



# ÚNICA

INSTITUCIÓN UNIVERSITARIA  
COLOMBO AMERICANA

Working Papers

---

## **Journey Throgh Colombian Co-Teaching Experiences**

Por los docentes:

**Francisco Pérez y Alejandro Pérez**

Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana – ÚNICA

Programa de Licenciatura en Bilingüismo con Énfasis en Español e Inglés.  
Reg. SNIES: 106242

Bogotá D.C. – Colombia, 2022

Vigilada MinEducación

Working Paper – Resultado de Investigación Grupo de Investigación Innovation on Bilingual Education -  
INNOBED Categoría B Colciencias

Dirección de Investigaciones

Calle 19 No. 2ª-49, Piso 3, Centro Colombo Americano

Teléfono: 2811777 Ext. 1291

[dirinvestigacioneslic@unica.edu.co](mailto:dirinvestigacioneslic@unica.edu.co)

[www.unica.edu.co](http://www.unica.edu.co)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26817/paper.18>



## Abstract

Co-teaching is defined as a collaborative method of instruction (Murawski & Hughes, 2009), which implies co-teaching partnerships where educators make an effort in terms of joint instructional decisions and share responsibility as well as accountability for student learning (Shumway et al., 2011). This working paper is intended to illustrate the state-of-the-art concerning the implementation of co-teaching in EFL settings in Colombia over the last two decades. This manuscript is based on documentary research, in which primary source data were collected from data bases, university repositories, journals, and official reports. As an outcome, we expect to unveil co-teaching strategies, co-teachers' roles as well as collaborative teaching benefits in EFL in general, and foreign language student-teachers' education, in particular.

## Key words:

Co-teaching strategies, co-teaching roles, collaborative teaching benefits, assessment in EFL, language student teachers' education.

## Journey through Colombian Co-Teaching Experiences

We undertake a journey with the aim of tracking down co-teaching experiences in our country over the last two decades. We set sail with the experience of Centro Colombo Americano which has been implementing collaborative teaching since 2000 approximately, as a way to give training and support to what the institution calls *junior teachers*. The purpose of this practice is to include senior teachers in the training, assessment and mentoring of junior teachers, who apply to the teaching positions offered by the institution. In the process, teachers who are assigned classes in the different programs must go through three different stages of team teaching; each one requires them to alternate roles with the fellow teacher trainer. First, they receive a training designed to help them be aware of the pedagogic principles and administrative duties they are expected to perform in the given program, namely: description of the syllabus, introduction to the textbooks, presentation of the Communicative and Task-based approaches, training on learning strategies, and formative assessment.

Second, trainees meet their fellow senior teachers, who will guide them to put into practice the aforementioned concepts for one month. During the first third of class cycle, senior teachers instruct students, and junior teachers observe. In the second third of the course, junior teachers begin to take over the class, first with learning focused-strategies and later, with more and more activities



during the sessions. Here, teachers are actually co-teaching in every lesson, and they are performing the *One-Teach, One-Assist* type of practice. During the final third of the team teaching work, trainees are in charge of the whole instruction, while trainers help with the observation of class, lesson plan, and assessment process on students. It is worth noticing that trainers and trainees keep an egalitarian relationship, in spite of the fact that they deploy different levels of expertise.

The final stage of this team teaching at Colombo develops under the principles of collegiality, according to which, co-teachers share criteria and beliefs about education in order to plan the class tasks as well as activities, and agree upon criteria of evaluation for students. In fact, it leads to even planned collegiate assessment sessions where both teachers are present and actively giving feedback to students. Actually, the whole set of functions both teachers have to carry out are lesson planning, giving feedback, using checklists, revising exams, writing reports, assessing in general, and finally, communicating when facing difficult situations (Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá, 2009).

It is interesting to notice that in the Colombian context, in the area of ELT, Colombo has gone ahead the exploration of team teaching as a strategy to train new teachers as well as a way to promote collegial collaboration among members of the teaching area. The roles that the two teachers perform in the training process are those of mentor and trainee. The former contributes to the team-teaching experience with their sharing knowledge of the program at the institution, while the latter gradually takes over the class instruction, which makes part of their own training. To guarantee a reliable assessment for *junior teachers*, Colombo has devised both, a series of instructional brochures that explain the characteristics of the team teaching that novice teachers are to experience, and a set of observation checklists that make expected teaching skills explicit (Centro Colombo Americano, 2020). This particular precedent can give us insights about co-teaching endeavors in the Colombian context for non-formal education. Nonetheless, this experience has not been openly documented in consistent research and remains an institutional pedagogical practice to train junior teachers, and allow senior teachers to boost their professional development by coaching their colleagues-to-be with updated strategies.

Following the co-teaching trail in Colombia, we come across the fact that first official attempts from the government to foster co-teaching experiences in our country 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 and Volunteers Colombia, was launched. As reported by MEN (2016), between the period 2009-2011, Volunteers Colombia hired 63 Native English speakers to provide students with cultural background and communicative experiences, with the aim of creating an immersion environment whilst the Colombian head-teachers were in charge of leading the classes and supporting the learning process.

As MEN (2016) informs us, there were several experiences worth being mentioned within the development of the said project such as the one that took place in the IED de Santa Ana, and at the Instituto Ecológico de Barbacoas on the island of Barú, Bolivar, in the year 2009; the one



led in 2010 at Institución Educativa y Centro Comunitario Pies Descalzos in Barranquilla, Atlántico, where seven volunteers were teaching English in different levels. Also in that year, in tandem with Secretaría de Educación del Quindío, as part of the initiative Quindío Bilingüe, four volunteers were in charge of supporting the English teaching and learning process at Colegio Policarpa Salavarrieta in Quimbaya, and at Colegio Santa María Goretti in Montenegro.

It comes to our attention as professors and researchers, that according to MEN (2016), the very first experience at a university setting came about between 2010 and 2011 at Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar, where four volunteers were teaching English to undergraduate students from different majors. Throughout this period, Secretaría de Educación de Manizales, by means of the scheme called *Manizales Bilingüe*, intended to progressively implement the approach *Modelo Colegio Nacional Bilingüe* in twelve public schools from this city. To achieve this end, a volunteer was assigned to each school with the purpose of doing collaborative teaching sessions with English teachers, from kinder garden to fifth grade.

According to this official account given by MEN (2016), in the year 2013, *Volunteers Colombia* and the Ministry of Education entered into an agreement to strengthen the teaching of English as a foreign language in Escuelas Normales Superiores. To achieve their aim, they worked together with 6 foreign language assistants or volunteers in three Normales Superiores from Eje Cafetero. The following year, the *volunteachers* from the Bilingual Program joined the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje to reinforce the learning of English in 63 SENA training centers in different regions of the country, specifically in hotel management, tourist guides, logistics management, and software programming programs.

One intermediate station in this exploration leads to a stop in the qualitative study carried out by Duque in 2010, as part of her undergraduate thesis. It pursues the characterization and impact of teacher roles as they are involved in a team teaching experience with pre-school pupils in an EFL context in Medellín. In the context of her pre-service research, she does her practicum in San Ignacio School supporting and analyzing interactions and roles that senior teachers as well as pre-service teachers take while instructing aesthetics classes (Duque, 2010). The purpose of Duque's observation is to identify issues that arise between the head teacher, who is an expert in the field of aesthetics, and the assistant teacher, who is an expert in English.

The instruments that the author decided to implement are class observations and two interviews; one with the project coordinator, and the other with the head teacher of aesthetics class.

Observations included recordings of the sessions and field notes that give in detail insights on the roles assumed by teachers. Such observations throw light upon students' reactions to the team teaching experience, too. Those instruments prove valuable in the characterization of the effect that interdisciplinary synapsis have in language learning with two teachers working synchronously.



It is interesting to notice that Duque cited within her theoretical motivations what Johnston and Madejski (1990) stated as cornerstone of a successful team teaching practice: both teachers must be involved in the pedagogical experience, and they should be able to balance their participation in the lessons be it with the whole group of students, or with a split-class (Duque, 2010). The author is emphatic in the pursuit of having both teachers active in the session at the same time while taking different roles, namely *One-teach, One-assist* type.

Some findings in this experience describe possible tensions that may arise in the team teaching practice due to varied causes, namely, main teacher recognizes their lack of knowledge in English, so that fact may cause discomfort with their own professional development. Academic community, including administrators and parents might deter from supporting this kind of team teaching projects since they consider they do not favor students learning, instead they could perceive that the lack of knowledge, either in language or class content by part of the team teachers harm students learning process (Duque, 2010). Students might find contradictions between what they hear from their main teachers, and what they hear from the English language teachers. In this sense the lack of knowledge in language is the main shortcoming that main teachers face and lead to frustration of the experience.

Duque's observation noted that two possible scenarios arise from the team teaching implementation. First, interpersonal aspects may undermine or strengthen roles between teachers due to the fact that they need to be involved in many stages of planning, interacting with students and providing feedback, so character compatibility between the participant teachers is vital. Second, language command from main teacher represents a hazard to overcome in order to facilitate communication and instruction. The team teaching experience is successful as long as the head teacher, in this case, improves instruction-giving and pronunciation. To solve this issue, the author suggests that both teachers keep working together in class, but not using English at all times (Duque, 2010).

One important observation Duque provides us with is that team teaching, which requires a lot of attention and commitment from teachers and students alike, could cause exhaustion in the long term, so it is advisable not to resort to this modality all the time (Duque, 2010). All in all, based on the interview results and class observations, this study concludes that team teaching application in the context of pre-school has positive outcomes. Teacher administrators showed a positive balance in the impressions that teachers shared after the experience. This approach also shows its benefits through the observation of students' behaviors when having two teachers in the sessions, this is to say students' experiences provide team teaching with a silver lining despite the effort and difficulties it implies in the planning (2010).

Treading the co-teaching road, we encounter the experience of Gutierrez and Patiño (2012) who took part as action-researchers in a collaborative teaching project to instruct English to a group of 12 adult learners with special needs (Down syndrome, bipolarity, moderated mental retardation, and different levels of verbal disabilities, and language difficulties) at a Special Education Institute in the city of Pereira. The researchers were assisted by three teachers who were professionals in special education from several



Colombian universities, and whose most important duty was to provide psychological, pedagogical, and professional aid in the classroom, when requested.

To keep the track of this experience, the researchers used observations, interviews to students and special-content teachers, and researchers' journals. Considering that students' level was very low, the method used to instruct learners was *code-switching*, which was adopted throughout a two-month period (10 sessions, altogether). Gutierrez and Patiño (2012) give us a vivid account of their research by describing the circumstances that revolved around their collaborative teaching. According to them, owing to co-teaching, they were able to provide a nearly customized treatment and teaching to learners; they could monitor and assess all students within the class, and quite importantly, they could attend every student's individual processes. They make it clear that due to their lack of experience, upon leading classes with special needs population, having two teachers in the same classroom might not be enough when behavioral issues arise; that is when the assistance of special education teachers comes into play.

These English student-teacher researchers adamantly suggest that to achieve positive co-teaching results, both educators plan their classes together spotting individual needs, that while one of them be teaching, the other one be monitoring progress, supporting, and taking care of students' needs, and equally, that they evaluate and make an analysis of learners' progress, once the class is over. In this fashion, the co-teaching techniques they recommend the most for these kinds of classes are *One-Teach, One-Observe*, and *Team Teaching*.

At the end of their account, they remark some of the benefits that co-teaching might bring into foreign language classes for both, teaching and learning. In terms of didactics, they highlight that they were learning from each other, they were sharing responsibilities, and they were performing as supportive colleagues. As for learning, they remark the idea that students who are regularly left out, can be provided further support. Moreover, students tend to participate more, display enthusiasm, self-trust and higher concentration levels on account of the great rapport both teachers can build up collaboratively (Gutierrez & Patiño, 2012).

Scattered throughout the national geography, we also find initiatives to explore co-teaching and team teaching, which leads us to Bogota in 2014. It is here that the *Secretaría de Educación of Bogotá* (SED) releases a series of documents pursuing academic excellence which gather eight areas of knowledge, among which particular attention is given to foreign language learning and second language acquisition. The district administration sets this endeavor to allow students at public schools to experience better and more meaningful learning in areas that contribute their knowing and being (Secretaría de Educación del Distrito, 2015).

The interesting pedagogical approach carried out in the institutions was called *Centros de Interés*, where skills such as curiosity, exploration, and research willingness led students to learn about life by means of the foreign language. Interestingly, both instruction and assessment took place with an innovative style



in our country, which is the co-teaching practice by part of a main teacher, and an international assistant teacher.

In this program, we identify a beacon that pinpoints a serious attempt to undertake team teaching from a Colombian and an international co-teacher. The class includes a main teacher from the same school teaming up with a native speaker of the language, who assists the teacher in the provision of meaningful and immersive experiences with language and culture. Something to note here is that the main teacher played the role of mentor to the assistant teacher, who was not necessarily a language educator (Secretaría de Educación del Distrito, 2015). Nonetheless, this apparently uneven relation between team teachers did not alter the importance of their contributions to the assessment moments.

Since students' progress was determined by a Task-based approach, both, teacher and assistant had a say about students' outcomes in the different evaluation moments. The program also intends to explore a more formative approach to assessment in which self-evaluation, co-evaluation, and peer-evaluation become common practices for learners (Secretaría de Educación del Distrito, Bogotá, October 2015).

Our next stop is the experience of Pueyo and Ramírez (2020) who tell us about a qualitative and descriptive study they conducted with 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders to implement co-teaching in a public school in the Colombian capital. To obtain findings, they used surveys, interviews, observation checklist, teachers', and students' journals. We deemed this experience insightful because students opened their hearts and expressed how meaningful it had been for them to see two teachers planning, explaining, and instructing together.

Thanks to this experience, we learned about the great variety of instruments that we can use while living similar collaborative experiences in our profession as teachers. From their adventure, we understand that if we want to succeed at co-teaching, we need to encourage students by constantly giving them feedback as well as support.

In our last stop at the national level co-teaching experiences pathway, we find the case study done by Lopez in the year 2020. In her role as a student-teacher, she attempted to lead several lessons with pre-school teachers. To determine whether her proposal had been effective and pertinent for that early childhood education environment, she made use of a diagnostic test, surveys, artifacts, and interviews. By virtue of the insights collected, she discovered that it was important to implement several modalities of co-teaching which were necessary to meet the needs of the classes, particularly, *One- Teach-One Assist* and *co-acting* in the material design stage of the pedagogical intervention. Lopez' research teaches us that it is possible to get self-contained teachers with a low English level and with lack of EFL teaching experience, to lead successful tandem sessions with English pre-service teachers.

The pre-school teachers manifested they had progressively developed a positive attitude towards collaborative teaching and remarked supportive relations together with willingness to act as a team as key elements in the implementation period.



## Methodology

This qualitative documentary study was guided by the research question: What does the existent literature reveal about co-teaching strategies, co-teaching roles, and co-teaching benefits in EFL Colombian settings over the last two decades, and the documents selection criteria were mainly that manuscripts should be written between the years 2009 and 2021; they should be studies about co-teaching experiences, and particularly, they should be situated in the Colombian EFL setting.

After having formulated the inquiring question and chosen the pertinent criteria, we followed the stages suggested by Blaxter et al.; (2010) in order to manage the amount of data found. That is to say, we considered *coding, annotating, labelling, selection, and summary* our guiding procedures. For the coding phase, we identified fragments or portions of texts within the articles that revolved around three main aspects which were explicit in the research question. Thus, we used *blue* for fragments which dealt with the description of co-teaching experiences, *green* for the portions that related to co-teachers' roles, and *fuchsia* for fragments which were connected to potential benefits of co-teaching. Afterwards, to fulfil the *annotating* stage, we wrote comments in front of each fragment that we thought we would need to start the next stages and precisely, to retreat at the moment of writing the analysis. Paying attention to the color coding and the partial annotations we had made, we proceeded to label each of the fragments we had spotted. When we felt there was a description of the steps followed in a co-teaching experience, we named it *co-teaching strategy*, when we identified duties and responsibilities teachers had to take on in the process, we called it *co-teachers' roles*, and when we found aspects related to advantages or positive remarks researchers made, we labelled them as *co-teaching benefits*.

To comply with the *selection* phase, we chose the quotes from the text that matched the labels that we had previously assigned. Subsequently, we cross-examined that the labels and the quotes selected coincided. To bring the process into completion, once the original data were coded and labeled, we fulfilled the *summary* phase by writing synthetic paragraphs for each of the quotes. This was useful for us in interpreting and discussing data.

## Findings and Discussion

After having explored the studies about co-teaching in Colombia over the last two decades, we have come to understand that the few research experiences we have found give us some insights as to the way co-teaching should be done, what the co-teachers are expected to do, and the advantages of using this teaching strategy.



## Co-teaching Strategies

Concerning the co-teaching strategies that have been used or suggested, it is evident that there is not a consensus over the actual way co-teaching should be conducted, and it seems that the choice of the strategy depends on the needs researchers find in the setting. In the case of Centro Colombo Americano (2008), two main strategies are used: *One-Teach, One-Observe and then, One-Teach, One-Assist*, implying that co-teachers switch roles. We would like to pinpoint that the experience from Centro Colombo Americano provides us with useful insights about how to do co-teaching under an environment full of collegiality. Regrettably, the information obtained about this case derives from secondary source (causal talk with a program coordinator, and the testimony of a teacher). It is suggested that this institution release open access manuscripts for the academic community, for whom this is an appealing topic.

The official experiences retold by MEN (2016) lead us to think that only one technique was used *One-Teach, One-Assist*. According to that, one of the co-teachers (the volunteer or language Assistant) supports the Colombian head teacher, particularly in culturally-based and communicative activities in the foreign language class:

The ETF's (English Teaching Fellows) are to take part in initiatives linked to the Program such as immersion fields or similar experiences in other institutions scheduled by the Ministry. ETF's are to devote non-teaching hours to the design and execution of complimentary of activities intended to foster communicative practices with students. (Own translation, 2016, p. 26)

As this is an official report, it contains numerous examples of pedagogical experiences carried out within what the government considers to be co-teaching. Yet, if we read the report carefully, there is no detailed information which sheds light onto the way co-teaching might have been implemented in the classrooms. As we will explain later, this manuscript is enriching in terms of the expectations and roles participants are supposed to fulfil.

From Duque's experience, we find out that her observation corresponded to *One-Teach, One-Assist* strategies. However, the planning stage was not done collaboratively as co-teaching implies, but done entirely by the content-class teacher:

Before describing the situation in the classroom, it is worth mentioning that the Aesthetics teacher oversees planning the team-teaching sessions, she is the main teacher in *transición B*; this plan includes the class for physical expression sessions, too. The plan is then submitted every Monday morning to guarantee a mutual understanding of what teachers and students will do throughout the week in *transición* courses. This is subject of evaluation by part of, pre-school academic coordinator, as well as six other instructors in *transición*. (Own translation, Duque, 2010, p.11)

The quotes below display that the language teacher leads the class while the content teacher assists her in the process. Sometimes, that assistance is increasingly more



active, based on the degree of confidence that co-teacher has and her willingness to lead some parts of the session:

in relation to English,

Then I have observed the situation in the classrooms, namely in one of the groups I have observed what I would describe as the situation that coordination in bilingual teaching expected to happen in all classrooms. The main teacher, regardless of not being an expert in foreign language, participates in English during the class time, her level of competence is intermediate, and she manages to make herself clear with accurate pronunciation. However, it's still noticeable that the main teacher shows less participation in class than the English language teacher, not being this a generalized behavior. At times, when the main teacher wants to give more complex instructions, she makes mistakes in English. It is in these moments when the English language teacher intervenes to correct, as long as she can. (Own translation, 2010, p. 12)

Conversely, in the other group, the assistant teacher is more willing to speak in English, but her pronunciation often changes the whole meaning of the instruction she wants to give. She is a very energetic person who shows willingness to participate in class, nonetheless, she lacks some linguistic competences which forces her to ask questions to the English language teacher about some phrases and expressions. She also uses paper cards for writing expressions as a mnemonic strategy for giving instructions in English. As well as in the first group, the English language teacher corrects the main teacher, but eventually, this doesn't always happen. (Own translation, 2010, p. 12)

According to what Gutierrez and Patiño (2012) tell us in their study, the co-teaching experience they did revolved around two strategies *One-Teach*, *One-Observe*, and *Team Teaching*:

We worked together in the same class, complementing our teaching process, and having different responsibilities addressed to help participants in their language learning. One teacher reviewed recycled vocabulary and the other one introduced the new vocabulary. We relate this issue to some of the collaborative teaching approaches such as: "One Teach, One Observe", and "Team Teaching" stated by Friend & Cook (2007) and also by Villa, et al.; (2004). (p. 65)

Exactly as happened in Centro Colombo Americano's case (2009), this pedagogical implementation suggests that the *One-Teach*, *One-Observe* stage is fundamental when two teachers try to instruct as a team in the co-teaching phase. We want to highlight that the level of expertise teaching English the two co-teachers possess, as well as the horizontal relationships they have and build up are relevant in the co-teaching process. In Gutierrez and Patiño's experience (2012), both educators are language pre-service teachers from the same university, and in Centro Colombo Americano's case (2009) English trainee teachers.



As part of the National Bilingual Program, Secretaría de Educación de Bogotá (2015) gives us some considerations in the pursuit of co-teaching practices in foreign language teaching settings in the Colombian capital. We can observe that similarly to Duque's case, the one in charge of planning the lessons is the main teacher (English head teacher), and the foreign language mentor should assist that head teacher in the development of the class, for instance, in raising an immersion environment. From our perspectives as language educators and researchers, we deem it convenient that to reach a whole co-teaching cycle, both educators must be involved in the stages of planning, implementing, and assessing:

The immersion room work suggests the co-teaching concept, according to which a head English teacher, preferably from the target school, leads the planning and execution activities in a coordinated fashion with the foreign fellow, who is not necessarily a teacher. Within this model, the English teacher takes on the role of mentor to the foreign assistant while the two of them contribute to the development of curricula with students. (SED, 2015 p.24)

Lopez' experience privileges the *One-Teach, One-Assist* and the Teaming or Team Teaching stages to complete a co-teaching process. We can see that in the first phase (*One-Teach, One-Assist*), the one who teaches is the language student-teacher, and the one who assists is the transition grade instructor. In contrast, in the second stage (Team teaching), both of them try to hold a horizontal relationship as they plan, teach, and lead the class, interchanging passive or active roles, depending on the situation.

This study stands out from the rest in that it includes the co-planning moment as fundamental stance in the co-teaching process:

Nevertheless, founded on the factors aforementioned, this research study will be focused only on two approaches as a process for teachers to foster children's basic oral skills in these transition grades. "*One-teach, one-assist*" approach, in which one of the teachers gives the instructions while the other supports the students individually; and, "*Teaming*" approach, in which the student-teacher and the head teachers do the planning, give the instructions, and conduct the class together, assuming active and/or passive roles. (Lopez, 2020, p. 23)

Lopez reminds us about the importance of providing asset to the co-teaching process from the field of expertise each teacher has. One of them may contribute with their foreign language knowledge, and the other one with their content-based knowledge. This demands an ongoing synchronicity, synergy, agreements, and mutual feedback:

On the one hand, the "*One-Teach, One-Assist*" approach, in which one teacher has more expertise in a specified area so he/she takes more responsibility for conducting the class than the other educator. In this case, the self-contained teacher provides assistance to children about the specific issues of the lesson while the pre-service teacher guides most of the instructions. The planning step in this approach is not focused on the teacher's turns to instruct, however,



synchronicity is necessary between educators, they need to have an assertive communication during the class to decide the tasks in which the self-contained teacher will support the pre-service teacher. The two experts should agree on how to intervene in class, also, the linguistic competences when teaching English as a foreign language have to be linked with the knowledge about kids' development and the interest's teachers have. (2020, p.23)

On the other hand, the “*Teaming or team teaching*” approach, is the complex one. Planning in this approach needs good communication, assertiveness, and agreements between teachers. There is no turn-taking, it seems to be freely instructed, nonetheless, both teachers complement each other. The pre-service teacher and the self-contained teacher do the planning together, give the instructions, and conduct the class at the same time, one explains, the other one exemplifies or leads the activities. If it is necessary, teachers support each other in the development of the class depending on the contents and activities previously planned. (2020, pp.23-24)

Pueyo and Ramirez (2020) remark that in a co-teaching session it is important first, to have *One-Teach*, *One-Assist* and then, a *station teaching* stage. They coincide with Lopez (2020) in terms of the importance occupied by co-planning and co-designing material before the class. It is relevant to mention that the co-teachers engaged in this process were an experienced English teacher, and a foreign language assistant. Both attempted to fulfil their duties, following guidelines from a textbook:

The following lines will give an account of a sample lesson plan executed by the teachers while co-teaching classes with the target population. In this sense, it is relevant to mention that although lessons were co-designed by the two teachers, there was a handbook where it was stated some of the content to guide the lessons. The following graph shows the phases of a lesson. (2020, p.22)

Adding variety to the previous studies, Pueyo and Ramirez (2020) introduce a stage that had not been considered in the other experiences: *station teaching*, which in our views, is an insightful strategy because it allows the two co-teachers to instruct simultaneously, under the same conditions, with similar exposure to students, and the same allocated time and richness of material which might result in better learning experiences:

Although the lesson evidenced the dynamics of the class and the interactions among the different actors in the class, it is relevant to mention that the most significant aspect was how both teachers took a role whilst developing lessons. Classes varied in the model of co teaching. Some of the classes implemented *One-teach*, *One-Assist* or *station teaching*. (2020. p.23)

## Co-teachers ‘Roles



As we noted before, concerning the roles co-teachers perform in the process, Centro Colombo Americano (2009) implements an interesting dynamic between teachers that make this particular precedent a pioneer in team teaching, regardless of the scarce documentation. The institution cherishes the mentorship that senior teachers can provide to trainees. However, what is interesting here is the role swapping they undergo in the one-month training term. At the beginning, trainees are observers of the teaching sessions, but do not take part in any section of the instruction. Gradually, not only does their role become more active, but also, they take over the class while the mentor becomes an observer who gives feedback on teaching practices. Throughout this process both teachers become assistants, observers, and main teachers, alternatively.

In turn, MEN (2016), states that the roles of both co-teachers are clearly defined. The head teachers, on the one hand, lead and support the co-teaching process, check, and develop the lesson plans in partnership with the foreign language assistants, and advise them on lesson planning, classroom management, and teaching techniques. The language assistants, on the other hand, are expected to apply the co-teaching strategies led by the head teacher, prepare, and plan their classes appropriately, and assist the co-teachers in students' assessment:

**Co-teacher**

Leads and supports the co-teaching model. Reviews the lesson plans and develops them with the FNE. Fosters the contextualization of the FNE in the classroom. Assist the FNE in planning, classroom management and teaching techniques. Informs the FNE promptly about possible schedule changes and class cancellations.

**FNE**

Helps main teachers and students to strengthen English language competence. Applies the co-teaching model led by the main teacher. Plans and prepares the class according to students' needs. Assist the main teacher in assessment and evaluation. (Own translation, 2016, p.24)

Reading between the lines, we can infer that despite this is reported as a co-teaching experience, it seems that the role of the head teacher prevails over the one of the assistants because the latter are supposed to lead just fixed moments from the class and not alternating or parallel instances, as co-teaching suggests.

Keeping the line of official accounts, Secretaría de Educación de Bogotá (2015) explicitly instructs education community to comply with the following teacher roles, according to its interpretation of co teaching: the head English language teacher plays the role of mentor to the international assistant teacher, and this one is expected to support the learning process. These roles directly lead the tandem to act like *One-Teach, One-Assist*. There is a subtle clarification in the document which states that although the two teachers may not share the same knowledge and pedagogic experience, they do have to work hand-in-hand to develop curriculum and help with students' command of the language:

The immersion room work suggests the co-teaching concept, according to which a head English teacher, preferably from the target school, leads the planning and execution activities in a coordinated fashion with the foreign fellow, who is not necessarily a teacher. Within this model, the English teacher takes on the role of mentor to the foreign assistant while the two of them contribute to the development of curricula with students. (SED, 2015 p.24)

It can be perceived that in MEN and SED's versions, horizontality in terms of roles is not promoted because the role that head teachers occupy in the process tends to be more prominent than the one foreign language assistants or volunteers perform.

With respect to teachers' roles, Duque (2010) tells us that English language teachers are considered companions to the content-class teachers with the purpose of supporting the latter with all the language elements that configure a transversal nature of immersion:

This project is then, apart from being formulated by the school, implemented by the pre-school teachers, through the teaching of content areas such as physical education, informatics and aesthetics (Team Teaching), using English as a means of communication; aside from the classes in this language, normally instructed at the institution, the team teaching lessons as such are imparted by two educators: by the English teacher and by the head teacher, the former possesses the knowledge of English; the latter is knowledgeable of the aesthetic dimension of preschoolers. (Own translation, 2010, p. 60)

On this account, there are roles defined from the dynamic didactic dimensions. The dynamic refers to the teachers' interactions with each other, the didactic dimension has to do with the management of strategies to foster learning of aesthetics and English language among students. The stages proposed for this dynamic are planning, implementation, and evaluation. Keeping in mind the dynamic and didactic dimensions of the class, Duque (2010) suggests the establishment of three important teachers' roles: active, passive, and cooperative. These role descriptions were coined by the researcher in the observation checklists to categorize the interactions teachers showed in classes:

In the observation cards, keywords such as active role, passive role and cooperation emerged to set apart roles seen during the class. These keywords were crucial to map the moment where they appeared. It was not necessary to mention these aspects in the interviews since the questions made these roles explicit.

Key words emerged in the observation grids to separate in each of the observations the moment references to active, passive, cooperative roles were being made, which in turn were vital to organize the part in which the reference for each role was made. It was not necessary to the same in the interviews since through questions it was possible to know what topic was being addressed. (Own translation, Duque, 2010, p. 53)



Regarding the cooperative nature of the team teaching roles, it is suggested by Duque (2010) that while one teacher contribute with the Aesthetic knowledge, the other one contribute with English language expertise. They both have received training as teachers, though. It is interesting to know how the head teacher (content-based educator) finds it difficult to manage her two main roles: teaching content, and learning the foreign language:

The main teacher has the role of educator of the aesthetic content to children, but also the role of English language learner. All things considered, the teacher has an active role in teaching aesthetics, hence she evaluates and monitors the activity, and she reckons suggestions given by the English language teacher among other. Withal, sometimes she shows a passive attitude towards the same aspects, monitoring class, reckoning English language teacher's suggestions, keeping the motivation during the session and preparing material for the class. (Own translation, 2010, pp. 60-61)

Concerning the role of language learner, the main teacher demonstrates active attitudes when asking questions about vocabulary and expressions in English. She also applies the corrections given by the English language teacher properly. Contrarily, she disregards the English language teacher's suggestions given in English or when she switches language to Spanish to give instruction. (2010, p.61)

In Gutierrez and Patiño's experience, the two student-teachers adopted a triple role: teaching and observing in the first stage, and team-teaching, in the second phase. It is not explicit in this study, if they swapped roles in the first stage that is to say, the teacher observing was teaching afterwards, and the one teaching was observing, then. It is worth mentioning that as it is depicted below, team teaching implies that the two teachers have an active role taking alternating turns while instructing the whole group of students:

We worked together in the same class, complementing our teaching process, and having different responsibilities addressed to help participants in their language learning. One teacher reviewed recycled vocabulary and the other one introduced the new vocabulary. We relate this issue to some of the collaborative teaching approaches such as: "*One-Teach, One-Observe*", and "*Team Teaching*" stated by Friend & Cook (2007) and also by Villa, et al. (2004). (Gutierrez & Patiño, 2012, p.65)

Based on Lopez's experience, we can see that in co-teaching there should be collaboration at all levels; collaboration cannot be only connected to planning the class jointly but reviewing concepts, designing material, leading activities, and providing feedback as a tandem: "co-teaching demanded from teachers a lesson planning, a guide's creation, a reviewing of topics, rewarding expressions, and useful teaching commands, a script creation, a video planning, practicing, and editing, constant and



mutual feedback, and a basic English language training focused on teacher's needs and future interventions" ( 2020. p. 58).

Lopez (2020) reminds us that to reach collaborative roles in a co-teaching process, it is important to consider some crucial aspects. In words of the author: "The co-teaching implementation had to do with time, attitudes, experiences, abilities, communication, professionalism, and so forth" (p. 48).

This tells us that a real co-teaching experience does not depend solely upon didactic, cognitive, and communicational skills the co-teachers have, but also on socio-emotional factors that might ignite the process as the level of empathy and rapport that is built up by and between the educators.

Exactly as the report from MEN (2016) and the manuscript from SED (2015) suggest, Pueyo and Ramirez (2020) speak about two roles in the co-teaching process: the one performed by the foreign language assistant (supporting), and the one led by the head teacher (teaching). It is worth mentioning that in projects like this one, there is the notion that for co-teaching to be effective, the "teacher" who does the assistance should be a native of the foreign language, and that it is not necessary that they hold a formal language teaching degree but go through a fast-track course or training, once they are in the country. Furthermore, these language assistants, irrespective of the setting, are called to mostly carry out culturally-based and communicational activities:

Regarding the teachers, two of them were direct participants. One of them was a foreigner and the other one was a Colombian teacher. The foreigner was a young native English Speaker Volunteer who was not a language teacher but was trained before coming to work in the school with the purpose to get acquainted with the educational policies and the methodology to teach in class [...]

The volunteer supports the English teaching, generates cultural environments, promotes pedagogical dynamics that help students to use and communicate orally in English. (Pueyo & Ramirez, 2020, pp. 16-17)

Generally, the second co-teacher is the Colombian educator who has broad experience teaching but may or may not have the expected English level. This teacher is expected to support the assistant in terms of didactics and pedagogy, particularly while the foreign assistant or volunteer plans lessons, designs material, or takes over some sections of the class:

Another participant was an English teacher from the regular school who helps the volunteer with all the methodological and pedagogical components inside the classroom. This English teacher had more than ten years of experience in the school, and as a result, the teacher did some



mentoring with the trainee with the purpose of giving feedback on the lesson given. After this, both of them designed action plans trying to improve student's performance, also, she led reflections sessions on a daily basis. (Pueyo & Ramirez, 2020, p.17)

## Potential Benefits of Co-teaching

Concerning the benefits that co-teaching might bring along in the learning-teaching process, some of the experiences we retreated here are not as enriching as we had expected, and others provide more precise information in this respect.

MEN (2016) reports plainly, that according to the foreign language assistants there was an improvement in the English level of students thanks to the co-teaching process they carried out together with the head teachers. Thus, MEN informs that:

“91.7% of FNE participants consider that students improved their English language proficiency by means of co-teaching carried out with the local teacher” (2016. p.28, own translation). Nonetheless, there is no evidence, reason, or detailed explanation that supports this claim.

Considering beneficial traits of team-teaching at Centro Colombo Americano, training has been successful in the provision of strategies and practices that trainee teachers need to use in the classes of the institution. Since team teaching has been an institutional policy for many years, we can infer that it contributes to the purpose of training and sharing teaching experiences between mentors and trainees in a more horizontal fashion. However, there is no way to evaluate the impact on students since this strategy aims at teaching development rather than the impact on learners. Needles to mention that the precedent at Centro Colombo Americano requires more documentation and socialization with the academic community.

The benefits of the official manuscript *Orientaciones del Área Integradora de Humanidades Lengua Extranjera y Segunda Lengua para la Implementación de la Jornada Completa* (Secretaría de Educación, 2015) are difficult to track based on the presentation of this government document because it enumerates methodological proposals, but it does not provide evidence beyond the ambitions of the Program of Bilingualism in Bogotá.

The benefit of team teaching in Duque's account (2010) is seen in only one of the disciplines of the practice. Findings demonstrate that students fulfilled the objectives of the content class with the added benefit of the incorporation of English in its instruction and development. Students reportedly become used to taking session with some input in the foreign language. In contrast, language learning objectives are harder to track given the nature of the experience in which the English language teacher's role was only to assist the content teacher in the pursuit of the content class objectives. This is even more patent with students who are already bilingual and benefited more from the experience:



From the first viewpoint, we can see how this work modality has changed the aesthetic class for children, since formerly it used to be taught in Spanish, and now is offered as a subject in English, situation which kids have progressively gotten used to.

Within the observed groups there are two bilingual students, who have achieved a successful learning of the aesthetic dimension in this modality. It can be observed in the other kids, that learning has been effective as well, however, in some of them it has not been quite so. Yet, the causes for this, aimed at different situations which do not have to do with the bilingual experience in class. (2010, p.68,own translation)

Team teaching has shown that some students succeed in terms of content learning, surprisingly, not because the foreign language teacher provides students with communication tools, or clear sequence of instructions, but because the language teacher contributed with dynamic and engaging activities that facilitated class environment and learners' performance. From this finding, we can infer that team teaching achieved the goal of benefiting students' learning, but not for the reason attempted, which was full use of the language in the aesthetics class. In contrast, the benefits have to do with pedagogical practices that the assistant teacher brought in to motivate students' participation:

On the contrary, regarding the aesthetic dimension learning, coherence is observed in terms of what kids are expected to learn and what they really learn, in the case of kids with weaknesses in the area, causes are accounted for by different reason which do not have to do with the use of English in class. In relation to this, the strategy is said to be successful, in the sense that the target subject us being taught adequately; which is explained by the diverse didactic strategies used by the English teacher, as the use of images, music, body language and gestures; the role of the preschool teacher is not clear enough regarding these strategies. (Duque, 2010, p.73,own translation)

Based on Gutierrez and Patiño's account, implementing co-teaching in special education context brings as main benefits the individualization as well as customization of teaching and assessment processes. This is eased up by the fact that while one of the educators does the actual teaching, the other one assists them supervising, attending individual needs or queries:

In addition to the language learning difficulties commonly faced along the learning process, participants in this study struggled with cognitive impairments affecting their learning abilities. Under such circumstances, collaborative teaching turned into the best choice for us, as teachers, when designing the English lessons, since it allowed having a semi-personalized treatment and teaching, monitoring, assessing, and assisting every individual process, and therefore, facilitating the teaching-learning experience. However, it is important to highlight that in some circumstances not even the two teachers were enough when behavioral issues arose. (2012, p.p. 63-64)



Another benefit stressed out by Gutierrez and Patiño (2012) has to do with the didactic implications of working with someone else along the process. They remind us about the importance of supporting one another prior to the class, while the class is on, and even after class finishes:

Taking into account what teaching work demands, it is convenient to mention the important role that collaborative teaching played during the implementation of this project. In fact, the use of collaborative work as a teaching strategy pending the English lessons facilitated the teachers' work, before, during and after the English lessons. (Gutierrez & Patiño, 2012, p.p. 63-64)

Aside from the benefits expressed above, Gutierrez and Patiño (2012) highlight the significant value that co-teaching brings in terms of professional growth areas, since not only do teachers improve pedagogically speaking, but also in terms of autonomy and interpersonal skills:

Our teaching experiences were complemented from each other in the following ways: Before class, conducting the classes through planning the lessons, designing material and activities, and identifying learners' needs. During class, when presenting English vocabulary, monitoring students' activities and progress, supporting and solving students' needs. And after the lessons, evaluating and analyzing participants' progress. In other words, being two teachers working together affected positively the teaching process as we could learn from each other, share responsibilities and ideas, and be supportive colleagues. (p.p. 64-65)

In agreement with Gutierrez and Patiño (2012), Lopez (2020) points out the interpersonal benefits of co-teaching for co-educators. Those benefits range from the building of close and highly supported relationships, rapport, reciprocal assistance, shared values, acknowledgement of each other's work and professionalism, and mostly, the establishment of a horizontal social partnership:

Going beyond the model itself, collaboration inside the classroom promotes cooperation, confidence, better rapport, support, and understanding among the participants. (p. 39)

The set of challenges when planning, addressing classes, and creating the material during the pandemic prompted not only the supportive relationship in terms of the complexities of the day-to-day teaching practice but also raised the insights related to self-care, gratitude, engagement, self-reflection, and problem-solving. Reciprocal acknowledgment led the teaching practice guided by co-teaching to another level of camaraderie. (p. 56)

Building close relationships in this process meant the integration of the supporting role of co-teaching in creating rapport, mutual assistance, and understanding by establishing a horizontal social partnership. (p. 66)



Constructive dialogues were always prompted for teachers not to feel attacked or being aware of what the other could say about their performance. (p. 69)

During the complete co-teaching process: planning, addressing the classes, giving feedback or personal assistance to children, and creating didactic material were some of the aspects to highlight to build a supportive relationship in professional and methodological terms. (p. 74)

The horizontality that we have mentioned above also includes the linguistic, communicative, methodological, pedagogical, and experiential benefits that both participants might reach while co-teaching. This means that every co-teacher should improve in their own pace, and under their own interests and strengths:

Subsequently, co-teaching provided supportive relationships among teaching provided supportive relationships among educators during the pedagogical intervention in which knowledge, experience, and collaboration and collaboration encouraged and allowed self-contained teachers to contained teachers to enhance their language proficiency level as well as their EFL teaching practice. (López, 2020. p. 7)

While implementing co-teaching in the EFL teaching practice from self-contained teachers, there was a concern for improving the professional skills about English and from the pre-service teacher for boosting the knowledge about very young learners; in the process, some ICT updating was necessary, and it was achieved as teamwork. (p. 70)

To conclude, the coteaching implementation allowed an environment of collaborative work which led to an improvement in how teachers developed their English classes, despite the time-consuming aspect, and the extra work and the extra work it implied in the different cycles of the extra work it implied in the different cycles of the pedagogical interventions. (p. 75)

When implemented consistently, co-teaching may convey advantages in the learning process of young learners. Those benefits include physical skills, social, communicational competences development, and increase in knowledge about target language:

It was a type of joint responsibility in which an original material aimed material aimed assistance for teachers to face the English teaching in a proper way and raised children's skills while learning English as a Foreign Language and developing physical abilities, social competences, communicative intentions, and knowledge. (López, 2020. p. 40)



## Conclusions

Conception of co-teaching has varied taxonomy in the Colombian context. In some of the experiences we revisited, it is common to find an appreciation of co-teaching divided into two phases: *One-Teach, One-Observe* and then, *One-Teach, One-Assist*. It is worth clarifying that not in all cases there was a sense of equity and roles interchange. In some cases, the teacher who observes is conceived as the one who lacks experience and expertise, an educator who somehow displays a not so high command of the foreign language; conversely, the one who instructs, possesses a high level of L2, has accrued wide expertise of teaching, and has a native or native like command of the foreign language.

At an official level, particularly, it seems that the preferred co-teaching technique has been *One-Teach, One-Assist*, where the one who is expected to teach is the Colombian teacher, who in principle, may or may not have a foreign language teaching degree, may not have a great command of the target language, and may have a vast experience in terms of pedagogy and didactics in other subjects. The one who assists is usually a foreign language assistant or volunteer who comes over our country to serve as a linguistic model (native pronunciation), cultural ambassador (first-hand cultural experiences), and a communicative activities promoter. Gradually, the role of the assistant starts to prevail over the one performed by the local teacher and even, the *One-Teach, One-Assist* strategy becomes simply *One-Teach, One-Observe*, meaning that the foreign language assistant takes over the control of class.

The lack of equity and roles interchange cause disparity manifested in the role assignment, contrary to an ideal horizontality which co-teaching entails. That horizontality should embrace that both participants are fully active in all the process: planning, execution, and assessment, that they leave the comfort zone and exchange roles constantly, additionally, that they build up a sense of collegiality in terms personal relations and professional.

As for the benefits component, some of the relates of co-teaching we dealt with give an account of achievement from the teaching perspective, emphasizing aspects such as easiness to instruct, ongoing support from peer, interchange of specialized knowledge, and classroom environment diversification. Pitifully, only two experiences mention some benefits of co-teaching for learners, for instance, the fact that they can adjust more easily to the dynamics of the class having two teachers instructing them. Besides, students who have a previous knowledge in the foreign language, can consolidate that background thanks to the exposure to the two teachers' input. We can also conclude that co-teaching may be beneficial, when implemented in a CLIL content environment, this is due to the fact that students develop multifaceted abilities which include social, cognitive, communicative and even physical skills.



## References

- Blaxter, L; Christina, H; & Malcolm, T. (2010). *How to Research Second Edition*. Open University Press. Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá. (June 2009). Vacation Course, Training Session. [Documento de Word].
- Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá. (2020). Vacation Course, Training Session [Diapositiva de PowerPoint].
- Duque, D. (2010). *Los roles de las maestras participantes de las clases de team teaching (enseñanza conjunta) en un proyecto de formación bilingüe* [Undergraduate thesis, Corporación Universitaria Lasallista].  
[http://repository.lasallista.edu.co/dspace/bitstream/10567/648/1/Roles\\_maestras\\_team\\_teaching.pdf](http://repository.lasallista.edu.co/dspace/bitstream/10567/648/1/Roles_maestras_team_teaching.pdf)
- Lopez, M. (2020). *Co-teaching: Preschool Teachers' Insights About The EFL Co-acting Practice* [Undergraduate thesis, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional].  
<http://repository.pedagogica.edu.co/bitstream/handle/20.500.12209/12663/Co-teaching%2c%20preschool%20teachers%27%20insights.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- MEN. (2016). Modelo para la Implementación de un Programa de Formadores Nativos Extranjeros.  
<http://aprende.colombiaaprende.edu.co/sites/default/files/naspublic/colombiabilingue/2%20Modelo%20de%20implementaci%C3%B3n%20-%20Resumen%20en%20espa%C3%B1ol.pdf>
- Murawski, W; & Hughes, C. (2009). Response to Intervention, Collaboration, and Co-Teaching: A Logical Combination for Successful Systemic Change. *Preventing School Failure*, 53(4):267-277.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247524581\\_Response\\_to\\_Intervention\\_Collaboration\\_and\\_Co-Teaching\\_A\\_Logical\\_Combination\\_for\\_Successful\\_Systemic\\_Change](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247524581_Response_to_Intervention_Collaboration_and_Co-Teaching_A_Logical_Combination_for_Successful_Systemic_Change)
- Puello, I and Ramírez, S. (2020). *Co-teaching as an alternative to promote English language learning in a public school in Bogotá* [Master 's degree study. Universidad de La Sabana].  
<https://intellectum.unisabana.edu.co/bitstream/handle/10818/45176/Tesis%20Ibeth%20Puello-Sandra%20Ram%C3%ADrez.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Secretaria de Educación del Distrito, Bogotá. (2015). Orientaciones del Área Integradora de Humanidades-Lengua Extranjera y Segunda Lengua.  
<https://repositorios.educacionbogota.edu.co/bitstream/handle/001/979/SegundaLengua-Web.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Shumway, L; Gallo, G; Dickson, S; & Gibbs, J. (2011). *CO-TEACHING HANDBOOK: Utah Guidelines*. Utah State Office of Education.  
<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1583541712/davisk12utus/vkbe748ncmi5m2qlvhby/USBECo-TeachingHandbook.pdf>





# ÚNICA

INSTITUCIÓN UNIVERSITARIA  
COLOMBO AMERICANA

Calle 19 N. 2A - 49, edificio Centro Colombo Americano, tercer piso

Tel.: (+57-1) 281 1777 -  (+57) 314 419 6996

E-mail: [info@unica.edu.co](mailto:info@unica.edu.co)

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

[www.unica.edu.co](http://www.unica.edu.co)