

Preprint: Teaching Using Team-Based Learning Techniques in TESOL Teacher Education: Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions

Preprint: Enseñar Usando Técnicas del Aprendizaje Basado en Equipos en la Formación de Profesores de TESOL: Las Percepciones de los futuros profesores

Preprint: Ensinar usando Técnicas de Aprendizagem em Equipe na Formação de Professores da TESOL: Percepções dos Futuros Professores

Natalia Ferrada Quezada
Universidad de Las Américas
Santiago, Chile
nferrada@udla.cl
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9910-0217>

Jessica Contreras Álvarez
Universidad Arturo Prat
Santiago, Chile
jecontre@unap.cl
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5138-293X>

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to portray the perceptions of pre-service TESOL teachers in a course based on Team-Based Learning principles. To answer this objective the researchers used a qualitative approach. Data was generated from 19 pre-service teachers from a TESOL education program of a state university in northern Chile, through weekly written reflections. The findings suggest that students have positive perceptions of TBL. This was a novel method for them that generated a higher level of commitment towards their learning process, developed their social skills, and the most valuable and unexpected benefit is the enhancement of the development of language skills since TBL provided them with a real possibility to practice the language in a safe and controlled environment. The results from this study are in line with previous studies, but also provide evidence that this teaching method can be used in English Teacher Education programs, an area scarcely researched, which should be explored in future investigations.

Keywords: Team-Based Learning; collaborative work; language skills; TESOL; pre-service teachers.

Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio es dar a conocer las percepciones de profesores en formación de TESOL en un curso basado en los principios del Aprendizaje Basado en Equipos. Para este estudio las investigadoras usaron una metodología cualitativa. Los datos fueron generados por 19 profesores en formación en TESOL de un programa de formación de una universidad estatal del norte de Chile, a través de reflexiones escritas semanales. Los hallazgos sugieren una percepción positiva de los y las estudiantes hacia el ABE. Este fue un método nuevo para ellos y ellas, lo que generó un alto nivel de compromiso hacia su proceso de aprendizaje, desarrollo de sus habilidades sociales, y los más valorado e inesperado es el beneficio en la mejora de sus habilidades del lenguaje, ya que el ABE les provee de una posibilidad real para practicar el lenguaje en un ambiente controlado y protegido. Los resultados de este estudio están en concordancia con estudios previos, pero también proveen de evidencia de que este método de enseñanza puede ser usado en programas de formación de profesores de inglés, un área que está escasamente investigada y que podría ser abordada en futuras investigaciones.

Palabras claves: Aprendizaje Basado en Equipo; trabajo colaborativo; habilidades del lenguaje; TESOL; profesores en formación.

Resumo: O objetivo deste artigo é retratar as percepções dos professores pré-serviço do TESOL em um curso baseado nos princípios de Aprendizagem em Equipe. Para responder a esse objetivo, os pesquisadores utilizaram uma abordagem qualitativa. Os dados foram gerados a partir de 19 professores de pré-serviço de um programa educacional TESOL de uma universidade estadual no norte do Chile, através de reflexões semanais escritas. Os resultados sugerem que os alunos têm percepções positivas de TBL. Esse foi um método novo para eles que gerou um nível mais alto de comprometimento com o processo de aprendizado, desenvolveu suas habilidades sociais e o benefício mais valioso e inesperado é o aprimoramento do desenvolvimento das habilidades linguísticas, uma vez que o TBL lhes proporcionou uma possibilidade real de praticar o idioma em um ambiente seguro e controlado. Os resultados deste estudo estão alinhados com estudos anteriores, mas também fornecem evidências de que esse método de ensino pode ser usado em programas de formação de professores de inglês, uma área pouco

pesquisada, que deve ser explorada em investigações futuras.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem em equipe; trabalho colaborativo; habilidades de linguagem; TESOL; professores de pré-serviço.

Introduction

Teaching has always been a challenge, and it has become a harder task if we consider that the generation to be taught are known as Millennials (Strauss & Howe, 1991), and due to the fact that they are expected to know how to use technology very well, university teachers have strong “enemies” to face.

Active methodologies seem to be the key to catch and maintain motivation and higher students’ expectations towards classes (Malouff, Hall, Schutte, Rooke, 2010), keep their interest in learning, and improve their performance along the term. These help teachers transform their traditional classes and make students accountable for their own learning, and more importantly, make students realize that learning has always been something personal that cannot be endorsed to anyone but oneself.

Team-Based Learning (hereafter TBL) is one of the active student-centered methodologies based on constructivism (Walker, Guo Zheng, Mendoza & Lee, 2017) that offers a small group learning benefits within large classes, as it is easier for students to find the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge when they are working in smaller groups (Greetham & Ippolito, 2018). TBL original model was proposed by Larry Michaelsen during the late 70’s for adapting his classes to reach all the students and provide them with the same possibilities to participate and share, since it was conceived for students to show conceptual and procedural knowledge (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008). It helps to promote critical thinking (Roberson & Franchini, 2014), collaborative work, students’ engagement, concepts and contents acquisition and accountability (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008). TBL has become an effective method for teaching that involves a structured teamwork, guided by the instructor, which is easy to implement.

Recent studies (Frame, Cailor, Gryka, Chen, Kiersma, & Sheppard, 2015) reveal that when a TBL class is compared to a lecture-based class, the former prompts a more positive perception from the students in regards to their education

and learning process. As reflected by [Michaelsen \(1983\)](#), students under a traditional lecture tend to be passive and this leads to an inevitable lethargy that pushes them to start missing classes or have a reduced performance during the term. Thus, teacher education programs should start to reconsider the methodologies and practices they promote ([Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018](#)).

TESOL teacher Education in the Chilean context

In 2019, a study reported that 40% of the in-service Teaching English for Students of Other Languages (TESOL) teachers in Chile reached only an A2 level of proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, while the required level for pre-service TESOL teachers is C1 ([MINEDUC, 2019](#)).

Therefore, in order to educate the future teachers of English for the Chilean context, it is necessary to give an answer to the national demand, and prepare them according to the national standards in terms of the pedagogical and disciplinary contexts ([CPEIP, 2019](#)). Considering that English language teaching is localized, negotiated and dynamic ([Canagarajah, 1999](#); [Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999](#); [Graves, 2000](#)), the future teachers must be prepared to teach their own students to use language forms to go beyond routine conversations, such as argue points of view, hypothesize and draw conclusions. Besides, we must consider that input is critical when learning a language. As Krashen claims ([Krashen, 1982](#)), input and output should encourage students to use the language beyond their current level and gain confidence in their language development.

On the same issue, the Chilean Teacher Professional Development Law ([MINEDUC, 2016](#)), demands from the teachers to work with others emphasizing on collaborative working techniques as well as the improvement of the necessary inclusive skills. Consequently, to be a good teacher of English requires more than reaching a near native level of proficiency in the language, which implies to master pedagogical content knowledge as well as linguistics skills ([Snow & Campbell, 2017](#)). Thus, if language is taken for communicative purposes, as it is reflected in the Chilean curriculum, then teachers should give the necessary opportunities to use language in authentic contexts as often as they can. Accordingly, and based on our previous experiences as teacher educators, we consider that TBL is the method that best

adapts to a language learning situation that, at the same time, allows students to gain experience in an interactive classroom as they develop their teamwork skills.

Research on TBL is wider, but TBL research in teacher education is not. Accordingly, the methods to assess the impact and the perception towards TBL are based on surveys which lack the details that a deep qualitative analysis provides. This kind of analysis generates a better comprehension of TBL benefits and its relation to the participants, as it improves the key skills that every teacher must have, and that are compulsory and demanded by the public policy declared on the national standards that were created according to the [TESOL International Association demands \(2008\)](#).

In order to contribute to knowledge in the use of TBL in TESOL teacher education, this study was guided by the following question: Which are the perceptions of pre-service teachers of a TESOL education program regarding Team-Based Learning?

Team-Based Learning Structure and its Benefits

According to [Michaelsen and Sweet \(2008\)](#), TBL has three sections: a) the Preparation phase, consists of a pre-reading stage, where all the concepts to be learned are presented in a text whose length may vary according to the contents that must be covered during the classes; b) the Readiness Assurance Phase, composed by four different steps. Initially, students take a multiple-choice question quiz known as the Individual Readiness Assurance Test or iRAT. The Team Readiness Assurance Process Test (tRAT) comes next, and the students, all together, take the same quiz they took individually. At this moment, students share their knowledge in order to all have a better understanding, and negotiate the answer they will select as the final one in the answer sheets. Next step corresponds to the appealingings. The teacher encouraged the students to remember what they read to generate a new answer which is checked by the teacher once again. This will also help them find the words to support theoretically, when needed, the answer they chose as the correct one. Finally, the Mini- Lecture takes place. Here the teacher goes over the concepts the students had more problems understanding or learning, and all together explain or discuss the topics or concepts, in order to reach an agreement. And c) the Application Phase, the students are given a case study or problem where they have

to apply, hence reinforce, what they have learned, and solve a worthwhile situation in which they demonstrate full understanding and knowledge. This case must be the same for all the groups in order to motivate the interest in the rest of the groups' answers and their theoretical supports (Greetham & Ippolito, 2018) (for more information about the phases and its components, visit www.teambasedlearning.org).

Many disciplines have adopted this method, specially business (Fairfield & London, 2003) and medicine (Wu, Farquhar, & Compton, 2018) thanks to its flexibility to be applied in higher education centres (Samad, Hussein, Rashid & Rahman, 2015), and several studies have documented a wide variety of benefits for the actors involved in TBL. Students get the most benefits at an academic as well as at a personal level. In the academic field, students can complement their previous knowledge with the current content with the purpose of scaffolding new knowledge (Samad et al., 2015; Samad, Rashid, Rahman & Hussein, 2014). TBL helps learners to develop their capacity to apply content knowledge on assignments created for that purpose. Besides, decision-making processes provide students with several instances to practice critical thinking, which is the kind of thinking teachers need to enhance in their disciplines (Roberson & Franchini, 2014). Likewise, TBL classes promote a positive relationship, due to teamwork, and enhance better communicative skills (Lee & Bonk, 2019; Samad et al., 2015; Walker et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2018).

Team Based Learning in teacher education

TBL has not been overly used in teacher education, and even less so in TESOL teacher education, there have been some implementations of TBL in the field. A study conducted by Samad et al. (2014) focused on pre-service teachers of English perceptions of the implementation of TBL in teacher Education. The participants of the study were 32 Bachelor of Education students enrolled in a Teaching English Grammar course at a Malaysian university. They used diary entries and a questionnaire to generate the data. The researchers reported that the future teachers had an overall positive perception of working in teams, regardless of their apprehensions on group dynamics and accuracy of assessment. However, the researchers still regard TBL as efficient to be used in teacher education courses.

With TBL, teachers can see the development and organization skills the students have developed after a few weeks. Teachers can observe how their students

become more responsible for their own learning as they prepare the readings in advance, and during the group work the acquired knowledge the students demonstrate accounts for the level of development they have reached (Samad et al., 2014).

On the other hand, the benefits for students working with TBL range from cognitive development to the improvement of their social skills. Interaction among students flows easily with TBL and the sense of belonging is also enhanced (Sweet & Pelton-Sweet, 2008). Furthermore, TBL provides immediate feedback to the students, so it engages them faster with their performance regarding the course contents (Sweet & Pelton-Sweet, 2008). Concerning communicative skills and the needed skills when working on the field, TBL contributes significantly to the enrichment of abilities such as leadership and collaborative working (Wu et al., 2018), skills which are not always considered in the syllabus.

Walker et al. (2017) conducted a case study in Singapore aiming to assess the implementation and effectiveness of TBL for in-service teachers at a teaching institute. They gathered quantitative as well as qualitative data regarding the teachers' experience in learning through TBL. Their findings showed that teachers generally perceive TBL as a positive experience even though there is room for improvement. The in-service teachers preferred this new methodology instead of lectures; they highly valued team work; and they perceived an increase in their interpersonal skills and their problem-solving capacities. In terms of the qualitative results, these showed that in-service teachers valued the exchange of ideas and the possibility to discuss the different topics among the teams, as well as the opportunity to experience the use of TBL in a real teaching context.

Samad et al. (2015) conducted a year-long research project that investigated the use of TBL in EFL teaching training. The results showed that the EFL pre-service teachers were receptive to TBL making them more aware about what working collaboratively implies.

Method

This study was designed as a qualitative study of pre-service teachers of a TESOL education program. We used a qualitative research methodology to explore

the research questions guiding this investigation because we were interested in depth and we were most concerned with collecting participants' opinions, practices, experiences and beliefs in their own words (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Previous to the implementation of the study, all the participants signed an informed consent where the volunteering character of the research was clearly explained, as well as the right to give up voluntarily at any time. All the data collected are anonymous and coded for the participants identification.

Participants

Using a purposeful sampling method (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), the participants of this study were 19 students from a TESOL education program at a regional public university in northern Chile. The students age range varied from 20 to 25 years of age ($M = 20.89$, $SD = 1.37$), and all of them were in the third year (5th semester) of studies. The total sample was composed of 16.6% males and 83.3% females. All of them were taking the subject for the first time.

The university where this experience was carried out is considered to be economically vulnerable. This is because the university receives only a 1.01 % of the 100% the government gives to the universities. On the other hand, the amount of students that study with full government financial support throughout the years that the career lasts, corresponds to the 56% in TESOL education program.

The participants were taking a core subject called *Introduction to the Study of Language*. This subject is related to the field of Linguistics. The four-hour classes were conducted two days a week and within a semester that lasted 18 weeks. Hence, the total amount of hours was 54 chronological hours for the whole semester. The study was conducted by two researchers, but one of them taught the subject.

Implementation of Team Based Learning

For preparing the class with this new method, the researchers had five two-hours meetings in order to adapt the method to the group and the students' academic background in terms of contents and evaluation percentages. During these meetings,

the iRAT and tRAT were created. The readings were prepared and selected by the teacher who was teaching the subject, and the adaptation to the class contents was done by the other teacher. Additionally, some possible problematic situations were foreseen and eventual solutions were also planned.

Before implementing TBL in this subject, the teacher had to make some decisions regarding group formation. It was decided that there would be three groups of five members and one group of four. They also designated the roles each member was going to perform. Even though [Michaelsen and Sweet \(2008\)](#) recommend teams to be allocated by the teacher, for the purpose of this study it was the group of students who chose their teammates. This was a way to assure accountability of the students' teamwork as they knew, or had an idea, of their classmates' level. The roles of leader, secretary, mediator and editor were also asked to be assigned to each member in order to optimize the tasks, which is a common practice in cooperative learning ([Burke, 2011](#)), as a way of providing supportive structures to students in a collaborative learning environment. However, this is not common in TBL.

The very first class the students were presented the syllabus and all its learning outcomes; the groups were formed; a trial TBL class was done including all the phases in order to show the students the new methodology.

For a better understanding of how the implementation of TBL was done, [Table 1](#) presents a summary of the TBL phases as proposed by [Michaelsen and Sweet \(2008\)](#) and the adaptation carried out for the purpose of the current study:

Table 1. Summary of the Team Based Learning Techniques and implementation

TBL Phases	TBL Phases description	Our Adaptation to TBL
------------	------------------------	-----------------------

Preparation Phase

In this phase, a reading is given to the students for them to get prepared on that assigned material in advance, for the individual and group tests.

All the material the students had to read was uploaded to the online platform a few days in advance the Readiness Assurance Tests (Time: 2 - 3 hours of autonomous reading preparation). In case the students had questions about the readings, they always had the possibility to go to the teachers' office and ask for clarification. They also had the chance to email the teacher. All the readings were taken from the book that guides the course, which the students could lend from the library if they wanted to. The students could also print the material if it was more comfortable for them.

Individual test (iRAT): The students have to take an individual test based on the reading they prepared in advance. This test has alternatives and they answer in an answer sheet.

Students took the individual test. It was an alternative test which was easier to check and grade. They were graded from 1 to 7 according to the Chilean grading system. It made the test results easier for the students to understand and have a record of their progress. This test had a worth of 20 %. (Time: 15 minutes).

Team test (tRAT): The same test the students took individually is now taken and answered in groups. For this purpose, a feedback assessment technique (IF-AT) is used. It consists of a scratch-off card in which students can find a star if the chosen alternative is the correct one, or a cross if the answer is not correct. If they do not get the correct answer, they can continue scratching with less credits till they get the correct answer.

The same individual test was now taken by the group and the students were also asked to provide a written argumentation. We could not use the scratch-off cards due to financial reasons. To solve this, and in order to make it funnier, the teacher went to the group table and used two cards with the concepts "correct" or "keep on participating" (which meant that the answer was not correct) told the group if the answer was or not the one. When the answer was not correct, the teacher asked some questions or made some comments that made the

Readiness Assurance Process

(45-75 min class time)

group reflect or think critically to reach the correct alternative. This test has a worth of 20 %. (Time: 45 minutes).

Appeals: For checking the test with the whole class, students are allowed to refer to the assigned reading in order to appeal any wrong or missed answer.

After the group test, the teacher encourages the students to provide oral answers to the test. The teacher asked someone to read the statement or question and another person read the alternatives. The students answered by using cards with the letter that represented each alternative, all at the same time. After this, the teacher asks each group to justify their answers orally. When the answers given by the groups did not coincide, a debate took place which prompted feedback, at the same time. When all the students agreed on the answer, there was a collaborative meaning building between the groups. The feedback was a very important part of this phase due to the fact that the teacher encouraged the students to share their ideas and promoted interaction. After the teacher provided feedback on students' answers and contributions, she gave the final and correct answer in order to have the same understanding on the content or issue.

(Time: 40 - 45 minutes)

Instructor feedback: Based on the incorrect answers the groups give, the teacher clarifies the misconceptions and helps the students to understand the contents straight. Discussion is generated with the whole class and interaction goes beyond the group work.

The teacher gathers all of the information that generated the most difficulties for the students to comprehend, and summarizes all the contents to have a general understanding of it. The teacher used examples or asked for them to the students, and even though this

Application of course contents

(1-4 hours class time)

Application oriented activities: A case study is given to the groups for them to apply all the contents and knowledge acquired so far, and particularly in that class. This case should be significant and the same for every group. It also should be simultaneously reported.

feedback was a teacher's duty, the students were encouraged to participate because they had the possibility to use oral English with the whole class. (Time: 15 - 20 minutes).

This phase was done by the book. The case, problem or question was worth 30% of the final grade of the session.

After this phase, all the students took a self-evaluation and a group evaluation to record their progress. They had a worth of 15% each. (Time: 2 hours).

Note: to access some samples of the materials and the assessment used, click on the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AW9Bn1iKegLWaG5WDLVP5KGt5III7uiD>

Data Sources and Analysis

To generate the data regarding the students' perception of TBL we used a combination of techniques: weekly personal and written reflections were collected. Reflections are considered a deep qualitative approach that provides valuable information about the students' learning process (Ganly, 2017) whereas encourages the students to express their feelings and thoughts regarding the experience they lived. All the students had to write a weekly reflection in which they discussed/expressed their perceptions and experiences related to this new teaching method. The reflection instruction was very general in order not to interfere on the students' writings. Those reflections were part of a portfolio that the students had to hand in at the end of the semester for a final grade.

The 19 students' reflections were evaluated, and thematic analysis was deemed as the most useful technique for analysing the written reflections. To support the analysis, we used Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's procedure (2013). First, the reflections were read carefully to get familiarized and immersed in the data. Then, the coding process considered the repeated reading of the content to identify the words that conceptually represented what the researchers considered as units of meaning.

In this research, two coding strategies were conducted. First, we used literature for the first categories to emerge and see if the main elements of the TBL method were evidenced in the students' descriptions. The second was the one that implies the discovery of the categories based on the data.

To triangulate the collected data, both researchers identified the themes independently in the reflections. Besides, we used the audit trail (Creswell & Miller, 2000) in order to ensure validity and improve the agreement among the written reflections' codifiers. Previous to all these tasks, the researchers agreed on reaching 100% of reliability among the reviewers, a process which is known as the inter-rater reliability. Reflections were coded in three periods, and each reflection evaluation lasted, according to their length, between 10 and 20 minutes.

Once the analysis was done, and to guarantee a higher validity level in the research, member checking strategy was used (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describes member checking as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" in a study (p. 314). A random, volunteer sample of seven participants were part of a focus group to check and comment about the precision of our findings, and a new checking of the themes and codes was done. One researcher was in charge of the recording and further analysis of the data collected in this meeting that lasted one hour. Afterwards, two themes were added based on the students' suggestions.

Findings

In this section, results from the students' reflections and focus groups are presented. We analysed 323 reflections from which we identified 11 themes, 3 of them were found in literature, but here we consider the ones that were more mentioned by the students. Those themes are mentioned along with their frequency of appearance divided as follows: (a) language skills improvement ($f=439$); (b) social skills ($f=185$); (c) novelty ($f=97$); (d) knowledge sharing ($f=76$); and (e) collaborative work ($f=35$).

Language skills improvement

The development of the four language skills are at the core of learning a

language and the fact that this category emerged as the most frequent from all the categories is not random. However, the focus of this study was not on the development of the language skills, but it came out as an unexpected result for our students. The students manifested that TBL helped them improve several language skills, particularly reading.

Student 14: I was enthusiastic about this methodology because of the fact that we had to train our reading comprehension capabilities and read a lot in order to understand and learn all the contents proper of this class.

Student 8: Now I feel that I can read so much faster than before and also I improve my vocabulary...I can realize that the TBL is helping me a lot with my English.

Student 7: We read in English, then speak about the reading and listening to the team members in order to understand their points of view, and finally you write in English. So that TBL is very complete.

As [Krashen \(1982\)](#) explains, exposure to quality input is as important as going slightly beyond the learner's proficiency level. Input as well as output are both critical for language learners. However, language learning goes beyond that since for someone to claim they have learned a second language, they need direct and frequent opportunities to interact with a person who is near fluent and willing to participate in a communicative situation and provide support to their linguistic counterparts. The interaction that occurs during a TBL activity allows for students to go beyond their current knowledge and skills in English, particularly at an academic level.

TBL phases offer students a myriad of opportunities to interact and different spaces to develop their language skills. These spaces have become a need felt in the academic program and our findings account for an improvement in our students' language skills which can be observed in the students' reflections, as shown in the following extract:

Student 6: [TBL]it was quite useful to develop reading and listening comprehension, to develop oral fluency it was crucial because there are no

plenty of opportunities to interact among classmates and that was interesting and funny.

Because of the nature of TBL and also since the class itself involves interacting in the target language, the process of going from translating into thinking in English, happened before the students' eyes, becoming aware of their language level in the target language. Reading, vocabulary searching, arguing, debating, etc., accelerated the development of their language skills and the students were capable of noticing that, as Student 4 reports:

Student 4: I cannot change my mind about how effective this methodology is. It feels like we are actually learning and speaking (using) the language. For a long time, I thought I was not able to think in English, but it happens in this class.

Social Skills

Nowadays, teachers must know not only the content and pedagogical knowledge, but to master and apply diverse and effective communicative skills. Many times, future teachers are not properly trained, and the university does not promote the development of the abilities a teacher needs for acting accordingly in their daily professional life. Those abilities are connected to their social skills such as effective communication, active listening, respect and empathy. TBL gives us the possibility, through group activities, of developing the capacities pre-service teachers need to interact efficiently with their peers and, in the near future, with their students.

Student 10: Participating in classes helped me to express my ideas better ... I had to express what I thought clearly to my teammates so they could understand my point of view.

Student 17: ...a curious thing is that I never skipped a class (not counting my trip) due to it was impossible! so the laziness did not win me.

Student 6: The way TBL is organized helped us to make a commitment with our group and it reinforced the value of responsibility, since if one member missed the class it could have affected the group performance.

Student 9: Sometimes it is complicated to interact in group where you are not confident enough, even more in English, you do not want to be imprudent or arrogant. But TBL helped me to gain self-confidence, I learned to be more respectful with my peers, to be more tolerant towards different ideas. TBL generated spaces to share our thoughts.

Self-confidence

Pre-service teachers showed a positive attitude towards using TBL, which promoted their self-confidence in regards to their own learning processes. Self-confidence is a characteristic developed while students share and gain personal knowledge with their classmates. Being comfortable in a group increases the possibilities for students to learn and comprehend concepts more deeply and express their ideas freely during the discussion to get the correct answer to each group test.

Having self-confidence is a very important characteristic for teachers since it helps them to face difficulties and challenges that teaching presents. Self-confidence provides the assurance level to solve problematic situations based on theory and experience. In this sense, TBL seems to be a very good method to increase that self-confidence in our students.

Student 10: ... TBL worked so well, that we have the opportunity to express ourselves, our points of view and what we understand without shame or feeling intimidated...

Student 1: I could understand the text in a better way, and that is why I answered the alternatives feeling confident about myself.

Student 6: Personally TBL helped me with my self-confidence and leave aside what people may think at the moment of sharing my opinions in the group.

Novelty

TBL took the students out of the traditional methodology, where interaction among students is scarce. These groups of students had never experienced any

method but the traditional one throughout their academic life. The national curriculum is promoting the use of Communicative Language Teaching and Learning in the school classrooms; nevertheless, our program has advanced very little towards a more student-centered approach, and the use of active methodologies. Hence, as the pre-service teachers were faced with this new method, they experienced a break on the monotony of expositive classes.

Student 5: Using this methodology, it was a totally new experience for us because we haven't used it before in a subject at University...

Student 11: ...the methodology used in this subject was something completely new for us, due [sic] the fact that all the other subjects were based on the standard one (teacher is the one who gave us the information) ...

Student 10: Team based learning helped me to get more interested in learning the topics the teacher gave us because every class was very interactive...

We observed that for some students, TBL triggered an interest in coming to the class without feeling forced to do so. We believe that it is the novelty of the method which caught the students' attention and inherently drove them to attend the class. These aspects are portrayed in some of the expressions provided by the students.

Student 4: I like to practice with TBL because it is different. It calls my attention a lot and it is not that difficult to wake up in the morning for this class.

Knowledge sharing

Every group member has the possibility to contribute to generating solutions putting their arguments into a specific context and sharing their reading comprehension with their peers, teaching them or clarifying concepts that may not be clear or well understood. In this sense, collaborative learning plays a critical role in TBL as a strategy to improve understanding and acquisition of concepts. By sharing knowledge with their peers, a synergy is generated that promotes the capability of acting as real teachers. So that, in the future when they become in-service teachers, they could recreate that synergy with their colleagues which in turn tributes to their

own professional development.

Student 17: ...we could share all our opinion [sic] and I realized that I knew more than I thought... I could show more potential than doing an individual “silence” test.

Student 11: ... we had so much fun analysing what we were reading by putting the knowledge in situations, in that way it was easier for us to understand or to make a conclusion.

Student 3: It is easier to understand the concepts when your ideas can be complemented by others', it makes learning funnier and easier.

Collaborative work

Learning is an individual and collective process. Learning how to teach is more significant if it is done with others as long as you share and listen to others' opinions, you also grow professionally. Debating and sharing are at the core of collaborative work and learning, an idea that is supported by our students' opinions. Nowadays teachers are not aliens to collaborative work, as the Chilean educational standards (CPEIP, 2019). for teacher education demands the universities to develop in the future teachers the capacity to reflect and collaborate with other colleagues, within the same discipline as in others. In this sense, TBL seems to be the appropriate method to do so, as it was mentioned by Students 16 and 14.

Student 16: ... we all give [sic] our opinion and it felt productive, we realize that we were wrong in some concepts but then we understand where was the mistake [sic].

Student 14: TBL involves active learning that allow students to use all their abilities to strengthen their knowledge..., and be able to admit that they don't understand something, and that's ok because their classmates can help them...

Working with TBL poses a challenge for instructors and students who have

been immersed in a traditional system where teachers are generally the ones who lead the lesson and students are not used to working autonomously either. Therefore, instructors must prepare students to be able to construct collaboratively beforehand.

Student 13: The only thing I did not like is that not everybody knows how to work in groups, so at the beginning the teacher should make sure everybody understands what to work cooperatively and collaboratively means.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to shed light on the perceptions of pre-service teachers of English regarding Team-Based Learning and TBL in relation to TESOL teacher education. The findings suggest that students have a positive perception about TBL, which is consistent with other studies ([Samad et al., 2015](#); [Samad et al., 2014](#); [Walker, 2017](#)). The participants report that their experiences with TBL were beneficial, in particular when it comes to the development of language skills. The latter has emerged as the most significant for TESOL education considering that previous studies involving language teacher education have not reported on the improvement of language skills. TBL was not created to improve language abilities but to improve the areas intrinsic to TBL as well as conceptual and procedural knowledge ([Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008](#)).

Our first finding regards the novelty this method meant for the participants who experienced learning through TBL. The students declared they prefer this method over traditional classes which is aligned with studies ([Frame et al., 2015](#); [Walker et al., 2017](#)). They also manifested their interest and motivation for this attractive new way of learning, which has also been observed in other studies that have used TBL for training teachers. Those results tell us the participants were not used to either learn actively or being accountable for a peer's learning. Even though in their teacher education programs there may be some elements that motivate and interest them, TBL provided the opportunity to learn and teach in a more authentic way which kept their expectation in a higher level, making them more responsible for the teaching-learning process in this subject.

Our second finding supports the idea that TBL improves the level of students' commitment with their own learning and their teammates'. Similarly, [Sweet and](#)

[Pelton-Sweet \(2008\)](#) suggest that TBL causes students to reach a higher commitment with their peers and with the course contents. This can be explained seeing that students felt a sense of belonging in which they held each other accountable for their learning, which is more related to a social aspect of learning. Commitment is a consequence of TBL and by being part of a collaborative teaching, the sense of belonging is enhanced.

Another finding connected to knowledge sharing is collaborative work. Our insights complement the results of previous studies on pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes ([Samad, 2015](#); [Walker et al., 2017](#)), as well as other studies conducted within other disciplines ([Fairfield & London, 2003](#); [Wu et al., 2018](#)). TBL creates the necessary spaces to share knowledge in a pedagogical way, as the members of the team should know their strengths and weaknesses as well as being able to adapt to different ways of approaching the contents. What makes using TBL in teacher education different from using it in other disciplines is that pre-service teachers work collaboratively to share knowledge and to learn how to become teachers.

Our findings corroborate the TBL value regarding social skills, abilities that are highly valued in the teaching field ([CPEIP, 2019](#); [MINEDUC, 2016](#)). Students considered TBL to be highly effective as a method that enhances their communication skills. [Samad et al. \(2015\)](#); [Wu et al. \(2018\)](#) found that TBL helped strengthen the participants' abilities to communicate effectively with their peers. On the same matter, [Lee and Bonk \(2019\)](#) indicated that the relationship among the members of the teams was better thanks to TBL, incrementing the level of interaction with peers. Nowadays, teachers should have the capacity to communicate effectively and to have a high sense of responsibility for their performance and tolerance towards differences. We need to provide them the necessary spaces to share their opinion feeling free from any pressure and TBL gives them that possibility due to its structure. However, those instances cannot be taken for granted and teachers should work hard to provide the students with a rich setting to interact with the other. Even though these spaces may exist in other areas of the educational program, TBL gave them the chance to work on their social skills in a more realistic context.

TBL also enhanced self-confidence in our students. When you learn a foreign language, this feature is very important since the higher level of self-confidence you have, the more participative you become in classes. Learning a foreign language

means that you need to interact with others in order to develop all the linguistic skills you need, even more when you will become a teacher of that language. You need to be confident enough in terms of knowledge of the subject matter, as well as the abilities that help you develop that language on others. Thanks to TBL, students feel confident enough to share their ideas freely and give their opinions without feeling judged or pressured (Roberson & Franchini, 2014), and this finding has not been found in previous studies.

Probably the most interesting finding in our study, TBL helped pre-service TESOL teachers develop language skills in the target language. TBL consented the students the possibility to practice the target language in a written and oral way. It was of great benefit for the students to improve their language skills in general because they had many instances to speak in English, share their opinions, discuss, argue, and all that it entails when they use English as a means for communication. Furthermore, constant reading allowed them to improve their reading skills, reading comprehension ability, enlarge their vocabulary and achieve a better fluency of their performance in the foreign language. The students welcomed the opportunity to have instances to enhance receptive and productive skills due to the fact that they are immersed in a Spanish-speaking environment in their daily life.

As it has already been mentioned, English language teaching is localized, negotiated and dynamic (Canagarajah, 1999; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999; Graves, 2000), and the spaces generated from working with TBL provided our students with the opportunity to use language in an authentic context, not only for academic purposes, but also for personal and professional purposes. Even though reading acts as an engine for TBL, after reading comes the interaction with the group which implies the development of social as well as language skills, such as listening, speaking and writing. Through teamwork, our students were capable of pushing themselves beyond their current level of language development (Krashen, 1982) since the input they received generated an according output; therefore, getting close to reaching one of the standards for TESOL teachers (TESOL International Association, 2008) which is proficiency in all four basic skills. However, it is necessary to take these results with some distance because more research on this area is needed in order to confirm that TBL can effectively impact English language performance.

Conclusion

This study has shed light into the perceptions of our students towards TBL which is in line with the findings of other authors. Our study portrays new findings in TESOL teacher education programs, such as the novelty the students found in this method, the gaining of self-confidence within the development of social skills, and the language skills improvement. The first one was connected to the interaction the students had as a compulsory activity within TBL classes. In a language class interaction is more often to be done with the teachers than with the peers, and this method encouraged the students to look for that interaction to solve the problems and get a common goal. The latter was the most frequent benefit reported by the students which was an interesting finding. However, the spaces for interaction that TBL offer seemed to give the students the possibility to foster the linguistic abilities they need to achieve the level of English demanded by the Chilean Ministry of Education.

Opposed to what we as researchers expected to find, and based on previous literature, collaborative work was not the most frequent theme mentioned by the students. It may be due to the fact that it was not a new activity in this TESOL teacher education group, as they may be used to working in teams in all their subjects. There is another possibility that is connected to the obligation the students felt to work collaboratively just because the method and the teacher demanded it, and they did not see the natural benefit that working with others brings. We consider that our results open a possibility for pre-service TESOL teacher educators to build this scenario where working collaboratively becomes a natural and imperative task. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that TBL can trigger a change in the culture of how to work in teams, it also poses a challenge for teachers and students. We may be used to working in teams in which we assign tasks, but we are not used to constructing collaboratively. It is necessary to research deeply on this last idea in order to fulfil with the national standards regarding the teacher education and the teacher professional development.

There are many challenges to face and adaptations to make to this method in the near future, but through this study we have found that with a strong sense of innovation and improvement great things can be done and important skills can be developed by university students. We consider that the abilities developed by using TBL will help pre-service TESOL teachers when they work in a school where group work and social skills should be demonstrated continuously. Innovations need time

and support, willingness and clear objectives. We strongly think this experience had all those characteristics, and the results we obtained reinforce the idea that TBL is a feasible alternative for TESOL teacher education.

The limitations of our study were that it was conducted with participants from only one university. However, this study could be extended to more participants within the same program or from other universities. The study is also limited to the field of TESOL, but we consider that other areas in teacher education can also benefit from it.

This research also prompts several questions that are necessary to investigate in the future, such as the implications that each TBL phase has in the learning and exploring the impact that it generates in instructors. It is expected that these issues could be addressed in future investigations.

References

- Burke, A. (2011). Group work: How to use groups effectively. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 11(2), 87-95.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English language teaching*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Castañeda-Trujillo, J. E., & Aguirre-Hernández, A. J. (2018). Pre-service English teachers' voices about the teaching practicum. *HOW*, 25(1), 156-173. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.25.1.420>
- CPEIP. (2019). *Estándares para la formación inicial docente*. <https://www.cpeip.cl/estandares-orientadores-para-la-formacion-inicial-docente/>
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. (2019). *Educational research. Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson.

Fairfield, K. D., & London, M. B. (2003). Tuning into the music of groups: A metaphor for Team-Based Learning in Management Education. *Journal of Management Education*, 27(6), 654–672. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562903257939>

Frame, T. R., Cailor, S. M., Gryka, R. J., Chen, A. M., Kiersma, M. E., & Sheppard, L. (2015). Student perceptions of Team-Based Learning vs Traditional Lecture-Based Learning. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 79(4), Article 51. <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe79451>

Ganly, T. (2017). Taking time to pause: Engaging with a gift of reflective practice. *Innovations in Educational and Teaching International*, 55(6), 713-723. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2017.1294492>

Gebhard, J. G., & Oprandy, R. (1999). *Language teaching awareness: A guide to exploring beliefs and practices*. Cambridge University Press.

Graves, K. (2000). *Designing language courses: A guide for teachers*. Heinle & Heinle.

Greetham, M., & Ippolito, K. (2018). Instilling collaborative and reflective practice in engineers: Using a Team-Based Learning strategy to prepare students for working in project teams. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 3(1), 510-521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2018.1468224>

Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practices in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.

Lee, J., & Bonk, C. J. (2019). Integrating Flipped Learning with Team-Based Learning in a pre-service teacher education course: Experiences and outcomes. *International Journal on E-Learning*, 18(1), 5-29.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Malouff, J. M., Hall, L., Schutte, N. S., & Rooke, S. E. (2010). Use of Motivational Teaching Techniques and Psychology Student Satisfaction. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, 9(1), 39–44. <https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2010.9.1.39>

Michaelsen, L. K. (1983). Team learning in large classes. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 14, 13–22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.37219831404>

- Michaelsen, L. K., & Sweet, M. (2008). The essential elements of Team-Based Learning. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 116, 7-27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.330>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- MINEDUC. (2016). *Ley N° 20.903 - Crea el Sistema de Desarrollo Profesional Docente y modifica otras normas*. <http://www.rmm.cl/biblioteca-digital/ley-ndeg-20903-crea-el-sistema-de-desarrollo-profesional-docente-y-modifica-otras>
- MINEDUC. (2019). Agencia de Calidad entregó los resultados del Estudio Nacional de Inglés. <https://www.mineduc.cl/2019/02/07/resultados-del-estudio-nacional-de-ingles/>
- Roberson, B., & Franchini, B., (2014). Effective task design for the TBL classroom. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 25(3 & 4), 275-302.
- Samad, A. A., Hussein, H., Rashid, J. M., & Rahman, S. Z. (2015). Training English language pre-service teachers using a Team Based Learning approach. *English Language Teaching*, 8(1), 44-51. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2017.110106>
- Samad, A. A., Rashid, J. M., Rahman, S. Z., & Hussein, H. (2014). Investigating the implementation of Team-Based Learning in a university level teacher education course. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 4(2), 249-257. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n1p44>
- Snow, D., & Campbell, M. (2017). *More than a native speaker: An introduction to teaching English abroad* (3 ed.). Alexandria: TESOL Press.
- Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991). *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. Harper Perennial.
- Sweet, M., & Pelton-Sweet, L. M. (2008). The social foundation of Team-Based Learning: Students accountable to students. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 116, 29-40. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.331>

TESOL International Association. (2008). *Standards for ESL/EFL teachers of adults: Adult/community, workplace, college/university, intensive English, English as a foreign language*. Alexandria: TESOL Press.

Walker, Z. M., Guo Zheng, T., Mendoza, R., & Lee, E. (2017). Adopting Team-Based Learning for in-service teachers: A case study. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 11(1), Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2017.110106>

Wu, S., Farquhar, J., & Compton, S. (2018). Why do Team-Based Learning educators use TBL? *The Asia Pacific Scholar*, 3, 38-41. <https://doi.org/10.29060/TAPS.2018-3-1/SC1040>

Preprint Preprint Preprint