

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH AN ENGLISH TEACHERS STUDY
GROUP

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*To my son, Thomas
My parents, Nohemy and Silvio.
And sisters, Elizabeth and Yuliana*

*To God
To my parents, Jorge and Alba
My husband, Cristian*

ABSTRACT

The present study “Professional Development Through an English Teachers Study Group” is a descriptive and interpretative case study where four (4) English teachers were involved in a professional development process. The study was held in an English language institute in Pereira, Colombia. The aim of the study was to obtain information of the processes undertaken by the teacher-participants while they strove to improve their job related knowledge through a study group. Nevertheless, the space provided through the study group served to laid and treat diverse teaching concerns by being exposed to different means of knowledge that helped ameliorate these issues. The data were gathered through the use of a survey, reflective logs, audio transcriptions of the sessions, and a final interview. The collected data was analyzed in order to obtain the findings that gave answer to the following research questions: *What is the role of reflection presented in an English teachers study group?* - *What teaching necessities are presented and addressed in an English Teachers Study Group?* - *What can an English Teachers Study Group inform us about its participant’s collaborative learning work?*

Key words: Teachers study group, professional development, reflective teaching, collaborative learning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	3
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	5
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	6
Professional Development.....	6
Reflective Teaching.....	7
Study Groups.....	9
Collaborative Learning.....	13
METHODOLOGY.....	15
Type of study.....	15
Setting and context.....	17
Participants.....	17
Methods for Data Collection.....	18
Survey.....	18
Reflective logs.....	18
Interview.....	19
Audio recordings and audio transcriptions.....	19
Field notes.....	19
Data Analysis.....	20
Researcher's Role.....	23

Instructional design.....	23
FINDINGS.....	27
The role of reflection as the mean to ameliorate the teacher-participant's practices.....	27
Teachers' views about their own need to improve.....	30
Teachers' concerns and interests for self improvement.....	32
Teachers' concerns about students' motivation and improvement.....	33
Applicability of the knowledge provided in the study group.....	36
Using of theory, strategies and techniques to solve teaching issues.....	39
Collaborative learning as means of professional growth.....	43
Learning through discussion offered by teacher-participants in English teachers study group.....	44
Willingness and commitment reflected by the English teachers study group's members.....	46
Fulfillment of the purposes of the study group.....	48
In-session reflection triggered by discussion.....	50
Teachers' professional development.....	52
CONCLUSIONS.....	56
IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	61
Pedagogical implications.....	61
Research implications.....	63
LIMITATIONS.....	64
REFERENCES.....	65
APPENDIXES.....	69
Appendix 1 Consent form.....	69

Appendix 2 Instruments.....70

Appendix 2.1 Exploratory Survey.....70

Appendix 2.2 Reflective Log #1.....71

Appendix 2.3 Reflective Log #2.....72

Appendix 2.4 Two-column format.....73

Appendix 3 Final Interview.....74

Appendix 4 Data Display of categories and subcategories.....76

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative research project was developed at a Foreign Language Institution (FLI) located in Pereira, Colombia with the participation of four (4) active participants and two (2) passive participant observers. This study was aimed at improving the job related knowledge of English language teachers by participating in a professional development process such as a study group. The English Teachers Study Group (ETSG) represented the endeavors led by the English teachers to derive positive changes in their teaching practices through a model that permitted pose different teaching concerns to treat at their pace and level. Furthermore, our eagerness for being better teachers, led us to explore in this research project the response of some English teachers as foreign language in English Teacher Study Group (ETSG) participation. We wanted to investigate new teaching insights shared during the English Teacher Study Group's sessions for the benefit of the language teachers.

In addition, with this study we intended to analyze the processes that some English teachers went through when they were involved in collaborative learning work and the self-reflection processes undertaken by the participants when they were exposed to different means of professional development tools. As Birchak et al (1998, 1) affirm, teachers study groups are conceived as a form of professional development in which teachers reflect and dialogue about their concerns. Thus, during this process different professional development processes were evidenced, reflecting the main theme of a study group which is learn through the interaction held by different people's standpoints.

Finally, in order to understand the processes evidenced during the study group's meetings, these procedures were supported with theoretical readings concerning teaching professional development and collaborative learning, appropriate to analyze, interpret or theorize according to the phenomena encountered in the sessions. Thus, the following

chapters of this study presents the interpretations we gave to situations manifested during the ETSG's process by presenting the study's findings.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The concept of study groups is a form of professional development that has not been considered by many English Teachers to attain professional growth in Colombia (Sierra-Piedrahita, 2007). In addition, many teachers may find helpful the interaction with other colleagues to think critically on their professional practice. Hence, a study group promotes teachers' reflection making their practice a reflective process that leads to curriculum improvement and individuals, as well as professional development (Birchak, 1998).

English teachers need to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses throughout all their practices. Nevertheless, there is the need to implement new and effective tools in the classroom to promote meaningful learning; but how can teachers tell about the effectiveness of such activities? In order for teachers to be able to bring answers to questions such as this, they need to engage themselves into self reflective thinking. Xu (2009) affirms that "experience coupled with reflection can be a powerful impetus for teacher's professional development" (p.35). Thus, implementing teachers' study groups linked to self reflective teaching can be beneficial for both the professional growth and students' learning.

The need to implement a study group as a form of professional growth in language education in Colombia goes together with the conception that professional development is more than the enrollment in extra studies offered by outside entities (Sierra-Piedrahita, 2007). A study Group is a more in-practice form of professional development which involves constant learning from its participants and their colleagues (Fullan, 2001).

From our closer look, professional growth for English teachers in Colombia is partly focused on the National Bilingual Program (PNB) proposed by the Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN). This program has been created with the intention to update the use of new technologies in the classrooms, to be more competitive as professionals and to ameliorate

communicative competences in English as a foreign language in every education sector of our country. This educative application has become a concern not only for public institutions but also for private ones which desire to renew their teaching methodologies and strategies. In other words, the crucial concern from Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN) in this case, is that all teachers English as a foreign language grow professionally.

Therefore, we considered that implementing a study group linked with self reflective teaching could offer important insights on what a teacher could gain while being involved in this type of professional development programmes, since there has been little documentation about what Colombian teachers could gain by participating in this professional development form (Sierra-Piedrahita, 2007). The absence of study groups as a form of professional development in private institutions is a reality. *“First of all this type of form for professional development is not commonly use in schools in Colombia. Secondly, that although there have been universities and institutions that have welcomed this type of professional development form, these studies have not been properly documented so this information is not easily accessible”* (Personal communication with Sierra-Piedrahita, November 2009).

Hence, as a study group is a space where all its members involved can grow professionally. Hence, we wanted to conduct one study group to understand the processes and the gains of both professional and personal growth of its participants. In addition, we wanted to report what we encountered in the study group in order to provide another source of research on the field of teachers’ study groups.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the role of reflection presented in an English teachers study group?
- What teaching necessities are presented and addressed in an English Teachers Study Group?
- What can an English Teachers Study Group inform us about its participant's collaborative learning work?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Currently professional development plays an important role in the improvement of language education in our country. Professional development is the initiative to improve professionally through extra studies during employment by a person that voluntarily enrolls in training programmes such as conferences, workshops, seminars, or participation of post-graduate courses (Reitz, 2004). However, professional development is more than ‘training’ to develop different skills or to learn new methodologies into pedagogy. One of these methodologies considers technology to foster inquiry-based learning that helps teachers continue growing with their professional skills, understandings, and interests (Grant, 1996).

Therefore, professional development activities and training may cover personal development, continuing education, in-service education, study groups, and mentoring (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory). As Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) argue, effective professional development practice is about promoting available activities where teachers can have continuous feedback, support and resources so that teachers are involved in professional learning. Moreover, professional development is also about constant learning from themselves and from their colleagues (Fullan, 2001).

From other researchers’ perspectives, teacher professional development provides teachers the amelioration of their practices and gives them opportunities to explore new roles and develop new instructional techniques. Teacher Professional Development is defined as “ a process of improving both the teacher’s academic standing as well as – acquisition of greater competence and efficiency in discharging her/his professional obligations in and outside the classroom” (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008, p.70).

Teachers can grow professionally without being involved in a specific training programme. Teachers constantly can monitor their process of teaching while they cope with different situations in a classroom. However, in order for teachers to successfully monitor their teaching process, this monitoring should be accompanied with reflection. According to Xu (2009), “experience coupled with reflection can be a powerful impetus for teacher’s professional development” (p. 35). Therefore, teachers need to notice the importance of implementing reflective inquiry practices in classrooms as a mechanism for improving the learning and teaching of English through the use of continual reflection.

Another relevant aspect dealing with professional development is reflective teaching that can be defined as an approach in which teachers make a pause in their practice to think and reflect critically on their performance for interiorizing and improving the quality of their teaching experiences (Xu, 2009). Considering teacher’s professional growth, reflective teaching can provide meaningful opportunities to examine and change what a teacher offers in practices which lead to changes in methodology, assessment and instruction.

Reflective teaching is defined as “the ability of professionals to ‘think what they are doing while they are doing it’” (Schön, 1987, cited in Waters, 2005). Professionals find a challenging condition and reflect on it; it means that they reflected on the action done and on the previous knowledge found implicitly in the situation, generating in the participant new knowledge and a change in this situation (Schön, 1983: 22. in Ariza and Ramos. 2010).

Wallace (1991) provides another definition of a reflective practice model of professional development which is derived from Schön’s concept related to ‘knowing-

in-action' and 'reflection'. Wallace illustrates in this model the 'trainee's existing conceptual schemata or mental constructs' as the pre-training stage. Followed by professionals 'received knowledge' (academic knowledge), which can be contrasted with the 'experiential knowledge' (classroom practices) as professional development. These two concepts are followed by teaching practices which cyclically linked to continual reflection attains professional competence as the end product. The concept explained by Wallace as the association of 'knowing-in-action' and 'reflection' is considered in his model as 'experiential knowledge'.

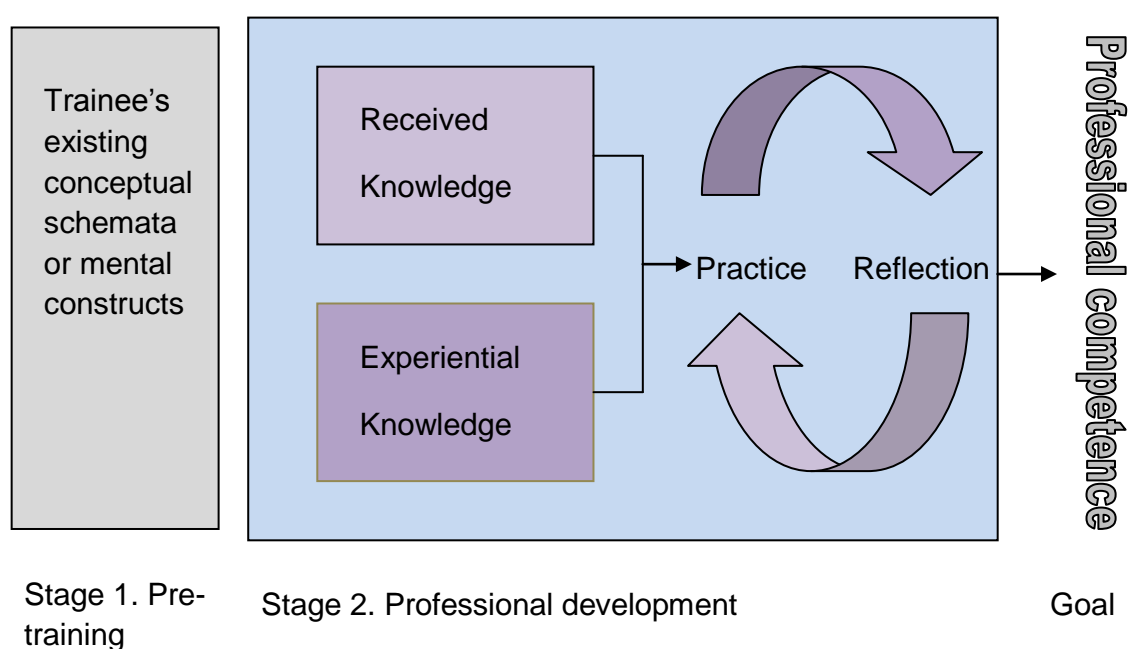


Figure 1. *Reflective practice model of professional development (Wallace, 1991)*

Yeh (2005) claims that "critical reflection is both a capacity and a process to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions of teaching and schooling practices and to imagine alternatives for the purposes of changing conditions" (p.3). She also states that critical reflection in teachers promotes and encourages rumination over others' perspectives in order to ameliorate better teaching practices in their professional scenes. According to Richards (cited by Ariza and Ramos, 2010) professional growth through

reflection teaching is a process where teachers gather information about their teaching performance inside and outside the classroom and they evaluate it.

Equally, Tice (2004) illustrates reflective teaching as cyclical process where the information collected by the teachers in their practices in order to analyze it and evaluate it, entails productive changes in their teachings, giving as a result, a new reflective and evaluative cycle as way of professional development.

Taking into account the previous mentioned concepts of professional development, our research is focused on teachers' study group to enhance professional growth through managing reflective teaching. Cayuso, Fegan, and McAlister (2004) claim that "a study group is a small number of people who meet regularly to exchange ideas and knowledge about texts and/or other resources they are reading" (p.1).

The Montclair State University Network for Educational Renewal (MSUNER) (2009), reports that Teacher Study Groups constitutes an opportunity for teachers to work with responsibility for their own professional development and learn with others concerning to their mutual interests. Moreover, as Birchak et al. (1998) affirm "the study group provided time to learn through dialogue and reflection" (p. 56), and constitutes a space where every participant is in charged of their professional development exploring new teaching perspectives and sharing their knowledge voluntarily instead of having mandatory approaches of teaching. Besides, as Murphy (1999) affirms that in a study group an expert leader is not necessary to guide a meeting, however, rotating leadership responsibility, such as arranging for materials needed, preparing the topic, and assigning participant's roles for next meeting, is certainly appropriate for the development of study group's meeting.

According to a qualitative research developed by Boggs (1996), with 28 teachers from suburban elementary school and divided in study groups of four to six teachers, found that study groups enhanced the teacher's professional development by providing an atmosphere of collaboration and experimentation; besides, she stated that study groups have provided a structure for focusing on school improvement goals as they relate to specific classroom setting and have allowed teachers some control over the kinds of professional development activities that will likely help them take changes in classroom practice; finally, Boggs (1996) found that study groups were seen as opportunities to share ideas as well as receive support from others. These results corroborate that the study group is a useful tool to teacher development of any school of the world, and supply another argument to create one study group in which the participants allow a change in their teaching career.

Given this perspective, it is interesting to note that a study group offer several resources to increase trust, encourage and it is a step to carry on the development of a great teaching. Sierra- Piedrahita (2007) developed a qualitative research with the aim to understand the knowledge, attitudes and skills that foreign language teachers educators and pre-service teachers developed when they participated in a study group. The analysis of the data of this research revealed that the facilitator of the study group developed leadership skills such as motivational and organizational skills, and attitudes such as initiative and democratic attitude that concerns to take into account the points of view of others, wishes and opinions in order to create an enjoyable environment. Hence, these findings are relevant to the topic of our research because demonstrate that a teachers' study group is more than meetings or a space to share with others, but also a continuous area certainly necessary to the teachers' professional growth.

Subsequently, Sierra-Piedrahita (2007), developed a similar study with the intention to obtain information about the development of its participants when going through a study group's process. Hence, this study reports the knowledge, skill and attitudes developed by a group of foreign language teacher educators and pre-service teachers through their participation in the study group. As a result, the analysis of the data reveals that foreign language teachers developed knowledge about theory concerning foreign language teaching such as communicative competence, language content standards, and learning strategies as topics regarding their professional field. Also, the study's participants developed knowledge about research through the readings they were to do about action research methodology as the approach the participants had chosen to be their project on performance standards.

Regarding the skills developed by the participants, the study reports that they obtained a series of research skills. Five of the teacher-participants could learn how to formulate research projects through the process of writing the study group's research project. In addition, one of the participants developed her ability to write research articles and other two developed their ability to look for research articles pertinent to their research area. Thus, these five teachers were able to activate their critical thinking which are manifested in three forms. Firstly, their questioning skill was evidenced in four of the participants questioning each other about their points of view or actions when they were given a task to write a term in a handout to be given to other teachers in the EFL programme. Secondly, the same four study group's members could put their argumentation capacity into practice by giving different arguments to support their ideas and convince their colleagues when carrying out the task. Thirdly, three teachers of the study group developed their reasoning skill through the activities carried out in the study group's process. In addition, one of these teachers manifested that these activities had

helped him not only develop his reasoning skill but other different critical thinking skills such as reading critically and connecting reading to context. Furthermore, the collaborative work those teachers engage in, represents the opportunity to learn from one another which enriched their teaching knowledge.

In regards to the teacher's attitudes, there was evidence a series of them developed by the participants during the study group's process. These attitudes include aspects such as teacher's initiative, commitment, positive attitude towards research, and risk taking. The teacher's initiative is manifested through their willingness to propose ideas and to make suggestions contributing to the development of the study group's work. Commitment in the study group is developed by three of the teachers due to the kinds of activities the group requires them to carry out in order to achieve its goals and also the possibility of exploring the topic that the group was working on. On the other hand, the researcher reports, that there existed a lack of commitment from the part of most the teachers educators and pre-service teachers, due to their lack of time and the responsibility with other activities as important as to be in the study group.

A positive attitude towards research is presented by all of the group's teachers as a common reason to join the group to learn about the field. However, the researcher highlighted that one of the teachers developed a more positive attitude towards research as she could see the benefits of being involved in it for her profession.

Risk taking is another attitude developed by the teachers which is evidenced by their impetus to ask questions to other colleagues in order to clarify, correct, or verify information they could provide some help about. The participants affirmed that in such groups people are afraid to admit they do not understand something or ask questions

about it because they might feel embarrassed. Thus, they felt secure to ask because of the group provided comfortable and relax working atmosphere.

Malagon and Cardenas (2007) claim a study group builds a sense of community among the teachers which enhance their professional development. Additionally, the study groups facilitate the development and interchange of knowledge characterized by Collaborative Learning.

Collaborative learning has multiple definitions. Researchers have defined collaborative learning as an educational approach based on talking and listening perspectives, principles and ideas with a group of learners, which permits the learners, construct their own theoretical framework in the environment in which they share knowledge. Learning is a lively process where learner relates new information with previous information; learning emerges when the learner is into a social environment. Thus, collaborative learning conceives oral abilities as a way to learn (National Institute for Science Education). Zañartu (2003) states that collaborative learning is a process where the members of a group are committed to learn something together, where they are able to decide the procedures and tasks they desire to develop in the group in order to learn. In addition, collaborative learning process entails the idea of a sharing environment, merely the aims devised in the group, can be accomplished if the work of the group is done by all of them. Communication and negotiation are vital tools in this collective learning process (Gros, 2000, cited in Zañartu, 2003). Collaborative groups are characterized by open discussion in order to solve problems, shared leadership and dynamic interaction in regards to a common object (Ziegler et al, 2010).

Malagon and Cardenas (2007) conclude that teachers involved in a study group identify the significance of working collaboratively with their colleagues so as to interchange experiences with them. They spread the view about possibilities of innovation and updating in the classroom, in order to foster collaborative work and strength their teaching skills. Hence, this approach is significant in our study because it promotes the exchange of thoughts and concepts through conversational skills that can be adapted into new prospects.

METHODOLOGY

Type of study

By determining the purposes of this study consisting on analyze the processes that stem from a professional development model such as a study group, the researchers have concluded that this study embraces a qualitative-descriptive and interpretative case study.

This study presents a qualitative case study since it is focused on descriptions, interpretations and clarifications of natural social contexts or settings (Burns, 1999). Thus, this study will be guided by the analysis of different people's thoughts, insights and concerns to provide interpretations and descriptions of these instances. Thus, Tellis (1997) argues that case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data, as it is also presented in this research through the different instruments to be used. As different authors agreed, a case study can involve "an individual unit - a child, a clique, a school or a community" (Cohen and Manion, 1991, p.124). Thus, this type of study includes a community of English teachers striving to improve their teaching related knowledge by being involved in a Teachers Study Group.

To expand the term "qualitative research" it is meant to be any type of research that produces findings not arrived by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It refers to research about person's lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions and feelings entailing an interpretative analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.11). Furthermore, qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods, as the type of facts we aim to obtain from our teacher-participants during this study. In addition, qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of

participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables.

In regards to a descriptive model, authors such as Merriam (1998) affirms that a descriptive case study “in education presents a detail account of the phenomenon under study- a historical case study that chronicles a sequence of events” (P, 38). Therefore, this study presents detail descriptions of the analyses obtain from the concerns, problems, situations that can be part of the teacher-participants practices. In addition, Lijphart (cited by Merriam, 1988. p 38) affirms that this kind of studies is not guided to create hypotheses or to formulate them. Its purpose considers describing certain cases to “move in a theoretical vacuum”. Therefore, this research intends to relate the problems and situations encountered during the professional development process with theory pertinent to analyze those situations.

In the case of an interpretive type, it is stated that the “descriptive data are used to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering” (Merriam, 1988). Thus, the intention with this study is to gather as much evidenced as possible to analyze, interpret, or theorize about the phenomenon to be studied and to provide a thorough description of it.

To conclude, this study entails a qualitative case study as it is intended to analyze the events and process that English teachers go through when they are involved in a professional development process such as a study group. In addition, a structured description of the analyses on the participant’s thoughts, insights or concerns will be reported to provide a basis of the interpretations given to the situations that professional teachers face when they participate in such professional development process. Nevertheless, these interpretations will be illustrated, supported or challenge by different theoretical standpoints in order to provide a

solid argument of the data gathered, as it is the case of a qualitative-descriptive and interpretive case study.

Setting and context

This study was developed at Language Institution located in Pereira. This Institution belongs to the bi-national centers (BNCs), non-profit cultural and educational institutions created during the Second World War in order to help improve the relations between Colombia and the United States. Nowadays, there are BNCs of different sizes in Armenia, Barranquilla, Bogota, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Manizales, and Medellin. In Pereira, this Institution has more than 40 years of service and it has been characterized by teaching English to children, teenagers and adults. It offers various services as cultural activities and counseling services for student exchange programs for young graduates, academics and professionals who wish to study in the United States. In order to decentralize its services and to expand its coverage of English instruction it has several agreements with other educational institutions. This institution has approximately four thousand of students in both adult and children programs. In Pereira the institution has a satellite branch in the neighborhood called La Circunvalar.

Participants

About the participants, they have different schedules in the Institution that vary according to the groups that the institution assigns them. This schedule could be of 3.5 to 80 hours per week in different courses in both Adult Program and Children Program. The participants for this study were three women and one man. Their average ages range from 23 to 46. One of the women is a full-time teacher in the Institution. The participants have between 2 and 9 years of teaching experience in formal and informal language teaching institutions. One participant holds a professional degree in TEFL; another holds an ESL

certification obtained in New York, he also lived there for several years; another is a Business Administrator and studied her High School in the U.S; and the last participant has taken courses as the TKT and TEFL. Hence, there are only two participants who learnt the English language abroad and currently are studying a professional degree in TEFL.

Methods for data collection

In our study a qualitative method was implemented to collect the data which are suited for the type of study group we applied. Hence, we used methods such as: surveys, reflective logs, interviews, audio recordings, and field notes.

Survey: According to Freeman (1998) surveys are groups of written questions focusing on a particular topic or area, with the purpose of seeking responses to closed or ranked questions. This method is used to gather open-ended personal opinions, judgments or beliefs, and is used in non face-to-face circumstances. In our case, we conducted a survey at the beginning of the study group in order to obtain personal information of the participants, their teaching strengths and weaknesses; knowledge about what a study group was for them, teaching experience and their expectations of participating in the study group. Through this survey we wanted to gather some information about the topics that they wanted to carry out during the development of the English Teachers Study Group (ETSG). (See appendix 2.1).

Reflective logs: This method is used to record teaching events, procedures, resources used and outcomes of a class. They give a retrospective account of the lessons taught (Freeman, 1998). During the study group five (5) reflective logs were used. Each log was carried out according to the topics developed in the English Teacher Study Group (ETSG). It is important to highlight that the discussion of topics took more than one session. These reflective logs were the instrument in which the participants could summarize what happened in a session as well as in their teaching practices. Besides, they could provide reflection on

their teaching experiences, concerns, standpoints and feelings according to the sessions that they were involved in (See appendixes 2.2 and 2.3).

Interview: As Freeman (1998) claims, “an interview is a structured oral exchange with someone” (p.216.). In this method the researcher can use planned questions in order to guide the face-to-face verbal session, though it can be guided with unstructured questions and open-ended interaction and discussion as well (Freeman, 1998). In our study, an interview was conducted as a tool to gather information about how the participants felt at the end of English Teacher Study Group (ETSG) process. The purpose of the interview was to diagnose significant changes on teachers’ attitudes or aspects before and after participating in the study group (See appendix 3).

Audio Recordings and Audio Transcriptions: Audio Recording is the data collection method that allows objective records of what happened in an activity or session; it captures spoken interaction, which can be re-examined. Audio Transcriptions are written representation of the oral recordings. The researcher should use conventions in order to identify the speakers, overlaps or any necessary non-verbal information (Freeman, 1998). In our research project we used audio recordings during most of the sessions and in the final interview to capture what the participants expressed and as a consistent procedure to analyze the data. Consequently, we transcribed the session and the final interview in order to have a more organized view of the data using the two-column format (See appendix 2.4).

Field notes: Field notes are well-detailed descriptions and considerations of observations, including non-verbal information, physical settings, group structures, interactions between participants (Freeman, 1998). This method was useful for us because we could write some events, actions, and perceptions that the audio recording could not provide

us. Due to the fact this instrument gathered researchers' opinions we decided to include it in our research.

Data analysis

This section presents the process of data analysis to give answer to our research questions. The analysis was developed through the use of four instruments: one survey, five reflective logs, audio recordings, one interview and field notes.

The first document that we organized was the initial survey that served to identify the teacher's concerns, their expectations of the study group's process and topics to be carried out in the sessions. After this session where the survey was conducted, we started to implement the reflective logs to collect data about the perceptions and opinions of the topics discussed during the sessions. Besides, we considered the field notes information to complement the data from the audio recordings. Once the data was collected, we took the reflective logs, filed notes, and audio recordings from the sessions, in order to transcribe them into a word processor which facilitated the handling of the data. The data taken from these three instruments was organized by using a two-column format (See appendix 2.4). In the first column there were the answers the participants gave to the initial survey, and the answers to the logs used during each session. Consequently, it can be found in the first column of the format the audio recordings' sessions transcribed. The second column was supported by the question *what it makes me think about?* This contained our perceptions about the comments, the attitudes and behaviors manifested by the teacher-participants in each of the instruments implemented during the sessions. At the beginning of the process the reflective log was administered in paper to be filled by the participants. However, as the study group progressed, we noticed that it was better to implement online documents following the same log's structure, to be then uploaded to a blog called English Teachers Study Group's

(englishteacherstudygroup.blogspot.com). The purpose of the blog was to save the documents, videos or material dealt with during the sessions and to lead the participants to fill each session's blog at the more convenient time for them. Nevertheless, the participants were asked to fill each reflective log on the same week the group met, in order to conserve a fresh and rational view of the aspects treated in the sessions that served to answer the log's questions critically.

The survey and reflective logs were organized by each question proposed in them. The survey contained ten questions and each log contained five questions that were numbered according the quantity of questions each instrument had. Then we assigned a number to each log corresponding to the topic that was covered in the sessions. All comments or answers of each participant had a code which included the type of instrument used and the question asked. As an example, if the instrument was Survey and question 1, the code was *su/q1*, if the instrument was Reflective Log 1, session 1, and question 1, the code was *ll/q1*. In the case of the audio transcriptions, the code was taken from the session and page we drew the data from, then the code was *at/s1 p1* (Audio Transcription, session 1, page 1). At the end of the process a semi-structured interview was carried out in order to consolidate previous data. Each question of the format consisted in one main question containing sub questions that complemented it. Besides, this interview contained other personal questions focused on clarifying previous answers given by the participants in the exploratory survey (See appendix 2.1). Thus, the code assigned was the initial letter of the instrument and the question asked with the sub questions, e.g. *i/q1a* (interview, question 1a). Finally, the participant's names were also codified with the first letter of their names and last names, for instance: Julio Gonzales – JG. Thus, the final code would be: *JG ll/q1* (Julio Gonzales, log 1, question 1)

All of the instruments used were transcribed and organized in the two-column format with the aim to analyze it from the computer. The data gathered were analyzed based on the

Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). According to Grounded Theory open coding refers to process of identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the data (Borgatti. 1996, p 2). Thus, it was under these perspectives that we started to analyze the data. First of all, by using the two-column format, we could write interpretations of the comments the participants gave to the instrument's questions. Having written these ideas, we started to identify the names or codes to build possible categories that shed lights on the aspects we intended to work on. After all this process, we found useful to print out all the instruments with the given comments, in order for us to have a more open view of the processed data. The following step was to group our open codes according to the participant's affinities and commonalities observed through the data. (Merriam, 2009). With the groups defined, each group was named with sentences based on our interpretations given to the commonalities. The group's names were revised with our research advisor in order to create solid arguments. Successively, we could identify five main categories and eight subcategories representing the groups created.

Finally, five charts were made in order to present the categories and subcategories drawn from the data (See appendix 4). This process is called a data display. As Freeman (1998) says, "displaying these patterns and relationships servers crystallize the analysis and to assemble an integrated interpretation" (p 103). Thus, the first category presents only one finding since it was not necessary to further explain it with subcategories, because basically it responded to what we were trying to identify through one of our research questions. Thus, the consecutive categories were complemented with subcategories in order to provide a more concise explanation of the findings. The following chapter presents the categories and subcategories, its explanation, and results found to give answer to our research questions.

The researcher's role

During this research project we had continuous participation. In the first and second sessions we were the facilitators of the sessions in order to show and guide the participants to show the way they should be facilitators then. Besides we were involved in different activities led by the participants; we could comment, discuss, and give our opinions and suggestions when it was necessary. Allwright and Bailey (1991) agree that the professional researcher is the essence of a research; the researcher has an important role in an investigation (as cited in Arias Castaño, 2008). Hence, we decided to be participants observers because in this way the participants could see us as their colleagues and friends, people they could trust on. We always looked for the way to provide a safe environment among all the members of the group, because we knew that the more confidence we displayed during the session the better outcomes we would receive from the participants, in as much as they would be more open to express their thoughts, worries or joys.

We considered that like observers and active participants we achieved the suitable perspective to learn from the others, to evaluate us, and help us to conduct and develop our research project.

Instructional design

We developed the English teachers study group during the first semester of the year 2010, during this period of time we presented the project's proposal to the institute's director and coordinators. Then, with the support of the administrators to carry out our research project in the institution, we started to search for some English teachers who voluntarily wanted to be the participants of our research. As soon as we found these teachers, we appointed one meeting in order to explain to the participants the methodology and dynamics of the professional process. In that day, we could set the days and time to carry out the study

group. The teacher-participants suggested meeting weekly every Wednesday at three o'clock in the afternoon as it was the time that fitted their work schedule. Thus, we continued meeting for the following ten weeks for one hour each meeting.

In the second meeting, the researchers decided to be the facilitators of the session in order to establish the group's parameters and show the participants how the study group was going to work. By explaining the parameters, the participants were presented with a consent form and with a survey in order for us to gathered information such as possible topics for the next session. The total amount of sessions carried out was nine (9).

In the following meeting (Session 1), the facilitator was one of the researchers as the participants suggested they wanted to see how a session was developed before they received the facilitator's role. In accordance with this, the researcher decided to give them an article called "*11 Techniques for better Classroom Discipline*" by Thomas R. McDaniel, and Phi Delta Kappan. We gave to each teacher-participant a copy of this reading. Before reading the article, we wrote on some pieces of paper some questions about classroom discipline which they had to answer randomly. Then, we read the article and discussed about it.

For the next session (Session 2), we continued talking about the same article. Although the facilitator was the same, the interaction was guided mainly by the teacher-participants. The session' aim was to discuss if the article "11 Techniques for better classroom discipline" were effective or not in their teaching practices. Most of the teacher-participants gave their opinions. Also, during this session the first Reflective Log was given to them to be filled in.

For the following session (Session 3) the other researcher was chosen by the participants to facilitate the meeting as they did not feel confident to take the role. Hence, the researcher selected the Chapter number 3 from the book called "*How to teach English*" by

Jeremy Harmer, called *Managing the Classroom*. We decided to continue talking about classroom management because the teacher-participants suggested it during the last session. During the session the researcher gave them the photocopies of the chapter and he played some videos taken from the book. The clips talked about different seating arrangement and seating groupings. As soon as the videos had finished, the facilitator started to make questions about it in order to discuss and obtained different perspectives and experiences by the participants about the topic.

After these three study group's meetings, one different teacher-participant was chosen in order to be the facilitator. From this session (Session 3), the teacher-participants decided to cover a common topic suggested by them through the Reflective Log. They suggested talking about different activities and games to add variety and dynamics to the classes and targeted to different populations (children, teenagers or adults). Thus, one of the teacher-participants decided to carry out the topic for the coming session (Session 4), by presenting the importance of implementing games and activities in the classroom, followed by a series of them through a power point presentation. During the session the participants offered their comments about the activities and games and possible adaptations according to their students' preferences. In this same session the participants agreed continue sharing their own activities or games so as to have different insights, resources and materials in order for them to have a wide variety of tools to teach the language.

For the next session (Session 5), another teacher-participant presented a customized memory game to practice vocabulary about professions and some customized worksheets in order to be used in different language levels. The session was nurtured by different opinions about how to adapt the material according the teachers and student's needs.

The following session (Session 6), the facilitator was a participant who wanted to share with the group her experience and knowledge by attending the ASOCOPI conference that was held the same year in the city of Barranquilla. In this session the teacher-participant focused her presentation on how to teach grammar to youngsters as it was one of the main topics in the conference. Subsequently, the facilitator's participation was divided into two more sessions (Session 7 and 8), which were aimed to present sources, material and tips to teach the writing and reading skills, topics also discussed in the ASOCOPI conference.

The last session (Session 9), was designated to provide an overview of the shared topics in all of the sessions. Thus, the researchers enquired the participants about the way they felt during their participation in the study group, the usefulness of the topics discussed and their suggestions for future study groups. Finally, the dates to conduct the final interview were appointed in this session.

FINDINGS

As we mentioned previously, we used the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to triangulate the four instruments: survey, reflective logs, interview, audio recordings, and field notes. This approach allowed us to name, categorize, and to describe phenomena found in the data. Apart from this, the presented categories in this section give answer to the research questions established in this research project.

Besides, the samples presented in the findings may contain spelling errors and syntax errors that were left without changes in order to secure the participants responses.

Category	The role of reflection as the mean to ameliorate the teacher-participant's practices
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Chart No 1: First category

This category emerges to present the role of reflection evidenced during the English Teacher Study Group's (ETSG) process. Hence, the role of reflection in this study was the means by which teacher-participants ameliorated their practices, since they were able to identify some weaknesses or strengths to evaluate and analyze them in order to grow professionally. Reflection's role was the promoter for considering better strategies, teaching ideas or beliefs so as to make the teaching practices more effective and pleasant.

According to the analysis of the data, a process of reflection was evident when the teacher-participants evaluated their teaching practices in order to correct, improve or change

the strategies, methodologies or tools they used in the classroom to derive a better teaching practice. Moreover, they considered that ETSG provided the stimulus for reflecting among them while assessing through comments, discussion and the material provided during the sessions which included theory they were interested in.

During the ETSG process a Reflective Log was made in order to gather teacher-participants' information, feelings and thoughts about the sessions. In one of these Reflective Logs the participants were enquired whether the study group provided them a space to reflect on their teaching practice. The following comment was the answer obtained by one of the teacher-participants.

VA 11/q4 Yes because it makes me think about every single procedure strategy being implemented in my classes. It really makes me reflect on advantages or disadvantages every teacher's attitude or reaction has.

Thus, with this sample we conclude that the participant considered the sessions as a way to reflect on what she has done or she could implement in her teaching practices. Reflection processes lead teachers to think about their teaching processes for their amelioration (Arias, 2008). Apart from teaching methodology, the session urged the participants to reflect on teachers' attitudes and how these may emotionally affect students or support them when they are learning. Reflection took place in this participant when she found a challenging condition during her teaching practice. That is, she reflected on the action done and on the previous knowledge found implicitly in the situation, generating new knowledge and a change in this situation (Schön, 1983: 22. in Ariza and Ramos. 2010)

AG 12/q2 I used to be very close to Ss in the monitoring process when they were doing some activities and this is the answer that I received from some of them: "Teacher, you got me nervous!!". After this session of the study group, I started to identify those Ss and give them the feedback at the end of the activity.

This participant affirmed that he had begun giving feedback to his students differently. After realizing his previous misuse of feedback strategy with his students, the teacher-participant stimulated a reflection process to arrive at the solution of his teaching concern and to recognize more effective ways of teaching. In this case, allowing the adjustment of his giving feedback methodology. As Yeh (2005) argues critical reflection promotes better teaching practices since teachers can be encouraged to inquiry and challenge themselves.

LC 14/q1...Moreover, the session provided an opportunity to reflect upon our Ss' preferences, particularities and needs that should be considered when it comes for us teachers to choose the games we are implementing with Ss.

VA 15/q1 Reflection about the type of learners we are facing in our classrooms every day.

In accordance with these samples, both participants agreed on the advantages of reflecting during the sessions in favor of students' improvement. In the first sample the teacher claimed that the session gave her opportunities to take into account not only teaching methodologies but also the students' suggestions to achieve more appropriate and appealing classes. The second sample showed us that reflection continued being a fruitful tool to examine their teaching practice. She did not say openly that she had reflected about her teaching practice during or after the session, but deeply that response means that the session provided her a space to reflect on the importance of knowing about the students' personalities, particularities and behaviors in order to know more effective ways to teach the language and draw better results from learners.

LC i/q3b...y pues yo creo que el resultado de un grupo de estudio va a ser siempre crecimiento, crecimiento profesional. Que mas es para mí, es un instrumento fabuloso, mira es un espejo en el que yo me miro, que estoy haciendo, huy esto está mal, puedo corregirlo de la siguiente manera, si la reflexión es clara.

As it can be seen above, the teacher acknowledged their improvements to the sessions and how positive they were for them. She believed professional development was an outcome of participating in a study group. Besides, it was a tool that allowed professionals identify and notice what went on their teaching practice, in other words she found a study group like a mirror that reflects how she is teaching. Arias (2008) explains this metaphor: *“As a mirror reflects what it is in front of it, each session will reflect what teachers are doing in the classroom. Indeed, teachers could evaluate their teaching practices when they could compare them with the theory presented in the TSG”*. When teachers reflected during the study group’s sessions about their performance in the classroom, the sessions promoted the clearness of the issues that a participant encountered in teaching practices, comparing this process like a mirror which allowed participants to see clearly their weaknesses and strengths.

Categories	Teachers’ views about their own need to improve.	Teachers’ concerns and interests for self improvement.	Sub-categories
		Teachers’ concerns about students’ motivation and improvement.	

Chart No 2: Second category and subcategories

Teachers’ views about their own need to improve

This category arises from the co-relation from the topics or issues that the teacher-participants wanted to discuss during the sessions of the Study Group, in order to grow professionally and at the same time to benefit their students. This category reveals the intentions and the willingness that the participants possessed in order to enhance themselves as English teachers. We deduce that the participants related the recommended topics: classroom management and activities or games for the classroom as a form to fulfill some of

their main necessities. Furthermore, the intention to devote more sessions to deal with the activities and games topics, remarked the participant's necessity to satisfy that specific need.

AG I2/q4 Yes, I do. There is always room for improvement in our teaching practice and there are many things that we unconsciously do and may affect the Ss' performance and motivation

This participant's comment highlighted the intention to improve for the benefit of the language learners. He considered that teaching improvement is a continual process to work on. Therefore, he conceived the ETSG's process as a resource to work on the aspects he desired to ameliorate.

VA I2/q5 We should look for more innovating and unknown topics. For example the games sessions will be very useful because we are going deeply.

In this sample, the teacher-participant reported the suggestions dealing with strategies and games for better teaching practices to improve students' performance. We infer that the teacher-participant desired to enlarge her knowledge about classroom activities in order to grow professionally and handle her teaching necessity. The above-mentioned samples can be connected to what Birchark et al. (1998) highlights that in a Study Group its members meet their necessities and their individual growth in a form that organize their development.

The category teacher's views about their own need to improve produced interrelated subcategories that remark the necessity to improve for a unified purpose such as the students. These are: Teachers' concerns about self improvement and Teachers' concerns about student's motivation and improvement.

Teacher's concerns and interest for self-improvement: Teachers highlighted the importance of improving their teaching practices according to the interests they mentioned throughout the instruments. The ETSG provided them a space where they could carry on with their pursuit of having solutions to their worries (Arias, 2008). Consequently, the teachers-participants suggested topics such as: classroom management, variety of activities and strategies to put into practice in the classroom. We interpreted that these kinds of topics are needs that they had.

In order to know the teachers' concerns we developed one survey (See appendix 2.1) at the beginning of the Study Group where the following question was asked:

6. What kind of topics would you consider interesting or useful to be carried out in this Study Group? And the following were the answers:

*LC su/q6 -Useful games to teach grammar.
-Classroom management strategies.*

*VA su/q10 The ways to handle difficult situations in class related to:
-Classroom management.
-Environment in class.
-Variety of activities.*

Through these answers we evidenced that the participants addressed their interests to maximize their knowledge and teaching aids in order to use them in their practices. These responses indicated their teaching concerns and their initiative to improve professionally.

AG I2/q5 activities for a better classroom environment (aspect we are dealing with right now for a few sessions).

In this sample the teacher-participant expressed the necessity to continue with the same topic in the following sessions. This indicated that the teacher had considered the session useful but somehow the necessity had not been fully covered. He was always worried for adding variety of activities to innovate in the classroom. This could be linked to what

Arias (2008) asserts that innovation permits teachers ameliorate their practices in order to grow professionally.

VA i/q3e ¿Considera que los temas expuestos fueron apropiados de acuerdo con sus necesidades?

VA: Si,

GB: ¿Por qué?

VA: No, porque ósea cada tema fue justificado. Fueron bien justificados, ósea, vamos a estudiar esto porque lo necesitamos.

As can be seen above, the teacher-participant stated that the topics studied in ETSG were appropriate not only for her but also for the rest of the group. We deduced that she considered as a necessity, the increase of the repertoire of games and activities to be applied in practices. On the other hand, it is important to highlight that the participant's contributions to the sessions and topics were limited, she never expressed to us clearly that the topics were appropriate to her practices as this answers reveals, so we concluded that this participant's answer was the result of dialogue led by teachers- participants in the ETSG.

Teachers' concerns about student's motivation and improvement: The subcategory deals with the willingness to encourage students to learn English. Besides, this subcategory refers to participants' concerns about knowing new teaching strategies and practical theory in order to offer students enjoyable and quality English classes. During the sessions, most of the teachers opened their hearts talking about their own learning experiences from their students. They were interested in finding the way to understand, help, and motivate learners through appealing activities and tasks that they conceived would provoke better outcomes from students.

AG i5/q4 Of course. When it comes to teaching English, the usage of different strategies is very important in terms of reaching our main objective: making Ss love English. The more variety activities we have in class, the better results we get from Ss.

AG 11/q5 I'd like to suggest that for me it's very important to start talking about different activities we can use in a classroom.

From our point of view, this participant was conscious about the challenge of it takes to be a good teacher, since he reflected on issues that may affect the student's performance and motivation in order to improve lessons. Besides, he stated the importance to have different strategies and activities to teach English, because he could implement them and make students find English easier to learn, as a result of it, students more passionate for learning English.

The following sample was obtained in the first session through a survey conducted to participants. We asked them about what kind of topics they considered interesting or useful to be carried out in the Study Group. This was one participant's answer:

VS su/q6 Students learning process.

In order to know the real intention of this reply, she was interviewed at the end of the ETSG with the same enquiry responding the following:

VS i/q4 En Studens Learning Process lo que yo quería decir ahí es como llegarle al estudiante es como ellos asimilan otra lengua, como podemos involucrar ahí las multiples intelligences, si? Que proceso adquieren, como tu decías funcionó o no esa actividad entonces cual proceso ahí si funciona entonces el proceso del estudiante como asimilarlo...

Thus, she made us understand that she considered essential to know the way students learn in order to provide a solution to their learning difficulties. Besides, this teacher-participant wanted to know the way to involve the multiple intelligences to the process students have as a foreign language learner. We deduce that she mentioned the multiple intelligences because she knew Howard Gardner's theory and considered that by taking into account the learning strategies and learning processes of each learner she might have more successful classes.

*VS su/q6 Classroom activities that enrolled the Ss.
And how to motivate Ss in learning English (like the English class and enjoy them)*

VS at/s1 p4 relaxing... I am more friendly with them than as a teacher because if they see me just like, ahhh, manager here, they are going to be, an especially with kids, yes. I am more friendly with them. Hello! How are you! How you doing! What did you do last weekend! Where are you coming from! Are you happy to have English class! Why are you studying English class! So, have like a conversation with them, so like that they are interesting, and they are concentrating because sometimes, they are paying...

These samples stated the concerns the participant had about applying new activities to teach English. Besides, the participant was concerned about how to engage and involve more the learners in English classes and to make them have fun while they are learning the foreign language. In addition, the samples agreed with her concern about making students feel comfortable and allowing them view learning English as different to the traditional way. Also, the teacher-participant reflected on the importance of establishing a positive environment in the classroom to have better results. She expressed concerns on the relationship teachers sometimes need to build up with students, and the importance of having a facilitator's role to provide better teaching guidance. She was always concerned on being better as a person, but at the same time being better as a teacher in favor of her students through the knowledge acquired.

To conclude, the category gathers the results of commitment, desire and encouragement, from teacher-participants during the ETSG in order to enhance professionally in favor of both their personal and students' development, in as much as study groups permitted teachers grow professionally and to live the process as learners that they wanted to give to their students (Birchak et al. 1998).

Category	Applicability of the knowledge provided in the study group.	Using of theory, strategies and techniques to solve teaching issues.	Sub-category
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Chart No 3: Third category and subcategories

Applicability of the knowledge provided in the study group:

This category arises from the knowledge provided through the English Teacher Study Group's (ETSG) sessions and how useful and appropriate the teacher-participants perceived it and included it in teaching practice. The participants highlighted that the knowledge they received in the group's sessions were applicable to solve teaching concerns by relating them to the theoretical readings and the session's discussions to draw the most relevant aspects appealing to their needs. Also, they considered the strategies and techniques discussed during the sessions practical to their teaching practices, thus, they attempted to use them in lessons. The overall knowledge considering this category was suggested from the beginning of the sessions through an exploratory survey (See appendix 2.1). The teacher-participants were enquired about useful topics for them, their expectations by participating in the ETSG or aspects to be improved in their teaching, resulting in the interest and necessities they intended to supply for possible incorporation into teaching practices.

AG su/q8 There is always room for improvement in every area of the teaching practice. It's important to me to know more about teaching in teenager levels. I'm kind of new at this and this part is very important.

LC su/q8 I need to improve: -time management.

-voice volume

VA su/q6 Classroom management.

How to design more creative, useful and interesting speaking activities.

As it was stated in the previous finding, there was a desire for improvement, thus teachers claimed the importance of certain topics to be included in their practices. The presented samples stated the possible aspects the teacher-participants considered relevant to explore or study in the sessions, as form of complementing their teaching or offering possible treatments to issues they found in their practices.

Throughout the ETSG's sessions most of the suggested topics were carried out and discussed upon theory, activities and games they had used in teaching practices and that were shared when they were given the role of the session's facilitators.

AG 11/q2 Some of the techniques from the reading I've already used them in classes. Some others I've never used them, for example, the Direct Instruction and Humanistic I-messages. After reading the deep explanation of the techniques, I can be more accurate when I put them in practice.

This sample reflects that the teacher-participant considered the strategy provided in the session useful, extracting and using what was most relevant for him. He affirmed that after reading the excerpt and interiorizing the applicable aspects of it, he could use them with more precision. Yeh (2005) states that, "teachers in teacher study groups are able to construct new knowledge through a process of interweaving their schemata and valuable experience" (p.3). For this reason, the participant built knowledge upon the topic of *11 Techniques for better Classroom Discipline* treated in the session by connecting his teaching experience and the teaching representations drawn by the analysis of the reading discussed, as a valuable experience that enriched his teaching practice and contributed to treat one of his teaching interests.

The category of applicability also has to do with the recognition of the topics' utility offered during the ETSG. The way the teachers-participants conceived the topics as suitable to their needs are presented in the following samples.

VA at/s9 p.13 Muy aplicable. Ya si se piensa seguir con el Study Group, empezarnos ya a meternos en campos más fuertes...

AG at/s9 p.13 Muy apropiado para lo que nosotros hacemos...

As the samples stated, the participants conceived the topics applicable to treat their teaching needs and important for their professions. In the first sample the teacher-participant considered the topic appropriate to what she was planning to study in the sessions. However, as the sessions considered topics from different teacher's standpoints and needs, these topics were carried out regarding the most practical to them excluding other topics of higher interest for this participant. The topics related to classroom management were of basic interest for her. We conclude that for this participant, it was desirable to approach deepened topics such as "dealing with hyperactive students", as a topic not commonly studied in workshops or conferences and that could have been approached in the Study Group to supply that interest.

LC i/q3d Claro, claro que fue muy apropiado yo necesitaba eso. De hecho fuimos nosotros los que tuvimos la oportunidad de sugerirlos también porque conocemos nuestras necesidades. Claro que sí.

The participant highlighted the usefulness of the knowledge acquired during the sessions, as she confirmed that the topics were justified by her own necessities. The participant also remarked that the topics were chosen according to the other participants' needs as they recognized them to come up with a possible treatment for these difficulties. Cayuso et al (2004) affirm that "study groups offer participants not mandated workshops, but rather the luxury of *choice* in terms of studying what interests the group" (p.2). Thus, the ETSG participants had the opportunity to work out their necessities as they proposed their

own areas of interest. When the members of the study group come to study what interest or concern them, application of knowledge is more likely to occur as it becomes meaningful.

As mentioned in previous lines, the teacher- participants related to the theory, strategies and techniques provided during the ETSG's sessions to extract the aspects they considered useful to arrive at the solution of their needs. Thus, the following subcategory is intended to present the way the members of the group approached the sessions for this intention.

Using of theory, strategies and techniques to solve teaching issues: This subcategory refers to the way the teacher-participants extracted the most relevant aspects from the theoretical reading(s), strategies and techniques, suggested in the ETSG to be incorporated in their teaching practices or derive a solution to their concerns.

LC 12/q3 Yes, I have projected my voice better. I have refrained of talking so loudly since I discovered I don't need to shout to be audible. It has aided my voice conservation.

I have also improved in giving instructions to students. Now, I'm more aware of keeping instructions simple, relevant, well-sequenced and logical.

In the sample above, there is evidenced how the teacher-participant related to the theory presented in a Jeremy Harmer's chapter taken from the book "*How to teach English*", to her specific needs. The excerpt dealt with topics on classroom management that suggested insights about the teacher in the classroom, the use of the voice, the rapport with the students, among other useful aspects related to the matter. As noticed in the sample, the participant could enhance the way she used her voice when referring to students in order to preserve her voice, she discovered after reading the excerpt that teachers might resort to other options in order to be understood in classes without abusing of the voice. The participant also remarked

that she had improved her way of giving instructions by referencing this aspect on the reading.

*AG I2/q2 All the aspects about managing the classroom had relevance on my teaching practice especially **THE TEACHER IN THE CLASSROOM**. I used to be very close to Ss in the monitoring process when they were doing some activities and this is the answer that I received from some of them: "Teacher, you got me nervous!!". After this session of the study group, I started to identify those Ss and give them the feedback at the end of the activity.*

*AG I2/q2 The other aspect having relevance is the **DIFFERENT SEATING ARRANGEMENT** which I started to apply in my classes.*

In addition, this sample provided information about the way the participant extracted the relevant aspects from the reading. He remarked the excerpt about *the teacher in the classroom* and the suggestion offered about how teachers should approach or address their students. He stated that after receiving the information in the Study Group's session he became more aware of how he should assess his students on different tasks and when providing feedback on student's outcomes. Matlin and Short (1991 cited in Yeh, 2005) state that a teacher study group provides its participants "an opportunity to think through their own beliefs, share ideas, challenge current instructional practice, blend theory and practice, identify professional needs-as well as develop literacy innovations for their classrooms" (p.68). As the literature informs us, the knowledge acquired through the sessions served the ETSG's participants to develop suitable reflection to their teaching necessities. Thus, with the identification of the utility of the knowledge, the desire to transmit it to the classroom was triggered, involving a positive change in the participant's teaching practices.

The other sample revealed that the topic discussed during the session (Classroom management), was useful for the participant, since he started to put it into practice. We

assumed that the participant found the space to reflect on his teaching practices and at the same time the way to ameliorate the relationship between him and his students in order to generate a safe environment in the classroom.

As it was stated in the subcategory, the teacher-participants attempted to use the practical knowledge such as strategies, activities and techniques. In the following samples the participants manifested the inclusion of the knowledge into teaching practices.

LC 11/q2 I found very effective a specific strategy I implemented in one of my lessons, the reading suggested this strategy. It consists of not trying to explain a topic or give instructions when some Ss are chatting, playing or simply detached. It is explained since the teacher would be unconsciously conveying the message that chatting or displaying a disruptive behavior while the teacher talks is allowed or it doesn't hinder learning environment.

Mentioning the technique called *Focusing*, the participant conceived it useful to be implemented in her lesson. The *Focusing* tool was provided through a reading that suggested several techniques to handle better discipline as a topic to cover the participants' needs to know more about classroom management. The participant related how the strategy worked for her, considering the strategy useful to her factual practice.

AG 15/q3 I implemented the BALLOON ACTIVITY with my Ss of teens 4C. They had a good time and they enjoyed a lot the activity. It met my expectations because they understood the topic - PRESENT PERFECT was the target language of the activity - in a better way, having a relaxing time.

This answer revealed utilization of an activity provided in one of the ETSG's sessions. The activity was effective for the teacher-participant as his students were able to manage a specific language structure the teacher wanted to teach in an easy way. Furthermore, the participant expressed that the activity provided for his class a relax environment which is an aspect the teacher participant manifested as important through the sessions in order to foster learners' better outcome. As Wallace (1991) states, professionals confront their previous

mental constructs with received knowledge and experiential knowledge which are followed by the teaching practice and its process of reflection. The samples previously presented, indicates that the participants perceived the knowledge offered in the sessions useful to be transmitted to their teaching practices. Thus, they included it in their classrooms as the end product of the reflection laid upon the interest to adjust the teaching strategies or techniques according to their teaching necessities.

LC 15/q3 In my last lesson on Saturday, I used two games suggested in Viviana's session: The Matches game and a sentence match game. My Ss enjoyed them a lot. The first game fostered Ss' mental agility and recycled their existing vocabulary. The second game was useful to practice the Conditionals structure. Both games helped me to build a good environment in the lesson before my Ss took an exam.

The participant highlighted the use of two games as a strategy provided in a session held by one of the teacher-facilitators, being those appropriate for their students needs. She remarked some of the advantages of using the strategies. These strategies dealt with the capability of the students to respond to certain questions and vocabulary with ease by exercising their mental dexterity and the appropriateness of relating the game to a specific structure being taught. Furthermore, the teacher-participant stated that both games provided the class a positive environment to reduce the student's anxiety before the test. The samples provided above can be connected to what Fullan (2001) states that professional development is about constant learning from themselves and their colleagues. The teacher-participants drew the relevant aspects shared in the sessions for the facilitators to adapt and include them into practices, benefiting themselves and their students.

Category	Collaborative learning as means of professional growth	Learning through discussion offered by teacher-participants in ETSG	Sub-categories
		Willingness and commitment reflected by the ETSG' members.	

Chart No 4: Fourth category and subcategories

Collaborative learning as means of professional growth

The category of collaborative learning as means of professional growth emerged from the most relevant characteristics reflected in the ETSG such as: Participant's learning process through discussion offered during the sessions, and participants' willingness and commitment while participating in ETSG. Besides, this category covers several qualities typical of collaborative groups such as open discussion in order to solve problems, shared leadership and dynamic interaction in regards to a common objective (Ziegler et al, 2010).

Furthermore, this category is complemented by the determination of the teacher-participants to participate in the study group, in order to treat or study topics so as to improve their practices; the willingness to listen to the Study Group's participants to attain reflection, and the desire to contribute to the other participants' learning by offering suggestions, discussion, or dialogue in the sessions.

LC II/q4 The topics discussed have helped me to discover some issues I can improve in my teaching practice and also the discussion sessions have helped me to remember some theoretical foundations related to EFL that I was probably forgetting. Thus, the sessions have been very enriching.

In this sample we can evidence how the participant viewed the usefulness of the session. She mentioned that the topic discussed on the session helped her to remember old EFL theory she knew. But at the same time the discussion shared by their colleagues offered

her new teaching perspectives, as a result, a willing and commitment teacher with her own professional development because we noticed through her participation on the ETSG that she always wanted to take advantage of this space; she projected herself as an enthusiastic and open-minded participant in order to learn as much as she could. We inferred that this participant's perception comes from her desire to be better professional as Sierra-Piedrahita (2007) argues, that a study group allows through teachers experiences and views of education, personal and professional growth.

At the end of the study group the researchers asked teacher-participants about what type of aims they achieved during their participation in this study group, and the following sample was one of the teachers' answers:

***AG i/q3c** yo creo que el objetivo si se cumplió, el objetivo fue muy claro, compartir y recibir información de los compañeros para mejorar.*

This response shows that the participant wanted through the participation in the study group improve as professional. In addition to that, he viewed as an objective to share his knowledge and experiences with the others members of the group. This meant that this aim was achieved by this participant since he mentioned in the sample that he gave and obtained information from the other members of the group.

Learning through discussion offered by teacher-participants in English Teacher Study Group: Through the analysis of the instruments we noticed that most of the teachers-participants stated that the discussion led by the sessions allowed them to learn and ameliorate their teaching practices. Hence, this sub-category deals with the reflection that occurred when they listened to the others' viewpoints. Hence, as Wallace (1998) states, teachers value and

reflect the others' contributions and comments as a mechanism to adapt new learning into their own way of teaching to put this knowledge into practice.

***AG 11/q4** The most important thing is that you listen to your study groups' partners and you learnt a lot about the way they teach, the way they manage the classroom and about their personality, too. I have some strategies that I can improve now, only by listening to them.*

In this sample the participant commented the relevance of listening to their colleagues during the sessions, since he could implement some new ideas to teach English better and some strategies that he expressed to enhance in the classroom. We deduced that the participant enjoyed being in the study group since his purposes were to share and learn with the others. This finding agrees with Murphy's statement (2007) that affirms that during the participation of the study group the members can share their perspectives and thoughts in order to foster professional development.

***LC 15/q4** It was great to have enriched my repertoire of activities by the suggested games through the discussion in the session. The discussion also allowed me to flaunt my creativity and autonomy as a teacher in order to modify the activities to my Ls' needs and characteristics.*

The sample above is another proof of the discussion effects in a study group. The participant commented that through the discussion created during the session, she increased her repertoire of activities to teach English. Also, she mentioned that this session allowed her to adapt some games according to her students' learning style.

In addition to this, through the development of the ETSG' sessions, there was a lot of discussion led by the participants. Some of this discussion emerged from the interaction of topics we intended to tackle. However, there were times when the discussion happened as

different opinions or comments the participants offered outside from the main theme of the topic. Those comments meant that the members of the study group came to session not only with the purpose of attending the sessions but also with the aim to share their feelings, standpoints and experiences. Hence, this category is also characterized by the spontaneous interaction that occurred when the discussion provided an incentive to communicate something to be added to their professional growth.

VA at/s1p5 I think that, ok, we have been told in meetings that we have to force students or to make them aware; of they are here or because they want to learn English, ok? But, we have to be careful, the way we do it. Why, last Thursday, I was listening to a student, that student expressed that the teacher said: I'm sorry is your time is my time is your money not my money, we know as teacher that is the idea, all right? But we can't say that in those words, we can't do that!

We selected this sample because the participant voluntarily shared with the group one experience about how to say some things to students. This contribution was out of the main session topic but it entailed that the other members of the group reflected and discussed about the situation which the participant was mentioning. Then, they spent several minutes talking about this issue and most of the ETSG' members commented about it. We inferred that most of them wanted to share their points of view since they felt confident to express what they thought, since the ETSG encouraged an environment for communication and productive discussion (Ziegler et al, 2010). Besides, from the beginning of the ETSG, the participants were never intimidated by their colleagues to express what they thought; they were always open to give their opinions and contributions which constructed confidence into the ETSG.

Willingness and commitment reflected by English Teachers Study Group's members: This sub-category refers to the commitment and willingness that the teachers-participants had during their participation in the ETSG to share their knowledge and

materials. They were motivated to provide their information about their teaching experience since they expressed that the value of sharing was one of the best things that a person could do during their professional path. They agreed with the goal to show and give as much as they could through the participation of the ETSG because they perceived it as a space to share and receive knowledge.

VA at/ s8 pg1 *I want to share with you something'.*

This concise sample shows us the teacher-participant's initiative to share something. She wanted to share with the group an activity to practice reading, writing, listening and speaking. Highlighting that the participant's contribution were minimum within the sessions, this session gave her the confidence to openly share some tips with the group. Besides, the sample demonstrates the participant's willingness in order to share an idea and contribute to the discussion.

VS at/s9 pg6 *we worked together, we joined together and we are working like in the same way... I would like to continue in a group like that, because he can share his lessons plans and his activities and we can, is not like be selfish with our work.*

The sample above reveals the aspects why the subcategory was created. The teacher-participant expressed that all the members of the Study Group had the same responsibility in order to contribute with the development of the ETSG. Besides she mentioned that she felt comfortable to share, moreover we inferred that her commitment resulted from the confidence she felt by discussing and interacting with the other members of the group.

VS i/q3c *...mi objetivo mi más satisfactorio para mi fue poderles brindar lo que yo tenía y poderles decir, comunicarles lo que es asistir a ASOCOPI, lo que crece uno y lo que uno aprende...*

According to this sample, the participant was pleasant for having participated in the ETSG because she could attain one of her goals she had which was share what she knew about teaching. She manifested the desire to talk in the ETSG about her attendance to ASOCOPI Conference, in fact she did it. After having returned from the conference she spent several sessions sharing with us what she had learnt as several teaching ideas. Zañartu Correa (2003) states that collaborative learning is a process where the members of a group are committed to learn something together, where they are able to decide the procedures and tasks they desire to develop in the group in order to learn.

***AG at/s9 pg4** Great space to share what you know and to get some ones else experiences and knowledge.*

From this point of view, the participant claimed that the ETSG is a medium to share and received knowledge. This makes us think that when he gave his teaching information to the group he was intrinsically motivated and willing to have an active role in the group. As we affirmed before, in this kind of spaces the social interactions, dialogues, and other individuals' contribution provoke new knowledge in the group's members (Zañartu Correa, 2003) as the teacher-participant confirmed as well.

Category	Fulfillment of the purposes of the Study Group	In-session reflection triggered by discussion.	Sub-categories
		Teachers' professional development	

Chart No 5: Fifth category and subcategories

Fulfillment of the purposes of the study group

The presented category emerged from the features produced in the ETSG in reference to other Study Groups and its similarities. The way the teacher-participants recognized their teaching difficulties to tackle them as they suggested, makes part of a well democratic study group. Thus, such characteristics provided the environment to trigger discussion that served as the reflection for the participants to reshape their teaching. Consequently, the treatment of those difficulties allowed the study group's participants to gain insights on how to adapt the concepts shared during the session according to their own needs for their benefit and the improvement of lessons.

LC i/q3c El objetivo era enriquecerme, era crecer, era mejorar. Y eso se cumplió, en tres cosas, muy marcadas que esta semana estaba yo recordándolas. La primera fue: lo de la voice conservation, ósea yo mencioné eso mucho y eso en serio, yo estaba quedándome muda, ronca. Cuando leímos en ese texto de Harmer no era.

GB: Si, Harmer.

LC: Aja, técnicas, bueno si, más o menos como se puede conservar la voz. Ósea, yo implementé eso al otro día, y créeme que yo deje de gritar, de gastarme la voz innecesariamente, de usar mas el cuerpo y menos la voz, para controlar la disciplina yo ya no sufro tanto de ronquera, eso es una cosa que me aporito muchísimo y es en serio, ósea, en serio que eso me ayudo mucho.

By enquiring the participant through an interview about what objectives she did achieved by participating in the ETSG, she expressed that she improved her voice conservation after reading an article from the book called *How to teach English* by Jeremy Harmer. Through this answer there is evidence of how the participant attained solution or improvement of one of her necessities she referred to at the beginning of the study group.

VA i/q3d Por ejemplo yo logre con las actividades, el tema de activities, ósea, tener más ideas, poder utilizar una actividad, y extenderla y adaptarla de acuerdo al tema enseñado.

This participant achieved one of her goals through participating in the Study Group, by increasing the repertoire of activities and games with the intention to adapt them according to her in-practice necessities. In addition, the participant highlighted the achievement of that specific goal as this was a topic she suggested to be carried out in the ETSG and the one the teacher-participants suggested devoting more time for discussion.

***AG i/q3d** Muy importante la parte del manejo de la clase, las once técnicas para el manejo de la clase, muy importante porque yo llevo un año trabajando acá pero ha sido muy empírico, apenas hasta ahora lo empiezo a hacer mas formalmente, entonces leí eso y descubrí que uno tiene muchísimas opciones para manejar un salón, de acuerdo a las circunstancias, a la actividad y pues nunca había pensado en eso, claro que si todo eso me sirvió bastante.*

This sample highlights the classroom management topic as important to contribute with the treatment of one of the participant's necessities. When the teacher-participant was enquired about the goals he achieved by participating in the study group, his answered was the above-mentioned comment. He affirmed that one important aspect he could obtain was the classroom management tools offered through the reading about techniques for maintaining classroom discipline and the discussion around the topic. They served to enhance his empirical knowledge about teaching. According to Smylie, "study groups build on teachers' present knowledge and skills, representing an important shift from past practice in professional development, which often assumed a "fix it" approach (cited by Boggs, 1996: 6). Thus, the sessions of the study group provided its participants with the insights or needed knowledge to reshape their teaching practices and improve upon their identified necessities.

The sub-category, **In-session reflection triggered by discussion** is presented as the process of reflection triggered by the ETSG's sessions in regards to the topics addressing the teacher-participants' necessities and as a complement of the category remarking the fulfillment of the purposes of the Study Group. Furthermore, the in-session reflection is

defined as the portion of thought laid upon the themes presented in each of the Study Group's sessions, and that differentiates from the ongoing reflection evidenced throughout the whole process as to be the vehicle for assessing the participant's teaching necessities and interests in order to draw a plan of improvement that fits a treatment. The following graph can portray a better explanation of the subcategory.



Figure 2. *In session Reflection's explanation.*

LC 14/q1 The session suggested some interesting games and activities to be implemented with EFL teens. Moreover, the session provided an opportunity to reflect upon our Ss' preferences, particularities and needs that should be considered when it comes for us teachers to choose the games we are implementing with Ss.

The participant in the sample affirmed that the session provided her the space with the discussion to reflect on her students' preferences so as to choose appropriate activities to be applied in the classroom. It is important to highlight that the session was the stimulus for the participant to think about the students as the center of learning when she came to choose the

activities; otherwise the participant would not likely consider them without the pertinent discussion that surrounded the session.

AG at/s3 p5 No, what she says is true. When you have that form in your classroom, the benefits are for the dominant students. The other ones they don't like to interact in front of the others students.

Now, if they are in small groups.

GB: They will feel more comfortable.

AG: Yes and they can talk. Ummm, I didn't think about that, now that I saw the video.

This sample was the resulted reflection of one the teacher-participants after watching the comments of a Jeremy Harmer's video clip talking about different seating arrangements and their benefits or drawbacks. The English teacher on the clip mentioned that one of the disadvantages of using the horse shoe shape arrangement was that certain but not all members of the group might have dominated the feedback sessions which is something that may be avoided with other type of arrangements. Consequently, the session and the discussion around the video clip gave the momentum for the participant to think of the limitations and advantages when coming to use different seating arrangements. The aforementioned comments are linked to what Richardson (1990) states, that "the improvement of teaching requires acknowledging, building upon, and promoting reflection on teacher's experiences" (as cited in Boggs, 1996).

Teacher's professional development as a subcategory arises to complement the fulfillment of the purposes of the study group's category, dealing with the teacher's development reached by the participants by being involved in the ETSG's process. Their

development is reflected by the improvement of certain teaching issues the ETSG's members had presented as aspects to enhance on their teaching practices.

LC 14/q4 Yes, the session was really useful. We EFL teachers need to have a very wide repertoire of games and activities so that our lessons become varied, motivating, fun and surprising for our Ss. The session helped me to enrich that repertoire and to enhance my creativity on how to adapt the suggested games and activities according to my Ls' particularities.

In this sample there is presented one form of professional development reached by one of the teacher-participants. She highlighted the importance to have a good collection of activities and games in order to add variety to the lessons, thus, obtain a more dynamic class. Adding up, the teacher-participant considered the session useful to create a collection of tools for her lessons and provide a positive change on the learner's perceptions while being these tools adapted according the student's peculiarities.

AG i/q3b Me pareció excelente la idea de estar en este grupo de estudio porque muchas cosas se aprenden y uno no lo sabe todo y no hay nada mejor que compartir lo que uno quiere... Eso nos da la oportunidad de tener más variedad en las clases porque a veces se queda corto en estrategias, en actividades... la oportunidad de haber estado en el grupo de estudio fue excelente y si hay una oportunidad de seguir haciéndolo estoy disponible para hacerlo...

The participant mentioned above that the ETSG offered him the space to learn and share his knowledge about teaching. He believed that the sessions gave him the opportunity to increase strategies and activities to teach the language. In fact, he stated that he would be willing and glad to participate in another study group. According to Reitz (2004), professional development is when the professional decides to participate in training programmes voluntarily. Therefore, professional development refers to practice about promoting available activities where teachers can have continuous feedback, support and resources, so that teachers are involve in professional learning (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990).

VA l3/q4 It was excellent because she gave different ideas and other games I have never tried before.

In addition, this teacher-participant remarked that the ETSG's session was useful as she could expand her repertoire of teaching activities. This expansion of tools contributed to her teaching interest of knowing more about this aspect which constituted an opportunity to provide new alternatives to her current teaching practices. Nevertheless, this opportunity promoted the participant's professional development. The above-mentioned comments can be justified with the Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) definition of professional development, claiming it to be the "processes that improve the job-related knowledge, skills and attitudes of school employees" (p. 234-235). In other words, the teacher-participants went through the ETSG's process that served to gain different insights to help treat their teaching issues and enrich their teaching styles in the light of obtaining positive outcomes from their learners.

The following sample was obtained in the final interview. We asked the participants what was a study group like for them, after they had been in this process. This was one participant's answer:

LC i/q3b ...es un grupo de personas que se reúnen con el único propósito de fortalecer sus habilidades de enseñanza... socializar experiencias, no sé, ideas, recursos, y pues yo creo que el resultado de un grupo de estudio va a ser siempre crecimiento, crecimiento profesional...

Thus, we can view that for this participant a study group refers to professional growth in the way that different means of knowledge are shared by the people who participate in the process. Besides, she claimed that a study group's purpose is to strengthen teaching skills and

learn collaboratively. Malagon and Cardenas (2007) claim that a study group builds a sense of community among the teachers which enhance their professional development. The ETSG offered a structure that motivated participants not only to be part of their own professional development but also to be included into the others growth.

CONCLUSIONS

After conducting this study we conclude that a study group promotes its participants professional development by going through several processes. These professional development processes can be justified by giving answer to the research questions proposed in this research: *What is the role of reflection presented in an English teachers study group?*

Reflection processes are manifested throughout the study group's development. According to the data process of reflection was evident when the teacher-participants evaluated their teaching practices in order to correct, improve or change the strategies, methodologies or tools they used in the classroom so as to derive a better teaching. Nevertheless, the role of reflection is conceived in our research study as the means to attain to the solution or treatment of a teaching concern. In addition, the role of reflection can also be expanded as the facilitator of examination to derive a plan of improvement on the participant's teaching necessities.

On the other hand, reflection can be distinguished during the process by having two intentions. Firstly, it is the participant's vehicle to constantly monitor their teaching performance in teaching practices and secondly as the instrument to derive a solution within the concerns to be tackled during the study group's sessions. Therefore, there is evidence through the data that the teachers considered the English Teachers Study Group, as a space that provided the stimulus to reflect while they could assess themselves according to comments' colleagues, sessions' discussion and the material provided as theoretical readings related to the topics they wanted to talk about. By activating the participant's critical reflection during the sessions, it is promoted better teaching practices as teachers can be encouraged to inquiry and challenge themselves (Yeh, 2005). In addition, other participants stated that the sessions allowed them see clearly their teaching weaknesses or strengths when

they reflected about them. As the mirror metaphor stated by Arias (2008) they saw the sessions as a mirror by which the problems encountered in classes were reflected. Thus, with the recognition of these problems a plan of improvement can be traced.

In order to give answer to the second question: *What teaching necessities are presented and addressed in an English Teachers Study Group?* We can affirm that the Study Group's participants came to sessions with the intention to improve as language teachers and for the benefit of the students. Hence, some teachers presented their individual teaching concerns as one stated by one of the participants in order to enhance her voice volume and other common teacher's interests as topics suggested to be carried out in sessions. Among these topics, different teaching interests were included such as classroom management strategies, different activities for the classroom, teaching and learning methodologies, useful games to teach grammar and motivational strategies for the learners. As said before, they voluntarily provided the topics in the study group to derive a treatment for these issues drawing up their own plan of improvement and highlighting what Birchark (1998) claims that in a study group its members meet their necessities and their individual growth in a format that organize their development.

Consequently, the teacher-participants suggested the classroom management strategies and activities or games for the classroom as topics to be treated in the sessions as a form to fulfill their main necessities. Thus, the classroom management strategies were presented as the first topic to be explored. Several sessions were dedicated to explore insights to deal with discipline problems and to treat suggestions about the teacher in the classroom and the different seating arrangement to be used by teachers. The sessions supplied teachers with tools to deal with difficult situations in the classroom and tips that contributed to the ways teacher should pose themselves and talk in classes.

Subsequently, there was suggested by the group dedicating several sessions to discuss experiences, insights, material or sources that added to expand their teaching knowledge about different activities or games to be used in the classroom. The purpose of this type of topics, according to the teacher-participants was to provide enjoyable and quality classes that permits maximize the learner's learning and outcome. Therefore, everything the participants suggested was in the light of improving for the benefit of students. In addition, the topic became of such interest that the participants suggested dedicate a whole session for each study group's member to be the session's facilitator and share their insights, material or sources.

Regarding the question *What can an English Teachers Study Group inform us about its participant's collaborative learning work?* We can affirm that as a root characteristic of study groups, each session were nurtured by the topic's discussions and within this discussion learning was attained. Firstly, there is presented the participant's determination to treat or study teaching topics in order to improve their teaching practices. The determination is remarked by their willingness to listen to the Study Group's members to attain reflection, and the desire to contribute to the other participants' learning by offering suggestions, discussion, or dialogue in the sessions. In addition, the English Teachers Study Group's participants stated that the discussion led by the sessions permitted them learn and ameliorate their teaching practice by listening to the other's viewpoints. As Wallace (1998) states, teachers valued and reflected the others' contributions and comments as a mechanism to adapt new learning into their own way of teaching to put this knowledge into practice.

Secondly, the interventions of the teacher-participants were not only based on contributing to the other's professional growth. Thus, the Study Group's sessions were also nurtured by spontaneous interaction outside of the main session's theme. This interaction was

conceived as the dialogue presented by the confidence surrounding the sessions and the arguments contributing to the participant's personal growth as an essential and integral aspect of a professional development program, highlighting the participant's professional ethics. Thus, as presented in a collaborative learning process the English Teachers Study Group encourages an environment for communication and productive discussion (Ziegler et al, 2010).

Finally, collaborative learning is a process where the members of a group are committed to learn something together, where they are able to decide the procedures and tasks they desire to develop in the group in order to learn. (Zañartu Correa, 2003). Thus, there was a commitment reflected by all of the teacher-participants to attend the sessions and share their knowledge and material. In addition, during the whole study group's process the teacher-participants manifested their enjoyment and value that sharing had in their professional path. Consequently, several means of knowledge and different types of material were provided to the ETSG's members, contributing to treat their teaching concerns posed since the beginning of the professional development process.

Additionally, by giving answer to our research questions, we further conclude that the English Teachers Study Group's process, as stated before, was supported by the in-sessions reflection that stimulated the participants' critical thinking skill. This served as the mean to adapt the knowledge treated through the topics discussed for their factual interests in teaching. Furthermore, within this adaptation it was presented the intention to put the knowledge into practice. Thus, most of the teacher found ways to incorporate the knowledge they had found meaningful and practical into lessons. As stated by the study group's participants, this determination offered positive changes to classes that are reflected in better outcomes from

learners. To close, all the efforts laid by the teacher-participants during the English Teachers Study Group constitute their willpower to enhance as language teachers, contributing to the main theme of this professional development process as to attain professional competence.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

After having collecting the data to substantially come up with the results of this study, we can affirm that Study Groups effectively correspond to a model to attain professional development. Thus, the English Teachers Study Group's (ETSG) participants gained pedagogical insights to improve their teaching practices. These gains were evidenced through the collaborative work implicit in study groups when its members come to talk about their interest or teaching concerns as to benefit themselves, the students, and the institution where they work.

In addition, foreign language institutes should recognize the importance of providing meaningful spaces for its teaching staff to develop their capacities through a model that allows organizing their own development, as this is the case of study groups as means of professional growth. Furthermore, foreign language teachers should also recognize the importance of reflection in their teaching practices to analyze the process underlying teaching. Hence, Teacher study groups can provide language teachers with the opportunity to analyze what goes on with their teaching practices in order for them to find suitable solutions to these concerns.

Consequently, the teaching community has the opportunity to enrich their teaching knowledge by being exposed to different means of professional development tools such as the theoretical readings to address their teaching necessities, the collaborative work surrounding study group's sessions and the reflection triggered by session's discussions. All of these aspects offered the teaching community a mental shift that allowed them reshapes their teaching styles over the needs to be changed or improved for both their individual and teaching benefits. Consequently, positive changes can be obtained out of teaching practices when the knowledge obtained through this professional process is to be put into practice.

To conclude, a study group comprises a great opportunity for EFL teachers to grow professionally in a format where its participants address their personal interests and teaching necessities leaving aside the anxiety caused by external factors and maximizing its productivity. The English Teacher Study Group participants' professional growth is attributed to the teaching necessities treated through the theoretical readings and the sessions that presented practical knowledge. Furthermore, the participants considered useful aspects as to reshape their teaching practices, leading to an improvement of both the teacher-participant and the language learners. On the other hand, English Teachers Study Group might represent a powerful instrument for the language institution in order to provide a space where its teachers can work out the difficulties encountered in their everyday practices. Besides, this professional model had as aim getting better results in teaching practices, in light of complying with the requirements established by the institution in its accreditation process, and the demands of the Ministry of Education governing EFL laws on higher standards to be achieved by language teachers and language learners.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This research project about study groups as professional development denotes a significant impact on what the teachers' communities can create. In our case, the English Teacher Study Group (ETSG) leaves an open interest in those who participated in it. In other words, not only we are benefited from this study but also the teachers-participants and the Foreign Language Institution in which we developed this research. They now recognize this process as a space where they can express without anxieties their feelings, uncertainties and wishes about the teaching field in order to propose possible solutions and to draw their plan of professional growth.

Hence, further research can be done by implementing post observations tasks that can give evidence of the effectiveness of the topics discussed during sessions. Nevertheless, it can include post observations tasks to confront the theoretical readings treated in the study group's process in order to see if they offer any type of professional development to the people involved in it.

LIMITATIONS

During the development of our research project the most relevant limitation was the time. We could not cover all the suggested topics by the teachers-participants, because they stated that their workload and other responsibilities did not allow them spend more time than the assigned for studying the readings and bringing new material to share with the group. Besides we could not study more topics because they were near to the end of the courses and the year.

Another limitation regarding to the time was the fulfillment of the instruments (Reflective Logs) as they sometimes don't fill them on time which caused us delay in the analysis process.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1. CONSENT FORM

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Proyecto de Investigación

Grupo de Profesores de Estudio – English Teachers’ Study Group

Apreciado Profesor

La presente tiene como motivo el establecer su participación en el Proyecto de Grupo de Estudio de Profesores de Inglés y garantizarles el acompañamiento y apoyo de sus investigadores durante el proceso de ejecución del Grupo de Estudio.

El proyecto llamado *English Teachers’ Study Group*, busca desarrollar un grupo de estudio para profesores de Inglés en el cual se aborden temas aplicables al desarrollo de sus clases, su desarrollo profesional y demás. Este proyecto cuenta con el aval de las directivas de la institución por ser planeado para el mejoramiento de la institución y para el desarrollo profesional de todo el grupo de trabajo.

Todo este se realizaría a través de sesiones de al menos una hora a la semana, la cual será estipulada acomodándose a su horario de trabajo. En estas sesiones se desarrollarán temas que enriquezcan su desempeño laboral y profesional, y el de la institución.

La recolección de datos será realizada dentro de las mismas sesiones, lo cual incluirá toma de notas, manejo de cuestionarios y grabación de la sesión. Su participación es de vital importancia para la consolidación del grupo de trabajo y el crecimiento personal y profesional de los participantes. Sin embargo cabe anotar que esta participación es voluntaria y todos los participantes se les garantizará:

- Verificar los apuntes y declaraciones tomadas de las reuniones y cuestionarios.
- Que la participación en el proyecto permitirá el reemplazo de la actual estrategia para el desarrollo profesional docente llamado Team Teaching.

Agradecemos de antemano su atención y su autorización para ser participante en el proyecto,

GABRIEL BEDOYA
JULIANA MONTOYA

INVESTIGADORES PRINCIPALES

NOMBRE DEL DOCENTE

APPENDIX 2 INSTRUMENTS

APPENDIX 2.1 SURVEY

ETSG SURVEY FORMAT

- 1. What is your name?*
- 2. When were you born?*
- 3. What is your degree?*
- 4. How many years have you taught English?*
- 5. What do you think a Study Group is?*
- 6. What kind of topics would you consider interesting or useful to be carried out in this Study Group?*
- 7. Which are your expectations to participate in this Study Group?*
- 8. What elements do you think you should improve in your teaching practice?*

APPENDIX 2.2**REFLECTIVE LOG #1
ENGLISH TEACHERS' STUDY GROUP**

Dear Teacher: The following questions are intended to know your perceptions about last session's work. Your doubts and opinions are important for the development of our research.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. What did the session offer to you?
2. From your point of view, what aspects from the reading did have relevance to your teaching practice? Please, explain your answer?
3. Did you use one of the strategies provided in the last session? Yes___ No___
If you did it, would you explain what went well and what didn't go so well?
4. Do you feel that this study group has provided you a space to reflect on your teaching practice? Why?
5. **Suggestions** (*Remember that this Study Group is guided by yourself*)
What aspects do you consider important to take into account for next session?

APPENDIX 2.3**REFLECTIVE LOG #2**

Dear Teacher: The following questions are intended to know your perceptions about last session's work. Your doubts and opinions are important for the development of our research.

1. What did the session offer to you?
2. According to (facilitator's name) session, can you mention at least two aspects from it that you consider relevant to your teaching practice?
3. Have you used any of the strategies or games for the classroom provided in (facilitator's name) session? If you have, it fulfilled your expectations? Please explain why.
4. Do you consider (facilitator's name) session useful for your teaching practice? Why?

APPENDIX 2.4**ENGLISH TEACHERS' STUDY GROUP****(Session's date)****Two-Column Notes****Questions****What it makes me think about?**

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APPENDIX 3

PREGUNTAS PARA ÚLTIMA ENTREVISTA- GRUPO DE ESTUDIO- Diciembre 7, 2010

Protocolo de entrevista

El propósito de esta entrevista es recoger información acerca de las experiencias de los profesores participantes del grupo de estudio. Este es un instrumento de recopilación de información para el trabajo de investigación que lleva el mismo nombre del grupo de estudio.

Apreciaría su colaboración en este ejercicio. Si en cualquier momento usted siente que tiene alguna duda acerca de las preguntas, por favor no se abstenga de preguntar. Estaremos encantados de aclarar cualquier duda que usted pueda tener.

1. Acerca de su vida profesional:

- a) ¿Qué estudios ha realizado? (cursos, diplomados, seminarios...)
- b) ¿En la enseñanza de una segunda lengua que estudios ha realizado?
- c) ¿Qué la/lo motivo a enseñar Inglés?
- d) Aparte del Colombo ¿Dónde más ha enseñado Inglés? ¿Y a qué clase de poblaciones?

2. En la práctica docente:

- a) ¿Cómo planea sus clases?
- b) ¿Qué hace usted cuando algo no sale en su clase como lo había planeado?
- c) ¿Qué elementos cree usted que debe mejorar en su práctica docente?
- d) ¿Qué papel tiene la reflexión en su práctica docente?

3. Acerca del grupo de estudio:

- a) ¿Qué es para usted desarrollo profesional docente?
- b) ¿Qué es un grupo de Estudio para usted ahora?
- c) ¿Qué clase de objetivos o propósitos logró participando en este grupo de estudio?
- d) ¿Considera que los temas expuestos fueron apropiados de acuerdo con sus necesidades? ¿Por qué?
- e) ¿Qué clase de herramientas le otorgaron las sesiones para resolver dificultades presentadas en clase?

Para AG: Al principio del Grupo de Estudio le hicimos una encuesta, y le hicimos una pregunta que decía: ¿Qué temas usted considera interesantes o útiles para tener en cuenta a estudiar en el Grupo

de Estudio? A lo cual usted respondió: Teen Activities and Teaching and Learning methodologies. ¿Nos podría aclarar o explicar mejor esta respuesta?

Para LC: Al principio del Grupo de Estudio le hicimos una encuesta, y le hicimos una pregunta que decía: ¿Qué temas usted considera interesantes o útiles para tener en cuenta a estudiar en el Grupo de Estudio? A lo cual usted respondió: Useful games to teach grammar, classroom management strategies and teaching children. ¿Nos podría aclarar o explicar mejor esta respuesta?

Para VA: Al principio del Grupo de Estudio le hicimos una encuesta, y le hicimos una pregunta que decía: ¿Qué temas usted considera interesantes o útiles para tener en cuenta a estudiar en el Grupo de Estudio? A lo cual ud respondió: Classroom Management, How to design more creative, useful and creative and interesting speaking activities. ¿Nos podría aclarar o explicar mejor esta respuesta?

Para VS: Al principio del Grupo de Estudio le hicimos una encuesta, y le hicimos una pregunta que decía: ¿Qué temas usted considera interesantes o útiles para tener en cuenta a estudiar en el Grupo de Estudio? A lo cual usted respondió: Students Learning Process, Classroom activities, that enrolled Ss, How to motivate Ss in learning English (like the English class and enjoy them). ¿Nos podría aclarar o explicar mejor esta respuesta?

Para VA: También dentro de la encuesta había una pregunta que decía: ¿Qué elementos cree usted que debe mejorar en su práctica docente? A lo cual usted respondió: In order to answer this question I'll have to be exposed to a situation, analyze it and start reflecting on that one. ¿Nos podría aclarar o explicar mejor esta respuesta?

APPENDIX. 4
DATA DISPLAY
CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Category	The role of reflection as the mean to ameliorate the teacher-participant's practices
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Chart No 1: First category

Categories	Teachers' views about their own need to improve.	Teachers' concerns and interest for self improvement.	Sub-categories
		Teachers' concerns about students' motivation and improvement.	

Chart No 2: Second category and subcategories

Category	Applicability of the knowledge provided in the study group.	Using of theory, strategies and techniques to solve teaching problems.	Sub-category
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Chart No 3: Third category and subcategories

Category	Collaborative learning as means of professional growth	Learning through discussion offered by teacher-participants in ETSG	Sub-categories
		Willingness and commitment reflected by the ETSG' members	

Chart No 4: Fourth category and subcategories

Category	Fulfillment of the purposes of the Study Group	In-session reflection triggered by discussion.	Sub-categories
		Teachers' professional development	

Chart No 5: Fifth category and subcategories