



## **Implementing Critical Pedagogy in EFL Classes: Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences**

**Tammy Fajardo-Dack**

Department of Education, Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador,  
[tammy.fajardo@ucuenca.edu.ec](mailto:tammy.fajardo@ucuenca.edu.ec)

**Juanita Argudo-Serrano**

Department of Education, Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador,  
[juanita.argudo@ucuenca.edu.ec](mailto:juanita.argudo@ucuenca.edu.ec)

**Monica Abad-Celleri**

Department of Education, Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador,  
[monica.abad@ucuenca.edu.ec](mailto:monica.abad@ucuenca.edu.ec)

**Rosita Torres-Ortiz**

University Language Institute, Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador,  
[rosita.torreso@ucuenca.edu.ec](mailto:rosita.torreso@ucuenca.edu.ec)

The application of Critical Pedagogy (CP) based on strengthening and valuing the identity of each person to educate them in diversity and achieve social equity becomes key to helping learners identify themselves as agents of change to contribute to the creation of social solutions. The study reports the experiences of pre-service teachers of the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) undergraduate program while implementing CP to teach English to children and teenagers who are beneficiaries of a Charity Foundation in Cuenca, Ecuador. The findings show that pre-service teachers were able to implement the principles of CP not only to teach English but also to foster in students a sense of self-identity and social justice, achieving the goals of using this approach.

**Keywords:** critical pedagogy, pre-service teachers, social justice, community outreach practicum, agents of change

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teachers and students face different realities on an everyday basis that go beyond their classrooms and school contexts (Freire, 2005), which could affect, among other areas, their teaching-learning process. Traditionally, the education systems have placed greater emphasis on the transmission of knowledge without considering factors that identify and affect the child or adolescent in different spaces of social interaction such as ethnicity, gender, socio-economic and cultural level, sexual orientation, age, abilities,

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disabilities, immigration status, religion, among others (Hankivsky, 2014). These personal and social conditions impact their way of being, acting, and learning.

### **Literature Review**

Critical Pedagogy (CP) is an important approach to teaching and learning in general, and in the last few years it has been adopted for the teaching of languages. It was defined by Kincheloe (2005) as an approach that focuses on changing power dynamics that are oppressive and result in the suppression of individuals. CP, considered a humanizing pedagogy, includes strategies used to motivate and engage students in relevant learning (Freire, 2005), and goes beyond the traditional teaching process. This pedagogy, when effectively implemented, might encourage students to relate learning to their own stories and make their voices heard; additionally, it might also allow teachers to use different strategies such as cultural practices, languages, and ideological frameworks (Giroux, 1999) in an educational context in which students' identities are valued as a means to empower them to cope with different social conditions. CP also evokes academic performance improvement in school and promotes a space for students to demonstrate their cognitive, procedural, and attitudinal skills, which are adjusted to broader academic and social contexts (Scorza et al., 2013).

Freire (2000) described humanizing pedagogy as a revolutionary approach to teaching where teachers and students are involved in a process of "mutual humanization" (p. 75) with constant dialogues based on generating awareness to "learn to perceive the social, political, and economic contradictions, and act against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 35). In-service and pre-service teachers should bear in mind that they are teaching human beings who confront unforeseen situations that might trouble them, changing their perspective of the world (Swalwell, 2013); therefore, their responsibility is to teach in ways that will

lessen the inequalities that exist in school systems throughout the world between children of the poor and children of the middle and wealthy classes and the injustices that exist in societies beyond systems of schooling, in access to shelter, food, healthcare, transportation, access to meaningful work that pays a living wage and so on. (Zeichner, 2011, p. 7)

Consequently, applying Freire's pedagogy could be a potential way to address social justice and reduce inequalities in different classroom contexts and thus in the broader society; therefore, "teaching for social justice is critical pedagogy and critical pedagogy becomes teaching to promote social justice" (Allen et al., 2015, p.85). CP can be implemented in all areas of education and English language teaching is not an exception. Because of its dominant status around the world today, learning English is imperative and equity in access to learning it should be guaranteed (McKay, 2010; Murray, 2020). Although English learning has been challenged for perpetuating socio-economic inequality since English instruction could be perceived as an "act of injustice against the poor" (Kuchah, 2018, p.9), it could be a powerful tool to potentiate students' skills and improve their future living conditions, foster identity acceptance, value and recognize diversity, and promote inclusion (Glynn et al., 2014; Nieto & Bode, 2018).

In this regard, it seems crucial to train pre-service teachers to include the principles of CP in their daily practices, perspectives, and relationships with their students to promote “culturally responsive and socially just teaching that enhances the academic and emotional learning of students” (Nguyen & Zeichner, 2019, p. 4). Taking social justice into consideration in language education can contribute to teaching equitably in the 21st century (García & Kleyn, 2016); it “is good for the rich and the poor, for the powerful and the humble, for indigenous and immigrant peoples” (García & Kleyn, 2016, p. 11). Maintaining a continuous and critical dialogue is the basis of education in today’s world; consequently, CP becomes crucial to promote such dialogue interactively. Regarding pre-service training programs, it is imperative to consider the need to equip pre-service teachers for their future practice with innovative and humanistic methodologies to start changing society (Sahragard & Saberi, 2018).

Nguyen and Zeichner (2019) adjusted the Boston College Model of socially just teaching and teacher education, proposing three components for this teaching paradigm. First, the goal of teaching is to view students through multidimensional lenses so that they can be provided with opportunities to learn and develop not only basic skills but also complex thinking and reasoning skills to foster social, emotional, and civic development. The second component requires going beyond teaching skills and teachers’ knowledge to include their beliefs about their work and the knowledge they should have about their students’ academic and personal lives to develop quality relationships and achieve higher levels of performance. The last component is to develop political consciousness because what teachers do in their classrooms is political as it takes place within a particular social and political context, which affects students’ lives.

Nieto and Bode (2018) proposed four characteristics of social justice teaching: (1) it challenges the privileges and oppressions that create and perpetuate social inequalities; (2) it provides the necessary resources to support all students; (3) it acknowledges students’ skills and strengths; and (4) it empowers students through critical thinking. Additionally, Muhammad (2019), mentioned that CP is an essential instructional approach aimed at enhancing students’ understanding of fairness and societal equity, while also enhancing their learning.

Based on these characteristics, it becomes evident that some important actions should be taken by (language) teachers and teacher educators. For instance, topics on inequality should be addressed in the curriculum to raise student consciousness to challenge unequal practices in their classroom, home, and city. In addition, teachers need to provide emotional resources by believing in students’ abilities, caring for their personal and academic lives, and preparing a safe and meaningful environment free from discrimination where there are spaces for an apprenticeship in democracy to be able to face future challenges (Nieto & Bode, 2018; Sierra-Piedrahita, 2016; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009).

Teaching English through the principles of CP can allow children and adolescents to go beyond borders to develop their citizen identity based on diversity. In addition, teaching a language through this pedagogy can empower students as agents of change and enhance their intellectual and personal abilities, which can be accomplished if language

teachers go beyond the role of being mere instructors and become educators who teach values of humanistic education and criticality and encourage their learners (Porto & Byram, 2015). In this sense, not only pre-service teachers require specialized knowledge and skills to better comprehend the complex task of teaching but also the curriculum needs to include more disciplines related to different teaching methods as a regular focus in didactic courses (Lustrea, 2023).

In addition, this research tries to showcase the interest engendered in the area to bridge gaps and to provide quality education regardless of the context where learning takes place, addressing innovative approaches such as CP to focus on the extent to which it can succeed in developing critical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to point out issues of equity and social justice in pre-service English teachers.

In an effort to investigate EFL pre-service teachers' experiences with the implementation of CP in their community outreach practicum, the following research questions emerged:

- To what extent do EFL pre-service teachers modify their perceptions of teaching after being trained within the framework of CP?
- What are EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of the implementation of CP in their outreach community practicum?

## **METHOD**

A mixed-method descriptive design (Mertens, 2015) was used for this study, which allows the researchers to integrate and triangulate the most specific quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to obtain more precise information (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2015).

The data collection process was planned in two different phases. In the first phase of the study, a one-group pretest-posttest design (Mertens, 2015) was used. According to Mark and Gamble (2009), in this kind of design participants are evaluated on a result variable before and after the interventions. In this regard, the participants (EFL student teachers) completed a survey focused on their beliefs about CP; after that, a training program took place to help the participants understand this pedagogy. Then, participants completed the same survey to analyze if their beliefs were different than those at the onset of the study.

In the second phase of the study, the pre-service teachers implemented CP with vulnerable students during their community outreach practicum. It is important to mention that the pre-service teachers were assigned different age groups of students; in that way, children and adolescents were not mixed in the same class and the material and the lessons were planned differently. After this implementation, pre-service teachers had to write a final report of their experiences. These written accounts were analyzed through thematic content analysis to understand their experiences and perceptions of the pedagogy and the program.

### *Participants*

The participants comprised 51 EFL pre-service teachers, mainly women (80.4%), who were starting their community outreach practicum at the university. Their ages ranged

from 19 to 30 years (M 20.71; SD 1.99). Most of these pre-service teachers were studying in the fourth semester of the program (76.5%). The remaining participants were taking their sixth and eighth semesters. Less than half of the participants (45.1%) reported previous teaching experience. They mentioned they have taught English mainly in educational institutions or foundations.

Table 1  
EFL student-teachers sociodemographic profile

Variable	Value	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	10	19.6
	Female	41	80.4
Age	19 years old	12	23.5
	20 years old	18	35.3
	21 years old	10	19.6
	22 years old or older	11	21.6
Semester	Fourth	39	76.5
	Eighth	2	3.9
	Sixth	10	19.6
Experience	Yes	23	45.1
	No	28	54.9
Location	No experience	28	54.9
	Institution	13	25.5
	Private	4	7.8
	Practicum	6	11.8

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

For collecting quantitative data, the questionnaire, developed and validated by Mahmoodarabi and Khodabakhsh (2015) was used. Analyses were performed on the values of the four dimensions proposed in the instrument: (1) incorporating dialogue and learners' real life into second language instruction; (2) liberatory autonomy; (3) critical approach to EFL classroom content; and (4) decision making through negotiation. However, due to the lack of detailed information in Mahmoodarabi and Khodabakhsh's (2015) publication regarding the numerical sequence to identify the validated items, an Exploratory Factor Analysis which indicated the presence of a single dimension was used, substantiated by its own value which was greater than one. The reliability assessment of this dimension showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.770 in the pre-test and 0.898 in the post-test, along with a McDonald's  $\omega$  of 0.789 and 0.908 respectively.

Subsequently, the differences between the final moment (post-test) and the initial moment (pre-test) were generated. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used for these differences, demonstrating the lack of normality in the distribution of the data in all items, except for the average. Even though differences in averages of the pre and post-test were not far from normality, it was decided to compare them with the Wilcoxon signed-rank statistic as this test verifies whether or not there are significant differences between these two moments. In addition to reporting the measures of central tendency and the one-sided p-value, the effect size is reported with Cohen's d. The software used for statistical processing was JAMOVI 2.4.8 (The Jamovi project, 2023).

For the qualitative analysis, the EFL pre-service teachers' written reports after implementing CP in their EFL classes on their community outreach practicum were used. The reports contained three sections. The first section included a description of the course, methodology, resources, and the kind of evaluations used. The second one detailed the responsibilities and difficulties they faced during their practicum. Finally, the third section were conclusions and recommendations.

The reports were written in Spanish (the participants' native language) since as suggested by Cortazzi et al. (2011), the native language facilitates free expression of ideas without language restrictions as well as a wide range of vocabulary. Before analyzing these written accounts, they were translated into English and reviewed by the participants to ensure that they expressed what was stated in their original reports. The translated documents were analyzed through thematic content analysis following this sequence: open, axial, and selective coding (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza-Torres, 2023). Themes were determined to obtain a complete view of the data and discover patterns in the participants' experiences and perceptions (Aronson, 1994).

To guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality rights of these future teachers, their real names were not included in the analysis; as an alternative, pseudonyms were used (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

## **FINDINGS**

### *Quantitative Results*

The analysis focused on comparing the responses obtained in a pre-test and a post-test of EFL student-teachers' beliefs about CP, using the Wilcoxon test to obtain a one-sided p-value. This nonparametric test was used to demonstrate that the post-test scores were statistically higher than the pre-test scores. The one-sided test is specifically aimed at determining whether there is a significant increase in the post-test scores compared to the pre-test, assessing the specific direction of this change and not simply whether there are changes overall.

As can be seen in Table 2, items 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 15, and 16 presented statistically significant differences between the pre-test and the post-test, evidenced by p-values less than 0.05. These differences, represented by the deltas between the post-test and pre-test scores, indicate significant changes in the beliefs of EFL student-teachers between the two temporal measurements. In contrast, items 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 17 exhibited no statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test as evidenced by p-values greater than 0.05. These results suggest a consistency in the beliefs of EFL student-teachers about these specific aspects between both time measurements with no significant changes in their responses.

In general, it is observed that the means and medians of the post-test tend to exceed those of the pre-test. This tendency is manifested in an average increase in the general variable, where the pre-test mean was 4.99, the median was 5, and a standard deviation of 0.45 while in the post-test the mean increased to 5.19, the median to 5.29, and the standard deviation to 0.63. These values suggest a shift toward more positive or aligned beliefs with the statements presented in the post-test compared to the pre-test, supporting an overall change toward more affirmative beliefs among EFL student-

teachers. Furthermore, the p-value of the overall mean is 0.012, reinforcing the significance of this observed difference between the temporal measurements.

Table 2  
Comparison of EFL student-teachers beliefs about CP (Pre-test and Post-test)

	Pre-test			Post-test			Delta		P	
	M	Med.	SD	M	Med.	SD	M	Med.SD		
1. EFL teachers' main role is to teach students not only to learn more independently but also to think and act more independently.	4,82	5	0,84	5,25	6	1,06	0,43	1	1,17	0.001
2. A major role of EFL teachers is to help students develop their own understanding of who they are and their place in the world.	4,55	4	1,12	5,41	6	0,88	0,86	1	1,30	<.001
3. EFL teachers should decide on their teaching strategies and techniques based on learners' specific features (e.g., age, gender, needs, and interests).	5,51	6	0,70	5,57	6	0,81	0,06	0	1,01	0.272
4. EFL teachers must share their authority and responsibilities with students in the classroom.	4,33	4	1,26	4,53	5	1,17	0,20	0	1,31	0.167
5. Ideal English Language Teaching (ELT) instruction books are those which are designed locally and in the light of learners' real lives.	4,65	5	1,00	5,08	5	0,91	0,43	0	1,12	0.006
6. EFL teachers should participate in class dialogues and discussions as a learner among learners.	4,84	5	1,12	5,22	5	1,01	0,37	0	1,43	0.019
7. Teachers are not the only source of knowledge in EFL classroom.	5,33	6	1,11	5,25	6	1,16	-0,08	0	1,40	0.764
8. EFL teachers should encourage and help learners create learning opportunities for themselves.	5,57	6	0,73	5,51	6	0,88	-0,06	0	0,93	0.698
9. EFL teachers should use dialogue and open communication as one of the main activities in the EFL classroom for sharing ideas.	5,53	6	0,67	5,61	6	0,90	0,08	0	1,09	0.170
10. The content of EFL classrooms and books that are commonly taught are often unrelated to learners' real-life concerns and problems.	5,06	5	0,99	5,08	5	1,16	0,02	0	1,26	0.407
11. Genuine and real-life dialogue should form the context of teaching and learning in EFL classrooms.	5,63	6	0,49	5,65	6	0,87	0,02	0	0,79	0.274
12. EFL teachers should have a critical approach to cultural and socio-political aspects of the content of ELT course books.	5,1	5	0,90	5,25	5	0,80	0,16	0	0,88	0.123
13. A major role of EFL teachers is to improve learners' critical thinking skills.	5,37	6	0,82	5,35	6	1,02	-0,02	0	1,24	0.467
14. Environmental, social, and political issues are suitable topics to focus on in EFL classroom.	4,49	4	1,01	4,67	5	1,05	0,18	0	1,18	0.101
15. One of the main goals of second language education is to help students understand the dominant social norms and beliefs in society and the educational system.	4,22	4	1,21	4,65	5	1,09	0,43	0	1,30	0.009
16. One of the EFL teachers' main roles is to make students aware of inequalities in society.	4,65	5	1,20	4,98	5	1,05	0,33	0	1,48	0.035
17. Learners should be involved in the process of selecting topics that are focused on in EFL classrooms, for example in speaking, writing, and reading activities.	5,27	6	1,00	5,14	5	1,34	-0,14	0	1,51	0.620
Mean	4,99	5	0,45	5,19	5,29	0,63	0,19	0,2	0,59	0,012

Note. Delta is the product of subtracting post-test minus pre-test.

In Figure 1, the difference between the post-test lower whisker position and the pre-test mean indicates that, on average, the post-test scores are higher than the pre-test mean. This supports what was observed previously, where the post-test means and medians tended to be higher than the pre-test, suggesting an overall shift toward more affirmative beliefs in the post-test. Furthermore, the p-value of the overall mean, which is 0.012, reinforces the significance of this difference between the temporal measurements, indicating that this observed change is not random and has statistical significance.

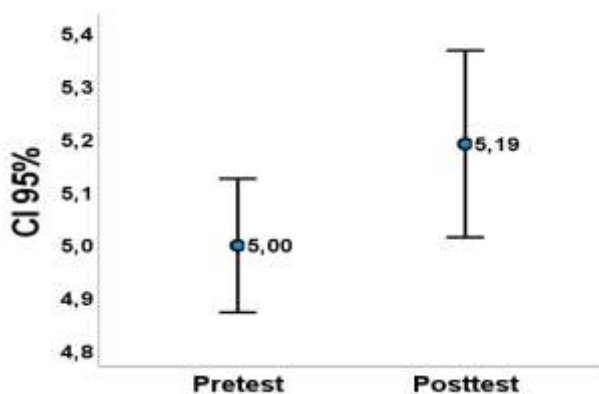


Figure 1  
Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of EFL student-teachers: Changes in beliefs about CP

In addition, when considering the effect size, Cohen's measure (d) was used, which showed a value of -0.327. This result points to a small to moderate effect size in the change between measurements, suggesting that although there is a statistically significant difference between measurements, its magnitude is relatively modest and limited.

#### *Qualitative results*

The pre-service teachers' final reports were analyzed individually by the four researchers. Then a discussion took place to achieve agreement so that inter-rater reliability was attained as suggested by Mackey and Gass (2005). As aforementioned, for ethical purposes and to assure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to each student teacher.

Four themes emerged from the analysis: the first includes the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the implementation of CP in their practicum. The second one deals with different realities that vulnerable children and adolescents bring to the classroom and how they shape the EFL pre-service teachers' practices. The third one refers to the use of technology (Flip videos and tablets) and how it could enhance or hinder students' language learning. Finally, the last one considers EFL pre-service teachers' experiences.



*Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of CP*

The EFL future teachers perceive enjoyment in using this methodology, as it gives them a new perspective of what being a teacher means. They also recognize that teachers need to be aware of their students' different realities and contexts to help these young learners embrace them and become the agents of change society needs. Some of the comments of the student-teachers are in the following excerpts:

Amparo: I am happy I was able to teach a little of what I currently know through CP. My two students told me that, in part, I was able to change their lives a little and taught them academic and personal lessons.

Karla: The implementation of CP generated a great impact on the lives of several children in difficult situations, as they had the opportunity to develop their learning skills in a second language [English]. In this way, the possibility for children to seek social change in today's society increased. It is gratifying to be able to meet children who are eager to learn every day and in the end to see the productive changes they achieved.

Cayetano: CP allowed students to learn and use the English language to talk about their own realities and contexts. It also opened doors for them to connect with other individuals using the English language. This approach presented a new vision by focusing on the students while enhancing the importance of each student's life and creating bonds of friendship among all the members of the class.

Naomi: CP was very helpful in recognizing and appreciating the cultural realities that each child faces in life. Many of those realities were extremely painful or sad, and I had to be very strong in order to listen to them and advise them about their situations.

*Vulnerable Children and Adolescents' Realities and Their Influence on EFL Pre-service Teachers' Future Practices*

The pre-service teachers stated that students bring a variety of ideas, thoughts, realities, and contexts to the classroom. These aspects can influence the EFL teachers' future practices because they challenge them to go beyond the subject content and see students as whole human beings who are in turn affected by their world outside the classroom. Student-teachers need to learn how to navigate these situations and make of their classes safe spaces for their students. In this regard, participants mentioned:

Julia: A lot of things are said about the contents to be learned, but not about the reality of the learning process. I think that knowing students' reality and encouraging them to be aware of it is important to have a better society.

Valeria: One of the factors that caught my attention was the variety of abilities that children can develop while learning since working in an environment where there were children with different abilities allowed me to change my perspective in the teaching of the English language environment.

Cayetano: The students I worked with came from vulnerable situations. This experience allowed them to leave aside their problems and enjoy learning English and

using it to talk about their identity. It also helped me to think about ways in which I can become a more human teacher.

Lucas: Working with children in vulnerable situations made this experience even more meaningful because we understood that our students have different realities, often not similar to the reality we live.

Naomi: It is extremely important to value and recognize that each human being is a world, with whom we must be very empathetic and reasonable when teaching any subject.

Paloma: This experience provided me with a new vision of the world by highlighting the importance of each student's life and creating bonds of friendship among all the members of the class.

#### *The Influence of Technology on Students' Language Learning*

The pre-service teachers acknowledge the usefulness of technology for EFL classes, as it promotes interactive and participatory learning environments and engages students in class activities. However, some failures were also recognized.

Carlos: Video recording was complicated for the children because they were of such a young age and they did not speak English. The tablets were mostly used for recording the videos of each unit, showing slideshows, playing educational games, and looking up words in a dictionary. However, they were a very motivating tool.

Valeria: In order to encourage students to develop their critical thinking through the teaching of English, the Flip application was used to record their oral production at the end of each unit. This activity allowed them to talk about themselves as well as their environment.

Gina: The use of different materials such as post-its, sheets, colored pencils, markers, and of course tablets with the Flip app allowed us to provide a quick response to the needs of the students to carry out the different tasks to develop not only the students' language but also their awareness of their own reality.

Alexandra: Technology was a key tool in the learning process as it helped to increase students' motivation to continue attending classes.

Camilo: I can conclude that the use of CP, together with the support of technology, built a superb teaching-learning environment where students could make use of new ways to grasp the English language and have fun in the process.

Georgina: Technology helped to catch students' attention, especially when dealing with young students.

Sofia: Technology and the use of the Flip application helped us to attract students' attention, thus motivating them to study English.

### *EFL Pre-service Teachers' Experiences*

The participants mentioned some important aspects of how working with CP changed their viewpoint on teaching; these experiences can contribute to shaping their professional identity, which can have a strong impact on their future professional practice.

Amparo: It is the first time I have had this kind of experience and the truth is that I have had a very nice and satisfying experience, as well as many lessons learned from this whole process. Undoubtedly, I have learned a lot from many people such as the tutors who taught me something new in each training class such as CP and the use of the Flip application. Also, my colleagues have taught me to work as a team, but at the same time to be independent. Without a doubt, the students I worked with also taught me lessons to help me improve my future professional practices. I also realized that we as teachers play a very important role in our students' lives.

Carlos: As a personal experience I can say that students have a more receptive attitude to CP classes compared to regular classes.

Julia: Working with children with different abilities and implementing CP was a rewarding experience. I enjoyed this experience as I learned about a more humanized approach that will undoubtedly be useful in my future professional practices.

Violeta: I met and interacted with students with different abilities, but with the same desire to learn and work as the rest of the children. I believe that I was able to learn from them, just as they were able to learn from me. I learned many things from these children and this is something that inspires me and motivates me to prepare and strive to give the best of me.

Marco: Knowing the different situations and needs of each student has allowed me to rethink my work as a teacher. Beyond being an instructor, I am a teacher of human beings, people with values, and above all people who feel free to improve and learn all the time.

Genesis: It helped me to identify myself more with the EFL teaching program. It also helped me recognize the teacher's reality and the problems I will face. These kinds of experiences are necessary to have an idea of what it is like to be a teacher and to be closer to reality, taking on challenges and solving problems.

Victoria: It was a great experience, as it allowed me to face the reality of what it really means to be a teacher, and also the problems that come with this profession.

Lucas: CP helped us to understand a goal as teachers. A classroom is a place where students learn and where they feel safe, taking a break from what weighs them down.

### **DISCUSSION**

The results presented in this study indicate an important change in the EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs about the implementation of CP for English teaching.

The quantitative analysis shows differences before and after the training program of the pre-service teachers' indicating a more positive and aligned shift in the beliefs of the participants about CP which is also corroborated in their final reports in which they realized people live different experiences concerning their position in society, and this, of course, affects their learning process. This change of beliefs can be related to the influence of CP training on fostering awareness of diverse circumstances that are faced by every individual outside the educational context, as pointed out by Freire (2005). Learners' individual realities affect their lives at all levels as mentioned by Hankivsky (2014), Mahmoodarabi and Khodabakhsh (2015), and Nguyen and Zeichner (2019).

It could be said that EFL future teachers may have gained consciousness of what Giroux (1999) stated regarding CP application in the classroom setting, the learning process is connected to students' own stories, voices, and identities. As it was noticed in their reports, EFL pre-service teachers mentioned they changed their perspective of teaching after implementing CP in their English classes. Now they conceive the English class as the place where students learn not only the language but also different strategies to face life and become agents of change. Additionally, these experiences could be framed within what Scorza et al. (2013) called thinking, practical, and attitudinal skills which may result in wider educational and collaborative environments that impact students' ways of learning.

According to Allen et al. (2015), Swalwell (2013), and Zeichner (2011), teachers' responsibility is to plan their lessons considering the different contexts students come from and try to minimize these differences by addressing and promoting social justice in their classes. Hereof, when EFL future teachers are aware of the power they have they could make better decisions that might impact their students positively. Furthermore, García and Kleyn (2016) detailed that promoting social justice among students is possible by implementing a great deal of dialogue in the class.

Particularly in the second or foreign language teaching field, CP could be considered an important approach to lessen social injustice as it gives the opportunity to encourage inclusion, recognize and accept diversity, and give everyone the same chances to learn and improve their living conditions. Comparing these research findings to what was mentioned by Glynn et al. (2014) and Nieto and Bode (2018), it is imperative to promote CP in order to foster a sense of valuing and accepting different realities in the EFL classroom.

It can be said that the results of this study encompass what Cochran-Smith et al. (2009), Porto and Byram (2015), and Sierra-Piedrahita (2016) mentioned about being educators within any education system, and not just language instructors in the class. Training future teachers to implement CP in their classrooms could empower students to face a world that is constantly evolving and in need of social justice advocates.

## **CONCLUSION**

CP can be conceived as an approach that facilitates school work based on recognizing and valuing students' diversity, realities, and context, and treating them "with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity" (Nieto & Bode, 2018, p.46) with the purpose of

fostering in them the inner desire to become agents of social change. In this sense, the English class is a place where the possibility of humanizing education is thinkable and achievable.

After the training experience, it is possible to say that EFL pre-service teachers have more positive beliefs about CP and how it should be effectively implemented in the English classroom. They are aware that CP can be conceived as an important base for the development of the educational transformation needed to form future citizens responsible for a fairer society. Likewise, through the training process to implement CP to teach English, it was possible to foster new critical reflective ideas not only in pre-service teachers but also in their students. Furthermore, the participants of this study and their students developed their language skills and achieved meaningful learning in a humanistic way.

The training program contributed to strengthening EFL pre-service teachers critical awareness and equipped them with some important tools to analyze and question the power structures and inequalities present in the educational context. It could also be mentioned that the participants acquired solid skills in the design and planning of teaching activities and materials that foster critical thinking, reflection, and active student participation in the English classroom.

The implementation of CP in the EFL pre-service teachers' community outreach practicum promoted an inclusive environment that values diversity, providing equitable learning opportunities for the vulnerable students who took part of the program, regardless of their individual backgrounds and characteristics. It was also noticed that pre-service teachers were successful in fostering active student participation, encouraging students to question, analyze, and reflect on the content of their classes, thus promoting deeper engagement with the learning process.

In this regard, the results of this study show that CP training can be consolidated as a different way in which future teachers can manage their English classes where the possibility of creating a different space for knowledge is evidently needed. It is also imperative to mention that shifting the traditional approach to teaching to a more critical one can be a crucial factor in trying to change the world into a more humanized society which can potentiate socio-emotional skills.

### **LIMITATIONS**

It is necessary to acknowledge a limitation of this study which is related with the fact that only EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs of CP before and after the training program and their experiences after the implementation of this approach in their English classes were considered. A study in which students' academic performance and their perceptions and experiences after being taught through CP would provide a deeper understanding of the scope of CP for personal and academic support.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT**

Several areas could be suggested to be the subject of future research to improve the area of English language teaching through CP. It would be advisable to research the impact

of CP on the motivation, self-esteem, and academic achievement of English language learners. It would also be important to explore effective strategies that incorporate principles of CP for training English language teachers and evaluate their impact on their teaching practices. Another necessary area to be studied could be how CP can empower English language learners by fostering their active participation, critical thinking, and commitment to social justice and how this pedagogy can address the needs of EFL learners from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic contexts. These topics may offer opportunities to understand CP in the context of teaching EFL and to improve educational practices.

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