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Artículos científicos

La investigación acción como estrategia de reflexión, mejora y cambio en la práctica docente de la enseñanza de lenguas

Action Research as a strategy for reflection, improvement and change in Language Teaching Practice

A pesquisa-ação como estratégia para reflexão, aprimoramento e mudança na prática docente do ensino de línguas

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Resumen

La investigación acción (IA) se entiende como el proceso reflexivo de búsqueda realizado por los integrantes de una comunidad para conocer su práctica y lograr mejorar la lógica y la justicia de sus propias acciones. En tal sentido, este artículo presenta los resultados de una indagación sobre el uso de la IA como estrategia de reflexión, mejora y cambio en un programa de formación de docentes de lenguas extranjeras en una universidad del occidente mexicano. El estudio, en su dimensión epistemológica, se realizó desde el posicionamiento constructivista, ya que el investigador se fusionó con el objeto analizado. El trabajo fue cualitativo y contempló la aplicación de un cuestionario abierto con el propósito de obtener información de un grupo de estudiantes, docentes en formación. Los datos se analizaron con

el *software* Atlas.ti, lo que permitió conseguir 31 códigos y cuatro categorías. Los resultados muestran que la IA ayuda al docente en formación a detectar problemas en su práctica a través de la reflexión, así como a mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas y favorecer la formación académico-investigativa, aunque los hallazgos también revelan la complejidad que un proyecto de IA puede representar para estudiantes universitarios.

Palabras claves: acción, docente, investigación, lenguas extranjeras.

Abstract

Action Research (AR) is understood as the reflective search process carried out by the members of a community to learn about their practice and improve the logic and justice of their own actions. This paper presents the results of an investigation on the use of AR as a strategy for reflection, improvement and change in a training program for Foreign Language teachers at the University of Colima, Mexico. The study, in its epistemological dimension, was carried out from the constructivist position since the investigator merged with the investigated object. The study was qualitative since the researcher was given the role of observer of the world in general and of that context. An open questionnaire to obtain information from a group of student teachers was administered. Data was analyzed with the Atlas.ti® software, identifying 31 codes and four categories. The results showed that AR helps student teachers to detect problems in teaching practice through reflection, to improve the process of teaching language learning, and favors academic-research training. The findings also revealed the complexity that an Action Research project could represent for university students.

Keywords: action, teacher, research, foreign languages**.**

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Resumo

A pesquisa-ação (IA) é entendida como o processo de busca reflexiva realizado pelos membros de uma comunidade para conhecer sua prática e aprimorar a lógica e a justiça de suas próprias ações. Nesse sentido, este artigo apresenta os resultados de uma investigação sobre o uso da IA como estratégia de reflexão, melhoria e mudança em um programa de formação de professores de línguas estrangeiras em uma universidade no oeste do México. O estudo, em sua dimensão epistemológica, foi realizado a partir da postura construtivista, uma vez que a pesquisadora se fundiu com o objeto analisado. O trabalho foi qualitativo e contemplou a aplicação de um questionário aberto com a finalidade de obter informações de um grupo de alunos e professores em formação. Os dados foram analisados com o software Atlas.ti, que permitiu obter 31 códigos e quatro categorias. Os resultados mostram que a IA auxilia os professores em formação a detectar problemas em sua prática por meio da reflexão, bem como melhorar o processo de ensino-aprendizagem de línguas e favorecer a formação acadêmico-pesquisadora, embora os achados também revelem a complexidade que um projeto de IA pode representar para Estudantes universitários.

Palavras-chave: ação, professor, pesquisa, línguas estrangeiras.

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Introduction

In search of social development through involving people in a cyclical process of investigation of facts, planning, exploration, action and evaluation, Kurt Lewin - known as the creator of the term action research (IA) - stimulated the origin of a method of do research (Hendricks, 2013; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). Later, Lawrence Stenhouse initiated the movement known as teacher-researcher, whose main objective was to prepare teachers to carry out studies in the classroom (Jefferson, 2014). Stenhouse's colleague John Elliot later extended and transformed the concept (Elliott, 1991).

For Elliot (1991) the main reason for the research is to improve education with the support of the generation of knowledge, based on efforts to change the educational practice in the school (Burns, 2005). Elliot 2007 stated that theory is implicit in all practices, so theorizing implies articulating tacit theories making them the object of analysis under a free and transparent professional rhetoric. Elliot's proposal on educational change through AI has

contributed to developing a solid foundation of knowledge and teacher professional development through this method.

This study reports the results of a group of students in the fifth semester of a degree in the area of foreign language teaching, at a university in western Mexico. The students, teachers in training, reported their opinions and experiences in the application of an AI microproject during their teaching practice. During their stay at the university they attend four courses, four semesters, of Teaching Practice; During the second year, they teach 30 English classes per semester to children in basic and primary education. While attending their first two Teaching Practice courses, they are also taking Qualitative Research, where they study the AI method. Under this strategy, students generate a research topic of their interest, which begins with the detection of a problem related to the English teaching-learning process. After passing the analysis, reflection and socialization in class, they propose strategies and an action plan that allows them to change or improve the situation detected. Subsequently, the improvement plan is implemented and finally the result of the intervention is reflected upon and analyzed. The project culminates with the writing of the research report, and several sessions in class to reflect on the process.

The central thesis of this work is that AI is a method that favors academic-research training, since it contributes to discerning the educational context through reflection, intervenes in possible omissions in the teaching process, corrects them and favors understanding of research.

The two primary objectives of this project were 1) to study AI as a strategy for reflection, improvement and change in teaching practice and 2) to describe the way in which the learning of the research process, doing research, permeates the teaching practice of foreign languages.

Action research as a strategy for reflection, change, professional development and teacher training

According to Mcniff and Whitehead (2010), AI is a professional development tool that nurtures teachers' confidence in practice, contributes to the acquisition of knowledge, to collecting and using evidence, and to learning based on their experiences (Furlong and Salisbury, 2005). On the other hand, Crawford (1995) introduces the concept of knowledge in action, defined as that which changes professional performance or social institutions

through the active and transformative participation of those who work in a particular environment.

Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Stringer (2004) point out that AI is perceived as a form of self-reflective inquiry, carried out by members of a community to improve the logic and fairness of their own actions. The process goes through ontological moments in which professionals criticize their practice, recognize what is good and benefit from its strengths, as well as understand what needs attention and implement measures to improve (McNiff, 2013). Glassman, Erdem, and Bartholomew (2012) suggest that AI is essentially a socio-educational intervention that helps tackle deep-seated problems and provide solutions to everyday problems (Meyer, 2000).

An essential element that always accompanies AI is the idea of change. In other words, AI is fundamentally used as a transformation strategy, as Carver and Klein (2013) argue, pointing out that AI is a tool that underpins continuous improvement in teaching programs. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2002) support the idea by stating that AI includes the study of social contexts by actors, involved in dysfunctional situations with the purpose of improving reality and their level of understanding of the facts.

Different researchers have explored the use of AI as a teacher training strategy. Moi Mooi and Moshin (2014) investigated how a group of students, teachers in training, from a special education program, conceive the teaching-learning process and factors that affect it. One of the most relevant findings was that teachers realized that AI favored the detection of learning needs. The study's findings suggest that AI should be an essential supporting element of a teacher education program, providing strong professional development for students to deal with many of the challenges during the first years of teaching.

For some authors, AI can be a vehicle to bridge the gap between theory and practice, to support trainee teachers in their acquisition of knowledge and for reflective practice (Kennedy-Clark et al, 2018). Their study focused on the development of an AI project that helped students develop research skills, reflect on their strengths and areas of their teaching practice. The authors argue that the approach of this project favors the preparation of teachers in training, with respect to the evaluation of their performance in the classroom, within a context of increasingly accentuated accountability.

Şahinkarakaş and Toköz Göktepe (2018) present the results of a project in which students, teachers in training, from the English teaching degree program at the University of

Çağ in Turkey did AI during their practice. Through a collaboration model between students and mentors, an AI cycle was implemented that began with the discovery of problems that students face during their teaching practice. After a process of analyzing their performance, together with their mentor, the students prepared and implemented an action plan to improve those aspects of their practice that required changes. During the reflections, the trainee teachers realized that what they learned in school did not always harmonize with the real environment of the classroom. They realized the difficulty of directly transferring the theoretical knowledge learned at the university to the classroom. The project also helped them to understand the importance of being a teacher, to be aware of the relevance of future research and continuous development through collaboration with mentors. The study revealed that doing AI during teaching practice provides an opportunity to develop a sense of community and understanding, fostering professional development in a collaborative environment. In doing so, ways could be explored to address the needs of pre-service teachers before and during practice.

The study

Research Problem

The review of the literature highlights the convenience of carrying out IA as a strategy for reflection, change and teacher training at university levels. As has been seen in the previous section, the literature accounts for the relevance of innovating in the classroom, in order to develop the researcher's own skills and competencies. Promoting the objective practice of self-observation is a challenge that teacher educators should take on as a priority. In this sense, and for the purposes of this study, the research problem focuses on deepening the application of AI, specifically in the area of language teacher training and providing evidence of the perceptions that students have about the use of this research method and its involvement in their academic-research training. With the intention of revealing the scope that the AI method may have on the training process of undergraduate students in the area of language teaching. Additionally, it seeks to show how AI, through the application of the different phases it uses, can change routines in the classroom related to the practice of language teaching.

Methodological foundations

The study, in its epistemological dimension, is carried out from the constructivist position. Lincoln and Guba (2013) characterize constructivism as interactive subjectivism. That is to say, the researcher who places himself under the constructivist umbrella merges with the investigated object. This union facilitates the construction of reality together with the actors and the object of study. Consequently, knowledge is the result of an interactive process with social reality and has a personal and subjective character. Additionally, according to the authors, the role of the researcher is to make sense of something, by placing himself at the point where the conceptual makes sense. It is convenient to mention that in addition to the above, this position is consistent with the approach and method chosen to carry out the study.

The research approach is qualitative, since the researcher is given the role of observer of the world in general and of that context in particular. Denzin and Lincoln (2012) define the qualitative approach as "a series of interpretive practices that make the world visible, (...) translate it into a series of textual representations, based on data collected in the field, through observations, interviews, conversations, photographs" (p. 3). In this sense, Sandín (2003) considers that "the person is not understood as a separate set of variables. The qualitative researcher must develop a sensitivity towards situations or experiences considered in their entirety and towards the qualities that regulate them" (p. 125). The attention to the context, the global and holistic approach and the interpretations derived from the interaction with the reality that is studied are its fundamental characteristics.

Stake (1995) identifies three types of case studies, according to their purpose, which allows us to classify this work as an intrinsic case study; with characteristics of instrumental, linear, iterative, embedded or embedded (Yin, 2009). An inquiry with the aforementioned characteristics is carried out when you want to achieve a greater understanding of the particular case, as it is manifested in your daily practices, so it was applied on this occasion with a group of students who are preparing to teach foreign languages.

Research question

The research problem focuses on studying in greater depth the phenomenon of the application of AI in the area of language teaching by teachers in training. Consequently, the following questions were formulated that served as a guide:

- How do teachers in training of the Foreign Languages Teaching degree program explain the use of action research during the process of their practice?
- How do they apply this strategy in their academic-research development?

The questions seek to answer questions regarding the use of AI and its implications in academic-research training. (Creswell, 2014).

Data collection

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire of open questions (Corral, 2010). The purpose was to know the perception of students regarding AI and its use in their teaching practice. Even when the answers to open questions are more difficult to code, they provide a lot of valuable information (García, Alfaro, Hernández and Molina 2006).

In addition, the use of the Atlas.ti software, as was the case in this study, greatly facilitates the information coding process. According to Álvarez-Esteban (2003), an additional benefit of the aforementioned instrument is that of "offering the respondent the opportunity to set their own hierarchical level of detail or establish the level of decision based on their experience" (p. 47), which does not happen with a closed-ended questionnaire, since people may feel that the suggested modalities are not as precise as they should be, and offer less useful answers. Open-ended questions also allow each individual to state her own motivation, allowing the researcher to elicit a much broader range of opinions about the problem.

The questionnaire was answered by twenty-six students. However, due to the richness and large volume of qualitative data collected, eight were randomly selected and used in this study. The original names of the participants were replaced with fictitious ones. It was answered through the Google Forms platform once the students concluded their teaching practice.

The data analysis process

Data analysis was performed using the Atlas.ti software, which allows managing, coding and publishing qualitative research data. The first step of the analysis was the reduction of information (O'Dwyer, 2004), which consisted of a detailed reading of the answers to the questionnaire. After this, the data was narrowed down to the relevant, key themes that emerged from the data itself. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out the opinions of teachers in training regarding AI, and its use in the teaching process. Therefore, the coding process focused on identifying and coding their different perceptions. Subsequently, the categorization of the data was carried out, which allowed an easy and quick access to the themes during the analysis. To do this, the responses of the participants were taken into account, which were represented in codes, based on the meaning contained in the text. Once an initial coding scheme was established, all transcripts were read and analyzed again (Charmaz, 2014). This rereading and analysis process, from the perspective of Denzin and Lincoln (2012), facilitated the interpretation of the findings, which resulted in a final version of 31 codes and four categories.

Results

After highlighting the AI method as a professional development instrument that nurtures teachers' confidence in practice, contributes to the acquisition of knowledge, to collect and use evidence, and to learn based on their experiences (Furlong and Salisbury, 2005). This section presents information about the experiences of the participants, opinions and beliefs, paying to the research question and objective that was to shed light on AI as a method to determine problems during the teaching-learning process, reflect on the practice, change or improve and as a strategy that favors the academic-investigative training of undergraduate students in the area of Foreign Language Teaching. The analysis is supported by some fragments taken from the responses of the participants.

The survey data categorized the perceptions of the participants in the following main themes: improving and identifying problems during the teaching-learning process, reflecting on the practice and learning about the research process.

Identify the problem

In addition to being a strategy to improve the processes of a class, AI —according to the testimony of the participants— favors the discovery and solution of difficulties that arise during practice. The following excerpts support the above:

[…] *It allows us to identify a problem and analyze it to improve or provide a solution (Maria).*

[…] correct those errors that I had in my classroom (Angélica).

[…] we can delve into the problems that arise throughout the practice (Juan).

[…] helps students to find different methods for their future or present problems in their teaching practice (Roberto).

The arguments revealed above testify to the usefulness of AI. According to the interviewees, AI is a support strategy to reveal possible inoperative activities.

However, not everyone feels empowered to identify situations to change or improve; These opinions state it thus:

[…] *it is not easy to identify the problem (Marlén).*

[...] identifying these problematic situations in the classroom is not easy (Luz).

[…] when you are a practitioner there is not enough time to observe in broad strokes what is failing (Berta).

The discovery of potential omissions will always be more fruitful if it is accompanied by a reflection exercise.

Reflect and analyze

On the path of AI, reflection is an inescapable station. The reflective activity of the still students is an inherent element that the method also contributes. The parts of the questionnaire presented here corroborate this assertion.

[…] *It helped a lot to reflect on what my class is like (Rosa).*

[...] has helped me realize the deficiencies of the group (Juan).

[…] analyze the situation and, based on the data, propose and implement these changes (Roberto).

[…] allows us to get to know our students and enter reality (María).

The reasoning presented by budding teachers recognizes reflection as an essential ingredient of AI, an ally in the investigation of possible errors in the teaching process.

Improve or change

Among the most popular arguments by students, AI stands out as a strategy that favors improving or changing aspects of their teaching practice. This position was corroborated in the present study and is evidenced in the following comments.

[…] *It helps a lot in improving the teacher's performance (Juan).*

[...] help improve our classes a lot (Roberto).

[...] contributes to a better management of the class (Rosa).

[…] notice that I could change that situation that I felt could be improved (Berta).

[…] have better results both in the development of our classes (Luz).

[…] change so that we can improve (Marlén).

[…] do not keep making the same mistakes (María).

The statements of the participants support the argument that AI is a method that contributes to improving the process of teaching and learning a foreign language, from the observation of aspects or situations within the process that produce some impression of unpleasantness or dissatisfaction. For example, the development of an activity in the classroom that did not go as planned.

Along with the favorable opinions about the use of AI as an improvement strategy, there were also voices that disagreed with the application of the method. The following excerpts give an account of the feelings of some participants:

[…] *It is a bit difficult to carry out a well-structured action plan and for it to work for us (Angélica).*

[…] the lack of experience and knowledge required to design an action (Rosa).

[...] that the students do not want to participate in the changes given by the teacher (Berta).

[…] when implementing action research projects it takes a lot of time (Luz).

[…] there are problems that have to be solved as soon as possible (Marlén).

The comments show that students observe difficulties in planning and executing strategies for improvement or change. The conflicts to which they allude concern variables of time, inexperience and uncertainty; evaluations expected from students in their training stage.

The main line developed in this study is primarily linked to what AI raised in the process of teaching practice. However, the information provided reveals that the use of AI during their practice also favored the academic-research dimension.

Train researchers

In addition to understanding AI as a strategy for reflection, for finding possible omissions and for change, future teachers also adopted it as a way of learning to do research. These are some of their contributions:

[…] *it makes us be researchers in a certain way (Angélica).*

[…] I didn't notice it until the moment I asked myself the question of my research (Rosa).

[…] it is important to have a record of what one does (Berta).

[…] it is necessary to have a method or strategy that allows us to gather the necessary information and process it (Light).

[…] provide methodological resources that help to carry out teaching and professional practice (Marlén).

The previous fragments refer to the discovery that students make of the research process, notions that appear during the questionnaire. Some of them clearly describe some point of the research process.

The findings also reveal that doing AI presents challenges, since previously the method must be studied in the classroom and work on the development of the research process, since most of the activities demand activities such as the administration of questionnaires or the completion of tests. interviews, as well as data processing. Knowledge of field work is favorable for carrying out AI, because it facilitates the implementation of research activities and prevents or takes advantage of certain situations that are already known in advance. Ignoring different factors related to the AI process such as theoretical concepts, methodology, and fieldwork results in project failure.

[…] *it is necessary to understand the meaning of action research (Maria).*

[…] doing action research is not like teaching, other skills and knowledge are required (Angélica).

[...] For a student to carry out an AI project, she needs to have studied the method (Juan).

[…] the study and practice in the classroom is essential to be able to more or less carry out an AI project (Roberto).

The previous study of the method, understanding the concept, the theoretical-practical support, knowing different models and studying cases, are some of the elements that help in the proper development of a project of this nature.

Discussion

This research focused on studying in greater depth the phenomenon of the application of AI as a method that favors academic-research training in the area of language teaching, since it helps to discern the educational context through reflection, intervenes in possible omissions of the teaching process, corrects them and contributes to the understanding of the investigation.

The interview data categorized the participants' perceptions into four main themes: identifying problems during the teaching-learning process, reflecting on practice, changing or improving, and learning about the research process. Each of these topics is built from the data collected and discussed with the results of similar research conducted in other contexts and from the chosen theoretical perspective.

Identifying problems to identify the state of things speeds up the solution

It is possible to develop the methodical look. That ability to see and read between the lines, to interpret reality without altering it, to observe and be able to say things are going well. When the language teacher is capable of making a judgment of such impact, it is because he has seen the phenomenon, has identified it in all its aspects and is capable of conceptualizing or defining its variables, to the degree of being able to find the exact solution or alternative solutions. .

Starting from a hypothesis facilitates the path of the language teacher in training, the AI that promotes both identifying hypotheses and designing axes of analysis will provide the student with a vision focused on the solution rather than the problem. An example of a hypothesis mentioned by one of the study subjects goes like this: Action research contributes to improving the practice of foreign language teachers in training, and in accordance with their idea, the concept of a methodical approach implies the monitoring of certain steps and

an attachment to systematization, in such a way that it does not fall so easily into conjecture or false hypotheses.

The exercise of problematizing, on the one hand, was positive for the students and, on the other, it facilitated the development of the teaching practice. Two main characteristics stand out as fundamental elements of this concept, that is, of AI as problem identifier and solution accelerator (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). The first corresponds to the act of delving into the practice itself from the perspective of AI. The second is related to the methodological contribution, without which the students would not be able to land the implicit processes in a method whose purpose is the impact on society.

Similar results are presented by Hine and Lavery (2014) on the experiences of three teacher-researchers who carried out AI projects in their respective schools as part of their postgraduate studies. The academics highlighted that the AI provided them with the appropriate methodology to examine in detail what they considered critical issues within their respective schools. They defined AI in terms of a valuable process for inquiring about issues of concern in their schools.

From the voices of the subjects emerge elements that define the subjects of study. For example, AI allows the student, teacher in training, learn to observe problems, among others. Although in some cases this must be interpreted objectively, since lack of experience, insecurities and not daring are subjective characteristics of teachers in training and they have assigned them to themselves throughout their professional training. Suddenly that subjectivity does not allow them to see that any conflict situation can be a challenge.

The young student or future teacher expresses wishes, dreams and desires, goes to the field of practice wanting to resolve the academic life of their students. His teaching practice demands the use of everything learned so far, speeds up processes and demands specific skills that are only acquired in the field. A determining factor for his progress is sharpening his gaze, focusing on what is relevant, overcoming obstacles and keeping his motivation high. However, the subjects express that this is not a simple task, and the reason is the little or no ability to identify the problem to be solved, its scope and approach perspectives. The problem reaches a peak when the subject claims to have tried different ways and none of them work. In this sense, it can be concluded that identifying problems to glimpse the state of things speeds up the solution.

Analysis and reflections that lead to solutions

The daily exposure to problems and the solution in patch format does not allow progress. The teacher in training must be able to analyze in depth the situation of her class. AI as a reinforcing exercise of teaching practice provides the student with possibilities to carry out a more in-depth analysis. It develops in the student to look through a lens, that is, focused, but from different perspectives, in such a way that it is possible to see the phenomenon in its entire composition, holistically. This all-encompassing, focused look is AI's most powerful strategy for spotting problems and planning for potential solutions. From the point of view of Kennedy-Clark et al. (2018), AI can be a vehicle to bridge the gap between theory and practice, to support preservice teachers in their knowledge acquisition, and for reflective practice. The reasoning presented by the students recognized reflection as an essential ingredient of AI, an ally in the investigation of possible errors in the teaching process.

Similar results have been obtained by Pellerin and Paukner (2015), researchers who studied in-service Chilean teachers who performed IA as a means of supporting the concept of reflective practice. Carrying out the research allowed teachers to reflect and act on their attitudes, beliefs and identity as professionals, and their role as agents of change in their respective classrooms and educational communities.

The findings also show that for some teachers, the self-reflection process went beyond their own problems in the classroom. These teachers began to reflect on broader social issues that impacted their teaching context and the Chilean educational context as a whole.

One of the great difficulties that can be found is knowing exactly the problem, having the results of the investigation, but not finding a correct action plan to improve the situation. In other words, when applying the changes, not knowing what to do or that they don't work is something that can arise for us and that can be difficult to resolve. One of the main obstacles that teachers in training face is the lack of experience and knowledge that is required to design an action that will be executed to solve a problematic situation within their class. In this sense, the decisions made by the students could not be the best and, consequently, confuse the investigation or, in the worst case, could aggravate the given problem.

Solve, improve and correct the practice

AI as a research method has processes that contribute to the improvement of teaching practice with subjects that will become facilitators in the development of second languages. As Burns (2005) mentions, AI generates meaning and illuminates understanding in problematic situations, improving the quality of human interactions and practices within those situations. This has been demonstrated in this case study. The participating subjects agree that AI helps to find solutions to identify problems, to delve into academic phenomena and to contribute to the achievement of student goals and teacher satisfaction.

Although it is clear that the teaching experience is developed by teaching, in the student's speech there is the certainty that it is necessary to look more deeply into daily actions. Go through ontological moments in which professionals criticize their practice, recognize what is good and benefit from its strengths, as well as understand what needs attention and implement measures to improve (McNiff, 2013). In this sense, facilitating teaching experiences, in real settings, is not enough. You must be able to observe your own experience in more detail, in such a way that it is possible to correct errors, optimize academic performance and, in general, contribute to the improvement of classroom processes. Sulaiman (2016) reinforces this point of view by showing the results of a study on an English teacher who found AI a tool for self-reflection and improvement of his teaching practice. According to what the teacher reported, doing action research helped him improve his self-esteem and solve problems, since it not only helped his students to become better writers, but also to correct his own teaching practice.

A concept repeated in the study emphasizes the ability that AI provides to deepen teaching practice. As Stringer (2004) points out, the strength lies in its systematic execution of articulated inquiry processes. The significance and relevance of this simple fact allows the future language teacher to aspire to achieve better results. The focused and constant observation added to the action of teaching in real scenarios allows the teacher in training to develop skills that are difficult to acquire with other teaching models. AI as a tool to delve into the practice itself and modify the actions of a proposal prepared by the same subject (researcher-teacher) is a powerful methodological resource that facilitates learning both in the area of research and in teaching, specifically of languages.

Researcher trainer

It is an implicit product in the exercise of using AI. If the act of looking more deeply at one's own teaching practice does not promote improvement, then what will? The student enters the field of researcher when he is able to question himself and his teaching practice. Formulating the right question can be the trigger to cultivate the culture of research in the future language teacher. AI acquires the character of training researchers when it enables subjects to develop the ability to observe their practice, detect a problem and design a solution (Moi et al., 2014).

Since the AI project that the students elaborate consists of the application of non-complex research activities in terms of time, objectives, data collection and analysis, it works as an optimal precedent that prepares the teacher for the execution of a more complex project. extensive and ambitious. Additionally, AI is a didactic tool that helps teachers in training to better understand the qualitative research process in the field of language teaching because the student learns and discovers its meaning through experience. This is a no less relevant point, since the learning exercise has an impact on the training of the student and future teacher. Through experimentation, the student tests what they have learned in class, which allows them to reach their own conclusions and generate a particular understanding of the subject.

This result confirms what was found by Eriksson, Romar and Dyson (2017), who involved pre-service physical education teachers in a research project to assess the effects of sport in the context of a Finnish school. They implemented a four-week soccer sports education unit instead of the traditional three-week unit. The project turned out to be an effective frame of reference to allow students in teacher training programs to have an active role with the opportunity to connect theory and practice. This allowed them to change the organization of class activities not only in terms of the length of the unit, but also in terms of how to organize work teams, involve students in organizing tasks, and change students' roles during the activities. The researchers also made important discoveries regarding her role as a teacher-in-training. They faced and resolved obstacles related to an innovative physical education model, which allowed them to search for real solutions.

According to what was previously reported, AI allows the student to learn research, although in some cases this should be interpreted with caution, since the fact of understanding research concepts does not necessarily mean that they will be applied. In other words, certain

information can be mastered, but that does not mean that it is feasible to develop it due to factors such as lack of training or willingness to do so. (Negi, 2016).

Conclusions

The fact that teachers in training have the opportunity to do field research integrated into the teaching-learning process is commendable. Inquiry encourages critical self-reflection, engages them in a more systematic examination of instruction or teaching practice, enables them to examine and explore classroom and school problems and their solutions, and helps them gain new knowledge for classroom teaching. .

The evidence arising from the study suggests that the future language teacher should develop a deeper and more reflective look. AI has shown, in the exercise from a micro perspective, that it provides a fundamental competence in the teacher in general and in the language teacher in particular. The exercise of observing a problem begins with the immediate analysis of the subject closest to the researcher: the teacher. The performance of both roles by the same person in a small-scale AI exercise facilitates the student's inquiry, and objectively determines whether her actions are appropriate or require adjustments. The first element recognized by new teachers is found in the differences of the subject, that is, by being aware that each person is unique, it is possible to correct or find solutions to the problems or mistakes made. That act, by itself, is a way of connecting with students, and when it is known that the solution lies in actions and attitude, a high percentage of improvement begins to take shape.

This research has made it possible to identify that AI facilitates a warm and quality approach to students. It is evident that the lack of experience of future language teachers can lead them to make mistakes not only in the execution of the method chosen to teach the language, but also in the way of relating to the student body. It makes it easier for the teacher to "put himself in the student's shoes" and be able to see in him a different and unique human being, with capacities and tastes that distinguish him. The teacher is able to ask himself how he can improve this situation instead of looking for blame, which creates an invaluable opportunity to find a solution to the problem. Commonly, seeing an undisciplined student tends to identify him as a problem. But could it not be that the teacher is implementing the wrong strategy? Thanks to the objective view provided by the exercise of carrying out an AI,

the teacher will develop the ability to approach the student in a proactive manner, with quality and empathy.

Finally, this study has shown that AI is a method that favors academic-research training through reflection, intervention in possible omissions in the teaching process, and analysis of the research process. But it is also argued that the fact of understanding research concepts, knowing that there are methods that help solve difficulties in the classroom does not necessarily mean that they can be applied due to deficiencies related, for example, to lack of training or will to do it.

Contributions to future lines of research

The two main objectives of this project were 1) to study AI as a strategy for reflection, improvement and change in teaching practice and 2) to describe the way in which the learning of the research process permeates the teaching practice of foreign languages. However, the results of the study emphasize the findings of the former more than the latter. Therefore, a future line of research that reveals in greater detail the peculiarities of a teaching strategy of the academic-research process based on the experiential method would be favorable to discover to what extent experiential learning can be effective when considering the role of the student more active than passive or by promoting discovering knowledge for oneself than that presented by others. Likewise, the stages that experiential learning follows in which strategies and procedures of a theory of action are put to the test to achieve certain results can be investigated. These steps can be studied in more detail to determine how effective they are.

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Appendant I

Open-ended questionnaire

Faculty of Foreign Languages
Research Seminar

Action research as a strategy for reflection, improvement and change in the teaching practice of language teaching

Name: (Not required) Gender:

Objective of the instrument: Analyze the effects of action research as a strategy for reflection, improvement and change in teaching practice in the teaching of foreign languages. It is intended to answer the following questions: how do teachers in training of the Foreign Languages Teaching degree program explain the use of action research during the process of their practice? And how do they apply this strategy in their academic-research development?

We ask you to answer this questionnaire made up of five questions and a reflection section, all of which are important for the study. Your participation is voluntary and we guarantee that your responses will remain confidential. They will only be used for the purposes of this research. Those responsible for the study thank you in advance for your collaboration: Dr. Fernando Manuel Peralta Castro and Dr. Pedro José Mayoral Valdivia.

Tabla 1. Preguntas del cuestionario de respuesta abiertas

1. ¿Qué es para ti la investigación acción (IA) como herramienta de reflexión?
2. ¿Cómo aplicas la IA en tu vida académica (formación y práctica de enseñanza)?
3. ¿Cuáles fortalezas identificas en utilizar la IA en la forma en que has dicho hacerlo?
4. ¿Qué áreas de oportunidad experimentaste en la aplicación de la IA en tu experiencia académica?
5. ¿Cuáles son las estrategias que resultaron más significativas en tu experiencia y por qué?
6. Comparte brevemente tu experiencia con la IA y sus efectos en tu desempeño como docente en formación

Fuente: el cuestionario fue diseñado por los investigadores

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