

As the data suggests, this was likely to happen because the teachers were used to analyze and investigate their background grounded in their beliefs, which means that they supported themselves on their previous knowledge to evaluate and reflect on the applicability of the topics and activities studied in that class. Maybe, the teachers used more mental processes because they were exposed only to theories and idealized activities. According to Vygotsky (1934/2005), in the process of constructing knowledge, there are two important concepts: spontaneous and scientific, which develop at the same time, since they relate and influence each other constantly, being part of the same process, in which inner and outer factors have a quintessential role in their formation. Based upon this concept, we can assume the teachers had this moment of constructing knowledge about the activities. However, the fact they have chosen more mental and relational processes shows us the teachers have realized a possible change in their classes. On the other hand, the subsidies they had that day were only to start up a reflecting process on the applicability of the activities. When the teachers had the possibility to discuss the applicability of the activities and the theories in their contexts, the only sample they had to compare was their own practice, which explains why they used more mental and relational processes. This might have happened because in
the first two stages of constructing knowledge, awareness and information, the introduction of new information was the focus. In this moment, it was expected to raise the teachers’ awareness besides establishing credibility and trust among them (REID, 2012). As this happened through interaction, it was assumed the teachers took roles in providing and requesting information (VYGOTSKY, 1934/2005), therefore, the facilitator was responsible to interest them in learning the information, and, on the other hand, the participants only needed to be interested and willing to learn (REID, 2010).

In a second moment, the respondents were exposed to various activities based upon the ELT methodologies they had studied in their first class. The results have suggested that the teachers put themselves more in the position of students rather than teachers to understand and evaluate the applicability of the activities. As long as they responded to the questionnaire, we can realize they have kept almost the same frequency of mental and relational processes, and a lower frequency of material processes. However, the participants of these processes are not only teachers anymore. The language class context assumes a role in their reflection about the activities, as it is seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S1: They are very useful and interesting to apply them.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S2: The activities were very interactive, adaptable, very easy, nice. It is a way to make teaching and learning real.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5: I found them funny, different and practical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6: I liked them very much because they were very interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9: The activities provided more interaction and had a purpose, a context. They were dynamic and funny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3: I liked very much because we exchanged experiences with each other. The activities were very interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4: I liked all activities. I liked the interaction, the easy way, how each activity had an objective. Because with this method the classes will be more interesting and dynamic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7: I liked most of the activities because they are interactive activities, interesting and helpful, I can use and fit them perfectly in my classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11: I liked the games because I believe I can get my students’ interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it seems, this was likely to happen because the teachers could experience the activities as they were the students, i.e., they could act like students. This probably made them feel like their students, which explains why they reflected on the applicability of the activities, whether they work or not. However, the fact they were exposed to different activities grounded in the ELT methodologies they had previously studied, might have provided a situation where they could associate the theory and the practice, as urged by Castro and Romero (2006) in the light of vygotskian perspective.

On the other hand, the moments of reflection depicted by mental and relational process, made the teachers think how they could apply the activities in their classes, which explains the incidence of material processes. This, according to Reid (2012), happens because changes in language classroom are a continuous and ongoing process which is a result of the changes in participants’ background knowledge and experiences.

In a third moment, the respondents, in their answers to the questionnaires, continued to
use mental processes, which evidences the teachers have kept on reflecting on the applicability of the activities. However, the incidence of material processes has increased. Moreover, another process has been used by the respondents, behavioral ones. This high incidence of material processes and the use of behavioral processes have suggested that teachers have changed the way they analyze and evaluate the applicability of those activities, as it is described below:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1:</td>
<td>I liked because of the interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2:</td>
<td>I liked because the activities are very interesting to apply grammar tenses in a funny way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4:</td>
<td>I liked about the interactive and dynamic suggestions. The students have to memorize, pay attention to take decisions, read, listen, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5:</td>
<td>I liked because students can interact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7:</td>
<td>I liked them because all of them involve practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11:</td>
<td>I liked the calendar because I can use the future for possibilities and plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9:</td>
<td>The activities provided moments of interaction among the group. We had positive interaction and we worked with pictures/sentences about routines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10:</td>
<td>The activity is interactive and we have to think all the time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likewise the two previous moments, the teachers have kept on reflecting on the applicability of the activities, since this was the purpose of the course – provide moments of critical thinking. However, it is noticeable a change in the way they have conducted this moment. As the data shows, they have started using more material processes rather than mental ones, this implies that they have analyzed and evaluated how they could manage the activities in their classes. The lack of relational processes in their responses has suggested they are no longer simply evaluating or characterizing the practices. This might have happened because they did not only have their prior knowledge as teachers and EFL students anymore to reflect upon the theories and ELT methodologies. This has shown that the fact they could apply the activities in their context to check what either works or not, evidence the importance of providing moments of practice and creating ways to discuss the relationship between theory and practice. This has illustrated how the teachers could assume responsibility on their learning process which, according to Reid (2012, p. 12) “can have a significant impact on the class, since the result is a commitment by the students to independent and long-term learning.”

In a fourth moment, we can observe that there has been an incidence of mental, material, behavioral and relational processes in the teachers´ responses. This has suggested that the respondents have analyzed and evaluated the activities in the light of their students´ needs, pointing out what could happen in their classes and what possible contribution these activities could provide. Furthermore, the reflection they made was based on behaviors and actions. It seems that the teachers have started to consider not only the language and the participants´ prior knowledge, but also the behaviors and actions students have to take to perform the activities and the possible reflections they have on the target language performing the tasks, as the answers to the questionnaire shows:
S2: All the activities are motivating. We can participate, learn and experience in a funny way.

S3: I liked very much this activity “go fishing”. But I would use this activity with a smaller group because I think with a bigger group, they would make a mess.

S4: I liked these activities because they are a dynamic way to learn Present perfect.

S5: I liked everything because the activities are different and funny. I could interact with my classmates.

S6: Very interesting because they are easy and I can adapt to my students.

S8: I think the activities we did today provide students a good opportunity to understand and practice grammar points, the language structures in an almost real situation. Another important thing to consider is the fact that works like this can help the students to understand why the present perfect is used, which is difficult for them.

S1: In these activities we could discuss the important applications for Present Perfect.

S2: I liked the activities for today because I think they are easier for the students to understand.

S4: I liked the activities, but I think it is possible that students have some difficulties to understand Present Perfect.

S5: These activities help the students to be able to use the present perfect tense to talk and write about their experiences.

S7: They are very interesting and useful. We don’t have a similar tense in Portuguese and this point can become difficult to talk about Present Perfect. The activities can help us with this.

S8: The most important point of these activities is that they are a very nice opportunity to practice speaking, listening and writing about real experiences, not that kind of boring activities that are only repetition and not production.

As everything indicates, the teachers took the entire responsibility over their practice in EFL classroom. This was possible because Reid (2012, p.12) advocates that it is in this moment participants “put their knowledge to work, adapt it to fit specific situations outside the classroom, and modify it to fit their own needs”.

What we can realize through their moments of reflection is that four elements were quintessential in the teachers’ professional development: the teacher’s background, the ELT methodologies and moment of studying the practice, the application of the activities in their EFL class context and the critical thinking moments. These four elements has shown how spontaneous and scientific knowledge have a role in the construction of knowledge (VYGOTSKY, 1934/2005), which enables teachers to (re)build their own posture and practice in EFL classes, since through language they could rethink their routine in classes as well as describe, analyze, and interpret their own practice (MAGALHÃES, 2004).
Conclusion

The results revealed that the teachers who participated of PSTDP Essentials have had their beliefs changed on the way their pedagogical practices are constructed, during the course. In a first moment the EFL teachers analyzed and evaluated the applicability of the activities grounded in their backgrounds as teachers and students, using the ELT methodologies which they were exposed to. Nevertheless, as long as the other suggested tasks of PSTDP have been accomplished, such as the activities based upon the ELT methodologies they previous studied in the course; the Class Reports which aimed to provide the opportunity to report the activities they tried in their contexts and; the Jornals, which is the critical thinking moment, the participants have started to analyze and evaluate the activities they were studying through other aspects besides the others they had been using. The practice has made the teachers to (re)think the concept of effectiveness, since they have started consider not only the acquisition, comprehension of the target language, but also the way students behave during the EFL learning process as a way to evaluate their pedagogical classes.

References


