

Chapter IV

Systematizing a co-teaching experience between Fulbright ETAs and Colombian English educators: through the lens of the ETAs

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Introduction

Co-teaching is widely used in a variety of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts around the world. It is a collaborative process in which two teachers work together in planning, implementation, and assessment. Through this approach, both teachers can share their knowledge, experiences, and cultural backgrounds with one another. Students benefit by improving their English skills as they interact with both types of teachers, feel free to ask questions, and participate actively. This dynamic allows them to learn the language within their own context, guided by both a native and a non-native speaker, whose contributions complement each other.

In the Colombian context, co-teaching has been implemented to some extent, most often through the One Teaches, One Assists Model, in which one teacher instructs while the other assists. This approach allows both teachers to plan and organize classes by considering the roles of teacher and teaching assistant, which can be alternated during implementation. It can also help the assistant feel more comfortable while adapting to a new context, enabling meaningful engagement, fostering cultural understanding, and serving as ambassadors of their own cultures.

At the university level, curricula for co-teaching experiences are often planned months in advance. However, it is essential to consult both teachers during the evaluation stage to develop and apply new strategies, materials, and methodologies that benefit students and teachers alike. In this sense, the objective of this study is to systematize an experience related to co-teaching in an EFL context, following the model of “one teaches, one assists,” where the participants were native and non-native English teachers, even though this research project only portrays the insights described by the English Teaching Assistants (ETAs). Besides, it shows how co-teaching is an opportunity for both

teachers to share knowledge and create more meaningful classes for their students.

On the other hand, it is also important to reduce or eliminate the perceived divide between native and non-native English teachers by creating an environment where students appreciate the contributions of both, regardless of differences, and understand what each co-teacher offers to the EFL classroom. In this context, this research project explores a co-teaching experience through the systematization of experiences conducted at a private university in Tunja, involving American English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) who shared their perspectives on co-teaching in this setting. These experiences offer some insights to consider when implementing this teaching model, such as the importance of cooperative planning and collaboration during the application of co-teaching in the EFL classroom.

In the field of education, co-teaching is a model that promotes the participation of both native and non-native English speakers in EFL settings, where each group has different cultural backgrounds. They can share their knowledge and experiences through planning and implementing methodologies that help students understand not only how a language functions but also develop intercultural competence, which broadens their perspectives. Additionally, this co-teaching model creates environments where teachers can try different dynamics; for example, one teacher teaches while the other assists, enabling interaction with students, strategies, activities, and materials.

Theoretical Framework

Co-teaching Co-teaching is two or more teachers teaching together, sharing responsibility for meeting the learning needs of students and, at the same time, learning from each other. Co-teachers plan, teach, and evaluate lessons together, working as collaborators on every aspect of instruction. (Murphy & Scantlebury, 2010, p. 34)

Thus, co-teaching has been one of the EFL classroom models that has provided teachers with multiple tools to explore in diverse

educational contexts. Among the opportunities offered by this model, both participating teachers can learn from each other. They need to plan lessons, or parts of them, together; implement classes as a team according to the chosen co-teaching model; assess students; and provide feedback. When teachers work as peers, the teaching-learning process can become more meaningful and successful, as it integrates each teacher's language knowledge and educational background.

Over the past decade, co-teaching has been widely examined in general education practices worldwide and defined as a collaborative method of instruction (Murawski & Hughes, 2009, as cited in Pérez & Pérez, 2022, p. 3), in which decisions and accountability for students' learning are shared (Shumway et al., 2011). However, "each term has different implications on how this teaching methodology is implemented. Team teaching values the contribution of every participant and all the participants enjoy the same status" (Liu, 2008, p. 105). This aspect is highly relevant in co-teaching, as both teachers can switch roles— for example, between teacher and assistant — and work with all students, offering peer feedback and fostering an environment in which different educational backgrounds are acknowledged. This approach also supports the creation of more engaging materials and lessons for students.

In this way, collaborative and cooperative teaching emphasizes the process of collaboration, and the degree to which each participant's function may be different. Co-teaching is a general term with broader implications and has been adopted to name different approaches to improve teaching through collaboration. (Liu, 2008, p. 105)

In that sense, "clearly, approaches to co-teaching should be selected on the basis of student characteristics and needs, teacher preferences, curricular demands, and pragmatics such as the amount of teaching space available" (Cook & Friend, 1995, as cited in Aliakbari & Mansoori, 2010, p. 7). Likewise, co-teaching was known in the 1970s as team teaching and is also referred to as collaborative teaching or cooperative teaching (Reinhiller, 1996, as cited in Aliakbari & Mansory, 2010, p. 10).

Therefore, co-teaching extends beyond the EFL classroom and has been implemented not only for English instruction but also for various other purposes. It has been applied in classrooms with special needs, where a general education teacher and a special needs-trained teacher work together to support students, meet their expectations, and, in some cases, teach other subjects collaboratively to achieve shared goals. In the EFL classroom, co-teaching can take different forms, one of the most common being the One Teaches, One Assists Model, in which participants can switch roles during the implementation stage. Thus, both teachers can experience both roles. Even when institutions define specific roles – for example, assigning one teacher as the general teacher responsible for overseeing the entire process, and the other as an assistant – both are expected to participate actively in planning, implementation, and assessment.

Research has also identified key elements necessary for effective co-teaching (Hourcade & Bauwens, 2002; Murawski, 2006). These include: (a) cooperative presence, where both teachers are physically present in the co-taught classrooms; (b) cooperative planning, where both contribute to planning and meet regularly to design lessons; (c) cooperative presenting, where both actively participate in classroom instruction; (d) cooperative processing, where both possess content knowledge to monitor and evaluate student responsiveness; and (e) cooperative problem solving, where both share responsibility for classroom management and seating arrangements (Hourcade & Bauwens, 2002, as cited in Sinclair et al., 2018).

In the EFL context, several key aspects are worth considering, as follows: co-teaching between NETs (Native English Teachers) and NNETs (Non-native English teachers) may begin with the One Teaches, One Assists model, where NNETs take the lead and NETs serve as supportive teachers. NETs, who have limited teaching experience, would likely feel comfortable with this approach to co-teaching and gain more experience in classroom management. These local initiatives can help both teachers as they go through the developmental stages of co-teaching: the beginning stage, the compromise stage, and the collaborative stage. (Gately & Gately, 2001, p. 43)

Thus, teachers or professionals involved in co-teaching processes who have less training in teaching may feel more comfortable working hand in hand with those who have more experience in the field of education. Besides, they can provide the NNET with opportunities to learn more about the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the language, as well as the vast cultural background that NETs bring to the EFL classrooms.

In classroom practice, NNETs are responsible for lesson plan preparation, instructional presentation, and classroom management, while NETs will conduct pronunciation demonstrations, participate in learning activities, and provide individual student assistance. In this model of co-teaching, the NNET acts as a head teacher, director, interpreter, and behavioral manager, while the NET functions as a co-teacher, model, authentic English linguistic knowledge provider, and activity participant. Both take different responsibilities but perform collaboratively to achieve the same goal. (Liu, 2008, p. 109)

Given the above, both roles are essential to creating an appropriate learning environment within the co-teaching model. Neither role is considered superior; instead, both are professionals working toward the shared goal of teaching a group of learners about EFL. However, lesson planning must be carried out thoughtfully, addressing not only the language itself but also the cultural backgrounds involved in the process.

During the implementation of a co-teaching model, several questions may arise: what model of co-teaching should be followed?, what is the most effective way to co-teach?, what if my co-teacher is not willing to collaborate?, who is responsible for assessment and grading?, how can we share the classroom space when I feel I am in another teacher's territory?, how can administrators and stakeholders be involved in the process?, how can both teachers address curricular assumptions? Santana et al. (2012) identified several non-negotiables for administrators, such as:

Developed and piloted a tool called the CO-Teaching Observation Protocol (CO-TOP). The ten dimensions of the tool were designed

to collect evidence on: (a) common planning and collaboration, (b) mutual, collegial, and professional respect, (c) in-depth familiarity with students' content and language needs, (d) clear, unambiguous language and content objectives, (e) appropriate scaffolds, (f) advocacy for ELLs (English Language Learners), (g) authentic student participation and engagement, (h) differentiation for assessing learning, (i) learning as demonstrated by student work, (j) planned extension and reinforcement activities to practice material presented during lesson. (p. 62)

Administrators play an essential role in ensuring that these elements characterize co-teaching in their schools. Research on co-teaching is limited, with data available regarding how co-teaching is viewed by teachers and on its effectiveness in enhancing student outcomes. Research has suggested that teachers perceive benefits to co-teaching, including collaboration between general and SETs, an increased ability to provide support to all students, and the increased availability of peer models of appropriate behavior. (Cook et al., 2011b, p. 190)

Nonetheless, teachers and researchers still need to carry out more studies on co-teaching in the Colombian context, keeping in mind the different agreements among countries in order to take advantage of having the knowledge and/or expertise of both teachers, NETs, and NNETs, and providing peer feedback and evaluation of the co-teaching processes in different contexts. Moreover, there is a need to implement co-teaching in contexts involving students with special needs, as well as in relation to the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) component and the subjects taught in bilingual schools in Colombia.

Brief History of Co-Teaching in International and National Contexts

On the one hand, at the international level, Davison (2006) conducted extensive research on collaboration among ESL and content area teachers, with a special emphasis on the nature and challenges of developing collaborative and co-teaching relationships. In her developmental model of co-teaching, she introduced the term partnership teaching. She emphasized some critical, observable characteristics of such teaching:

Cooperative teaching is where a language support teacher and a class or subject teacher plan together a curriculum and teaching strategies that take into account the learning needs of all pupils, adjusting the learning situation to fit the pupils (p. 112). Most recently, Van den Akker (2013) adapted a co-teaching rating scale by Gately and Gately (2001) to help identify ESL and mainstream teachers' strengths and weaknesses in the co-taught classroom. Key dimensions of her tool include items that may be clustered around (a) verbal and nonverbal communication skills, (b) understanding of the curriculum and students' instructional needs, (c) co-planning including language modifications, (d) methods and materials used in the lesson, (e) student-centered lesson delivery showing flexibility and a variety of classroom management, and (f) reflection on the practice. (Van den Akker, 2013, as cited in Honigsfeld & Dove, 2014, p. 8)

On the other hand, Centro Colombo Americano, which has been implementing collaborative teaching since approximately 2000, provides training and support to what the institution refers to as junior teachers. They are practicing the One-Teach, One-Assist method. Following the co-teaching path in Colombia, the first official attempts from the government to foster co-teaching experiences date back to the year 2009, when the program called English for Opportunities and Competitiveness (EFOC), as part of the alliance between the Ministry of Colombian Education [MEN] and Volunteers Colombia, was launched. As reported by MEN (2016), between 2009 and 2011, Volunteers Colombia hired 63 native English speakers to provide students with cultural background and communicative experiences. In 2013, Volunteers Colombia and the [MEN] agreed to strengthen the teaching of [EFL] in Escuelas Normales Superiores. (Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana [UNICA], 2022, p. 1)

Following this approach to co-teaching, Gutiérrez and Patiño (2012) conducted research into a collaborative teaching project to instruct English to a group of adult learners with special needs at a Special Education Institute in Pereira, Colombia. According to the authors, they were assisted by three teachers who were professionals in special education, whose primary role was to provide psychological, pedagogical, and professional support in the classroom under the specified requirements. Thus, the researchers found that students improved their ability to express their ideas by receiving feedback and support from both teachers in a more enjoyable manner, which

increased their motivation to learn English and encouraged other students to join the program.

Previous studies represent different purposes for applying co-teaching in the classroom. Thus, they indicate that further research is needed in this field, particularly regarding the various models of co-teaching and their potential benefits for both teachers and students. Nonetheless, it is essential to plan this type of teaching systematically, gathering valuable feedback from the various participants involved in the process. To continue implementing co-teaching, teachers must analyze students' needs, expectations, and cultural backgrounds, making them aware of the vast knowledge and enriching experiences they can have in the EFL classroom by having both types of teachers (NETs and NNETs). Besides, it is also necessary for teachers to be willing to participate in the process of co-teaching, integrating others' cultural and professional knowledge and worldviews.

Models of Co-Teaching

Currently, there are six co-teaching models that could be implemented in the EFL classroom, depending on the context.

Figure 1. The 6 Models of Co-teaching



Source: Adapted from Gemini (2025).

Co-Teaching Models

Lerner and Beverly (2014) explain that

Co-teaching involves professionals who plan and implement education using six methods. First, One Teach, One Observe model: in this method, the first teacher leads instruction and has primary responsibility for designing and delivering a particular learning process to the whole class. The second teacher observes and collects academic, behavioral, or social data relating to a single student, a small group of students, or the whole class. Second, station teaching: the two teachers divide teaching content, each taking responsibility for planning and teaching part of it. Teaching here is divided into three non-consecutive parts, in which the students are divided into three groups, and they move from station to station. (p. 161)

In the third place, there is parallel teaching, which reduces the teacher-student ratio. In this type of co-teaching, teachers plan together but each delivers content to two groups that differ in their characteristics. In the fourth place, there is alternative teaching, where the first teacher works with most students, while the second works with a small group of students for treatment, enrichment, assessment, pre-education, or any other objective (Lerner & Beverly, 2014). In the fifth place, there is teaming, where teachers lead their instruction with the whole group through lessons, lectures and/or discussion, each representing a different opinion, thereby presenting, explaining and clarifying two perspectives or two solutions to problems; also, teachers are responsible for instructing all students, whether addressing large groups, monitoring students working independently, or facilitating groups of students collaborating on joint projects. In the sixth place, there is the One Teaches, One Assists Model, where the first teacher leads the instruction, while the second walks among students, providing individual support and assistance; that is, one teacher retains the primary role of managing and leading the teaching process, while the other walks around the classroom helping students who need redirection or who have questions about their coursework (Lerner & Beverly, 2014).

Method

The methodology for systematizing this experience was based on Jara (2022) framework. This approach contextualizes the meaning of an educational practice as a primary source of knowledge, emphasizing the lived experiences of the ETAs in this Colombian context, who are regarded as reflective agents of their own professional role. Furthermore, systematization provides a critical perspective that enhances the transformation of future intercultural co-teaching experiences into diverse contexts. The systematization of experiences is useful because it enables researchers to critically reflect on teaching practices, identify patterns, and highlight learning outcomes. In the context of co-teaching with ETAs, it contributes to understanding collaborative processes, challenges, and impacts on teachers' professional growth and development. This approach re-signifies lived experiences into valuable knowledge that can be shared, replicated, and improved in similar educational contexts. For that matter, we selected this approach to analyze data. The methodological process was organized into five phases outlined by Jara (2022):

1. Point of departure: experience.
2. Designing a systematization plan.
3. Reconstructing the lived process.
4. Deep reflections.
5. Points of arrival.

These phases prioritize the meaning and intentionality of the experience as lived by the participants, highlighting the richness and complexity of their voices. Also, the intercultural nature of this co-teaching experience (between Colombian English educators and American assistants of language) within a Global South educational context aligns with the Latin American epistemological stance proposed by Jara (2022). This perspective affirms the value of situated practices and the knowledge they produced as a result of this educational experience.

Data Collection Instruments

In that sense, data were gathered through surveys: interviews and questionnaires conducted with the ETAs, who expressed their views, challenges, learning experiences, and both individual and professional changes during the co-teaching process. The interviews were conducted on May 2nd, 2019. The questionnaires were applied in April 2019.

Table 1. Data Collection Instruments

Technique	Mechanism	Instrument
Survey	Interview	8 open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview.
Survey	Questionnaire	12 qualitative open-ended questions – questionnaire.

Participants

The systematization of this experience involved five native English-speaking participants from the United States, who were enrolled in the Fulbright Program and worked at a private university in Colombia between June 2018 and June 2019. A purposive sampling approach was applied to select participants who had direct experience with the co-teaching process between ETAs and Colombian English teachers. This type of sampling was chosen because it allows the researchers to gather in-depth insights related to the lived experience. The sample was four women and one man aged between 20 to 24 years. They came from New Jersey, Washington, Virginia, Boston, and California. Besides, all of them were professionals in areas such as human rights, management, and politics. Then, the co-teaching experience was carried out in collaboration with Colombian English teachers over the course of one year, and this was their first approach to teaching matters. It should be noted that each one was assigned a Colombian tutor who helped them in their process of adaptation to the context.

Systematization of the Experience

1. Point of Departure: Experience

This systematization documents and analyzes the co-teaching experience between Colombian English teachers and United States Fulbright ETAs at a Colombian university. Although the process involved collaboration, this reconstruction focuses exclusively on the perspectives of the ETAs, who shared their experiences through interviews and surveys.

The purpose is to understand how the ETAs lived this process, the tensions that might emerge, the learning insights as a result of this practice, and their perceptions about their roles as English teaching assistants in Colombia. The aim is to reconstruct the experience from their viewpoints, considering their active participation in joint planning, instruction, and assessment with Colombian English educators, in order to identify key lessons, tensions, and opportunities for improvement and collaboration between teachers and American language assistants.

From a critical and reflective perspective, this systematization of the participants' experiences is a primary source of knowledge, analyzed under a systematization approach proposed by Jara. This approach allows not only for the sharing of results regarding the professional experiences of ETAs, but also for their re-signification through the voices of those who lived them. In that sense, the guiding question of this systematization is the following: What learnings, tensions, and transformations emerged for the ETAs through their co-teaching experience with Colombian English teachers?

2. Designing a Systematization Plan

The co-teaching experience took place at a Colombian university as part of an agreement between the MEN (Ministerio de Educación Nacional) and the Fulbright Program. Over the course of two years, approximately

five English teachers from the United States collaborated with Colombian teachers. The co-teaching model implemented was “One Teaches, One Assists”, and the content followed the English curriculum suggested by a private university. The curriculum was based on levels from A1 to B1, in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and adapted to the Institutional regulations.

Although all ETAs participants of this study were assigned to the same institution, their experiences were influenced by the diversity of the teaching methods and the varied pedagogical approaches each educator brought to the process. This resulted in interestingly different co-teaching practices, even within the same group, enriching the experience for all participants. This diversity of pedagogical stances reflects what Murillo (2007) describes as the richness and complexity of collaborative work, where different professional identities interact and negotiate practices. Finally, each Colombian teacher was supported weekly by an assistant, who could work with up to three different teachers at the same time. This arrangement led to variations in planning, implementation, and feedback approaches.

Planning Stage

Colombian teachers and ETAs jointly agreed on the classroom activities to be implemented, with a general priority on developing oral communication skills. Moreover, while all four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) were present, there was a marked emphasis on oral production. In that sense, teachers selected the topics to be covered, while ETAs had autonomy to design activities, materials, and resources. However, planning experiences varied greatly, revealing a lack of standardization in the process:

A2: “There were some professors that I worked with last semester and this semester. We planned things together and created rubrics together. That was nice because we could divide the work. Moreover, I learned a lot from how they organized classes and adapted materials” (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

A4: "It depended a lot on the professor. Some would send me a message the day before, like: 'Hey, let's do a game tomorrow', and others would meet every week to plan more deeply. So, it varied a lot" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

These differences shaped working pathways. Some assistants felt free to bring up ideas, while others valued the agreed-upon instructions that came from a structured, joint planning process. Also, when planning was organized and agreed in advance, it enhanced coherence between the assistant's contributions and the overall class development, fostering effective synergy among teachers, assistants, and students.

This evolving planning approach can be viewed through Jara's (2018) perspective on collaborative ethics, where valuing each professional's voice and reaching negotiated agreements enhances the co-teaching relationship. Furthermore, Correa and Wilches (2011) emphasize the importance of teacher training as context-based and conversational, which is apparent in the mutual learning shaped as a result of these planning spaces.

Implementation Stage

During this stage, ETAs implemented their planning activities. Colombian teachers remained in the classroom but typically adopted an observer role to avoid undermining the assistant's authority. However, their teachers' presence became crucial during the interactive process, especially when misunderstandings arose due to cultural or linguistic differences between the assistants and students.

A1: "They would sometimes rephrase what I was trying to say when I got stuck, or students would turn to them and they'd help explain things culturally or linguistically" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

Thus, although the teacher's role was initially neutral, they often acted as cultural mediators or facilitators of comprehension in practice. These spontaneous interactions revealed how co-teaching also implied steady cultural negotiations to contribute actively to real communication practices. This aligns with Byram's (1997) idea of intercultural

competence, as teachers and ETAs needed to manage linguistic and cultural differences to enable shared understanding.

Closing Stage

This stage was intended to include feedback sessions in which Colombian teachers would provide formative comments to the ETAs. While these exchanges highlighted both strengths and areas for improvement, not all of the feedback was perceived positively by the assistants.

A1: "I didn't always agree with the feedback. Sometimes it felt more like personal opinion than something constructive. But I appreciated having the space to talk about it."

Even with some occasional tensions, the ETAs appreciated the chance to share their perspectives. Instead of a one-way assessment, this moment frequently transformed into an opportunity for intercultural exchange and contemplation, allowing for the sharing of issues related to class growth, student abilities, and various contextual elements. In many cases, feedback sessions evolved into opportunities for mutual learning.

This bidirectional dynamic reinforces Murillo and Krichesky's (2015) notion of shared leadership and feedback as essential tools for professional reflection and transformation. However, it should be highlighted that the ETAs argued that not all the educators they worked with provided feedback, so it was a point to take into consideration for improvement. The lack of feedback from certain educators opposes the principles of collaborative professionalism outlined by Murillo (2007), which highlight ongoing dialogue and critical reflection as essential to educational collaborations.

3. Reconstruction of the Lived Process (Core of the Systematization)

Collaborative Planning

Planning was a crucial part of this experience. The assistants pointed out that collaborative planning enhances and maintains teaching

processes throughout the course because students see co-teaching as a synergistic partnership between teacher and assistant rather than separate activities led by native and non-native speakers. In other words, collaborative planning offers structure, coherence, and order, helping students view both figures in the classroom as a unified teaching team dedicated to a common goal. This aligns with Murillo and Krichesky (2015), who highlight that collaborative work requires an organized framework that supports the shared development of pedagogical knowledge. It also mirrors a distributed leadership approach, where each participant feels involved in the process rather than secondary.

However, when planning was not carried out collaboratively, difficulties emerged during implementation, and the co-teaching model often became unclear or even compromised. This can be explained in Murillo's (2007) terms as "institutional resistance" to collaborative change, in which isolated practices or a lack of coordination undermines the transformative potential of models such as co-teaching. This issue was noted by the ETAs in response to question 8 of the survey: "When do you find the time to plan together?". Their answers indicated that the most common means of coordinating planning were email, WhatsApp, or brief conversations after class.

A5: "It was really helpful when we could plan together. Sometimes, the professors already had a structure, and I could bring ideas for activities. Other times, I had to improvise because I didn't know the plan until I arrived" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

According to the aforementioned, having the opportunity to contribute ideas to the lesson is undoubtedly beneficial; however, the lack of collaborative planning often leads to improvisation. While improvisation might work effectively sometimes, it can also impact negatively on the educational process in terms of planning, designing and performing. This indicates that, when following a model such as co-teaching, which entails a well-defined process, planning cannot be a random action plan. Instead, it should be purposefully incorporated into all phases of the process to ensure that the model operates efficiently and produces reliable results. Moreover, planning jointly between

individuals from different cultural contexts presented both a challenge and a rich opportunity for intercultural exchange, a point that will be further explored below.

Shared Roles in the Classroom

Establishing clear roles within the co-teaching model was key to achieving a coherent and coordinated process. Clear role distribution helped students understand the scope of action of both the teacher and the assistant, enabling them to acknowledge and respect each figure's contribution to the class.

A2: "Some professors gave me space to lead parts of the class, and I appreciated that. I could do warm-ups, run activities, and help during group work" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

Therefore, when assistants were allowed to lead portions of the class, they exercised autonomy to implement activities previously designed in collaboration with the lead teacher. This freedom to guide certain pedagogical moments without intervention or interruption from the primary instructor fostered a sense of positive empowerment. Regarding this, Murillo and Hernández-Castilla (2011) noted that the active participation of stakeholders in educational processes promotes professional empowerment, particularly when pedagogical autonomy is respected within a collaborative framework. This allowed the assistant to explore intercultural aspects through more personal interactions with students, which, in turn, contributed to the development of their professional identity within a foreign teaching context.

However, when assistants worked with multiple teachers, the dynamics changed considerably. Communication between the teacher and the assistant was not always strong or clear, which negatively impacted both the planning and execution phases and limited the assistant's role.

A3: "Other times I just stood there, and the professor would do everything. I didn't know how to insert myself without interrupting" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

In such cases, assistants were aware that formal leadership rested with the teacher, who was ultimately responsible for the academic and administrative aspects of the course. As a result, they adopted a respectful stance toward that leadership but also recognized the importance of their meaningful participation in the classroom. This was supported by responses to question 10 of the survey, in which participants agreed that "students learn better in co-taught classes rather than classes taught by just one professor". This aligns with Murillo and Krichesky's (2015) assertion that teamwork not only strengthens the teachers' role but also positively impacts learning by providing diverse perspectives, styles, and forms of interaction.

This category highlights that working within a co-teaching framework requires both clearly defined roles and ongoing, open communication. Establishing roles, opportunities for participation, and levels of independence in advance is essential for students to perceive the experience as genuinely collaborative, with both teacher and assistant working together toward a shared educational goal. This aligns with Liu (2008), who stated that each term implies a different way of implementing the methodology and that team teaching values everyone's contribution while granting equal status to all participants.

Assessment and Formative Participation

In terms of assessment, the responsibility for grading students rested with the lead educator. This was not a unilateral decision, but rather a requirement shaped by the administrative policies of the university and the regulations of the Fulbright Program, which state that (ETAs) are not permitted to assess students.

Nevertheless, even when the ETAs were not directly responsible for grading students, they did not exclude them from the broader evaluation process. Collaborative strategies were developed, especially for activities such as oral presentations or spoken reports, in which ETAs acted as attentive listeners and provided feedback on students' language use.

A4: "We created rubrics together, and I liked that. It helped me understand what students were being assessed on" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

In that sense, ETAs did not simply follow the educators' criteria, because they actively contributed to the co-construction of rubrics when the communication between educators and assistants was solid. This practice of co-constructing evaluation reflects what Murillo (2007) defines as participatory processes, in which evaluation is not limited to a technical exercise but becomes a dialogic and horizontal experience. It underscores that co-teaching is a deeply collaborative process extending beyond planning and delivery, as Murillo and Hernández-Castilla (2011) argued that educational collaboration involves relationships that engage all dimensions of teaching, including evaluative practices. However, assessment also requires consistent communication and shared responsibility across the different stages of the educational experience, even when certain functions, such as assessment, may have some restrictions.

A2: "I didn't participate much in grading, but I gave oral feedback after presentations or during speaking activities" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

Therefore, although ETAs were not involved in quantitative grading, their oral feedback after productive speaking activities was highly appreciated by the educators and often used to inform evaluative decisions. This category reveals that, even in contexts where regulations from both the university and the Fulbright Program limit specific responsibilities, such as grading, it is still possible to foster meaningful participation by ETAs in that regard. Within a co-teaching model, evaluation does not merely have to be a unilateral process; it can imply co-constructed experience through dialogue actions, acknowledging the ETA's contributions as an important part of the assessment process.

Feedback to ETAs

Regarding the feedback ETAs received about their own performance, this was identified as an area with room for improvement. According to

their responses, many felt they did not receive as much feedback as they preferred during their co-teaching experience. Some even expressed that their voices were not always heard (question 10 in the survey).

A5: "I think having more feedback would be really helpful. I've had great feedback in the past, like when a professor told me: 'You interact well with the students and move around the classroom' -that was useful" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

In other words, ETAs found the feedback they received helpful, particularly when it addressed their classroom performance. Moreover, they expressed a willingness to receive comments that would help them improve their role in the teaching process. One of the ETAs stated:

A2: "I've only asked the professors who I'm most comfortable with to give me feedback, and there's only three of them, but that feedback has been really good" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

Feedback plays a crucial role in helping ETAs understand how educators perceive them, validate their classroom actions, and identify both strengths and areas for improvement. Assertive and timely feedback enhances classroom practices and enables ETAs to provide a more effective pedagogical experience, as it supports them in navigating real-world teaching dynamics. Therefore, since they were sharing a teaching experience without being certified teachers, feedback served as a way to understand the progress of their work.

This category suggests that feedback mechanisms should be implemented more systematically and consistently. In some cases, ETAs had to request feedback themselves, indicating that it was not always offered spontaneously or institutionally. Nevertheless, when feedback was provided, it was highly valued. In that sense, ETAs viewed feedback as a bilateral process, something they not only give to students but also expect to receive from the educators they work with.

Connection with Students

The strengthening of the bond between ETAs and students was an evolving process that developed over the course of the experience. In scenarios such as classroom interactions, pedagogical activities, and extracurricular spaces like conversation clubs, meaningful and reciprocal emotional connections emerged and deepened over time through authentic and engaging communication. This reflects Murillo and Hernández-Castilla's (2011) affirmation that building genuine bonds with students is a prerequisite for meaningful learning.

"I feel like the students who came to the conversation clubs or talked to me outside class improved a lot in their language" (question 10 of the survey).

A1: "Working with students has been the best part of the job. I really enjoy teaching. I smile more, laugh more. It's energizing" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

Moreover, it became evident in class that students genuinely enjoyed the spaces they shared with the ETAs. Although there were initial tensions resulting from cultural differences, ages, and personalities, both groups gradually overcame these challenges. Regarding this, the adaptation process involved mutual understanding, cultural negotiation, and the establishment of agreements that addressed social, cultural, and personal aspects within the interaction.

A3: "At the beginning, the age difference was challenging, but now I feel more comfortable managing inappropriate requests or setting boundaries" (Excerpt, Interview, 2019).

One of the key results of this phase was the improvement of intercultural competence, as Murillo and Krichesky (2015) stated that education is a space for intercultural and democratic encounters, where differences are negotiated and valued as opportunities for collective growth. There, students showed a strong interest in understanding the ETAs' culture, positively influencing their English learning by merging language and

culture as connected components. At the same time, the ETAs joined the educational community, enhancing their understanding of Colombian culture and engaging in the intercultural negotiation process that builds relationships among them.

This category indicates that emotional and cultural connections between ETAs and students enhance teaching experience while also fostering learning and cross-cultural awareness. Although tensions may arise in the early phases, they are typically resolved through a shared understanding and cross-cultural dialogue. Both sides should be opened so that the process can be done properly.

Deep Reflection

From the ETAs' perspectives, the co-teaching experience was both enriching and complex. Their journey was shaped by multiple contextual factors, including the Colombian teachers' pedagogical styles, their willingness to collaborate, the presence or absence of clear peer communication, and the opportunities to build meaningful connections with students.

While there was broad agreement on the value of co-planning as a space for learning and co-construction, tensions also emerged. Planning was not always consistent or participatory, and when it lacked clarity or joint preparation, moments of disconnect arose that affected the ETAs' role in the classroom. One of the main challenges identified was time management: ETAs reported planning well in advance, whereas some teachers tended to plan with little lead time. This underscores that effective collaboration is not automatic; it requires dialogue, mutual recognition, and a shared vision of teaching as a relational and horizontal process (Murillo & Krichesky, 2015).

Another persistent tension concerned the exercise of classroom roles. While some ETAs enjoyed autonomy and authority, others experienced limitations due to the absence of clear agreements on the scope and boundaries of each participant's role. In this regard, although co-

teaching is collaborative by nature, its implementation takes place within institutional contexts shaped by hierarchies, regulations, and cultural dynamics (Friend & Cook, 2010).

Regarding assessment, although ETAs were not authorized to assign formal grades, they found opportunities to contribute to formative processes, particularly in developing students' oral skills. However, a boundary often persisted between what was institutionally permitted and what was practically plausible. While some educators appreciated their role as evaluative collaborators, this contribution was not always fully utilized. This reflects a tension between institutional and Fulbright Program regulations and classroom realities, highlighting the need to clarify that ETAs can participate in assessment processes given their active involvement throughout the teaching-learning process.

Feedback was another area that yielded significant learning. While some ETAs received constructive comments, many reported a lack of systematic feedback. In several cases, they had to request it themselves, revealing a limited feedback culture that could otherwise enhance teaching practices. This lack of structured feedback may hinder professional growth and limit ongoing improvement, especially when there are no clear and effective channels for communicating both strengths and areas for development.

Ultimately, the connection with students proved to be one of the most significant aspects of the experience. Beyond anecdotal interactions, emotional bonds allowed ETAs to gain deeper insights into the educational environment, Colombian cultural codes, and students' emotional expressions. Affectivity served as a cultural bridge, fostering mutual understanding and reinterpreting educational practices. However, this bond also faced challenges, such as initial misunderstandings, generational tensions, and moments of discomfort due to certain cultural expressions. Overcoming these challenges required processes of recognizing the other, mutual adaptation, and cultural negotiation, in line with the principles of critical intercultural competence (Byram, 1997).

Taken together, these categories show that co-teaching is not merely a set of techniques or a method but rather a contextualized practice shaped by human relationships, institutional tensions, and mutual learning. This supports the assertion that both teachers take on different responsibilities while working collaboratively toward the same goal (Liu, 2008). Thus, ETAs did not only teach English; they also learned to navigate different educational settings, decode cultural expressions, negotiate their place in the classroom, and construct shared meanings.

The systematization of experiences leads to the understanding of situations critically and reflectively, in which several situations are interpreted to reconstruct history and the factors that influence those organized events. In this project about Co-teaching, the following stages were considered: 1. Point of departure: experience. 2. Designing a systematization plan 3. Reconstructing the lived process 4. Deep reflections and 5. Points of arrival. Thus, the information was collected acknowledging the process of Co-teaching the ETAs were thorough to evidence the whole and systematic panorama.

Points of Arrival

Learnings

One of the main learnings from the co-teaching experience is that this kind of model requires previous agreements, clearly defined roles, and time for planning together. Listening to and validating the ETAs' voices are fundamental, as their contributions as active agents enhance the model to function effectively. Following a structured process of planning, implementation, and closure in collaboration ensures a coherent and consistent experience, avoiding ambiguities in roles and responsibilities.

It was also evident that clear, direct, and formative feedback strengthens ETAs' pedagogical experiences. Regarding this, participants indicated that this type of feedback should be delivered personally and promptly, as involving third parties can create misunderstandings and tensions.

Therefore, disagreements and suggestions, when addressed openly among those directly involved, enhance the experience and promote continuous improvement.

In that sense, the development of interculturality requires adaptation, negotiation, steady communication, and a commitment to mutual care ethics. Although tensions often arise during the initial stages of teaching, they can be overcome through mutual respect and a willingness to negotiate. Moreover, co-teaching experience highlights the importance of growing intercultural competencies, especially when cultures share mutual experiences while dialoguing to reach common goals.

Recommendations

- Establish formal and regular planning sessions between teachers and ETAs. For the co-teaching model to have a positive impact, planning must be anticipatory and systematic, and agreed upon by both parties.
- Foster constructive and bidirectional feedback. ETAs also need space to share their perspectives on an educational process in which they are active participants. In other words, creating safe spaces for mutual feedback between teachers and ETAs would strengthen the quality of collaborative work.}
- Support ETAs in their cultural and pedagogical integration from the beginning of the semester. Early support is crucial for making their experience valuable for both them and the students, as it helps them adjust to local educational and cultural settings.
- Recognize the value of the emotional bond with students as a driver of learning. Although ETAs participate as assistants, they are also in the process of learning how to teach. Developing affective relationships with their students can motivate them to create more engaged and meaningful teaching practices, making their experience a valuable contribution to their growth both personally and professionally.

Conclusions and Implications

Co-teaching is an educational model that involves two teachers working together in different learning settings. This process entails planning, implementation, and assessment from both participants. Currently, there are six models of co-teaching: One Teaches, One Observes; Station Teaching; Parallel Teaching; Alternative Teaching; Teaming; and One Teaches, One Assists.

For a co-teaching process to be significant, it is essential to explore the different models that can be applied in the classroom. The chosen model must adapt to the needs of the context, not the other way around. That is why the success of co-teaching implementation depends on several factors, including selecting the model that best fits the specific educational environment. Therefore, it should be approached as a systematic and well-planned process, developed through each phase of implementation.

However, before adapting it as a teaching experience, it is recommended to conduct prior intercultural preparation that establishes clear boundaries, such as planning time, building strong communication channels, defining each participant's roles, and respecting them throughout the process. Communication between both parties should be direct and without intermediaries, and all agreements must be honored to avoid potential tensions.

Similarly, co-teaching requires dialogue, active listening, and negotiation skills. While educators may be considered the leaders, assistants play a vital complementary role in this teaching process. Therefore, reaching clear agreements is a key factor when ensuring a successful experience.

To conclude, the systematization of this co-teaching experience contributes to language didactics, as these kinds of narrative experiences shared from the lens of ETAs provide valuable insights into

how processes can be conducted to make them work properly. A co-teaching experience goes beyond collaborative work; it implies steady communication, cultural negotiations, and acknowledging the other side and voice within the process. These educational approaches are built up in each class, and it is a way to go from theory to praxis in a reliable way.

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