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ETHICS, MORALITY AND DEONTOLOGY IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: A REQUIRED DISCUSSION

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ABSTRACT

Teacher's role in society transformation cannot be either ignored or denied; hence, it should be seriously considered in their training process. The present paper aims to present a discussion on foreign language teacher training regarding ethics, morality and deontology. It was performed a documental research starting with a review of the concepts of ethics, morality and deontology to later go deeper into the current scenario of education of those professionals in Latin America and the way those three concepts are integrated in their training; then, it is presented a proposal for a desirable scenario regarding English as a foreign language teacher education. The paper ends by presenting the concern about the lack of a deontology code comprising issues belonging to the dynamic of foreign language teaching and the need for a deep curriculum review in the training of English teachers (as teachers from other specialties) in terms of ethics, moral and deontology.

Key words: English teacher training, ethics, moral, deontology.

ÉTICA, MORALIDAD Y DEONTOLOGÍA EN EL INGLÉS COMO ENSEÑANZA EXTRANJERA DE LENGUAJE: UNA DISCUSIÓN REQUERIDA

RESUMEN

El papel del profesor en la transformación de la sociedad no puede ser ignorado ni negado; Por lo tanto, debe ser considerado seriamente en su proceso de capacitación. El presente documento tiene como objetivo presentar una discusión sobre la capacitación de profesores de idiomas extranjeros sobre ética, moral y deontología. Se realizó una investigación documental que comenzó con una revisión de los conceptos de ética, moralidad y deontología para profundizar en el escenario actual de la educación de esos profesionales en América Latina y la forma en que esos tres conceptos se integran en su capacitación; luego, se presenta una propuesta para un escenario deseable con respecto al inglés como profesorado de idiomas extranjeros. El documento finaliza presentando la preocupación por la falta de un código deontológico que incluya los temas que pertenecen a la dinámica de la enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros y la necesidad de una revisión profunda del currículo en la capacitación de profesores de inglés (como profesores de otras especialidades) en términos de ética. Moral y deontología.

Palabras clave: formación del profesorado de inglés, ética, moral, deontología.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are important agents in the process of social transformation due to the pedagogical relationships they develop (Caetano and Silva, 2008) and, therefore as influential agents in society. It is through teaching that these new members of the community are educated and, in a certain way, they will replicate the behaviors observed in their teachers during their training.

Kawamura (2000) highlights that there are three levels of performance underlying and must be present in the teacher's behavior (whatever discipline he or she teaches). These levels (of human being, citizen and educator leader) must be developed in the individual who will carry on his shoulders the task of training others, in order to fulfill the objectives that society sets itself through the educational system. In this context, teachers of English as a foreign language (in any of its branches: English for general purposes or English for specific purposes) should be aware that every educator, through his teaching, transmits a series of values that are forming, in the learners, a concept of how to visualize the world and how to behave in it; even more when along with the foreign language a notion of

culture is transmitted; that culture might be general or academic/professional.

Sadio (2011) argues that teacher's personality should, to some extent, be the main objective of his or her undergraduate and in-service training. In other words, during their initial professional training and in postgraduate and continuing education courses, there should be content and training activities aimed at strengthening teachers' personnel (which has ethical and moral issues) and not only at the academic-professional level. Furthermore, as Caetano and Silva (2008) have expressed, a solid professional conscience and its deontology should be assumed as an essential dimension in teacher training. However, it is not common that in the formation of the teacher trainee the issues related to ethics and morality are incorporated in a deep way, but rather that aspects related mainly to his area of academic specialization in which teachers will practice their profession are approached. Generally, what is included in the discussions that are oriented towards this field in the university environment seems to be located more at the deontological normative level, leaving ethics and morals aside.

The importance of developing an awareness of ethics, morality and the deontological foundations of the teaching profession in general and from the particularities of each specialty are part of the need for general and specific teacher training, since not all practitioners will work in the same social context (public and private institutions), the same type of students (children, adolescents, adults), nor the same academic context (mother tongue, foreign languages, social sciences, pure sciences...) and they need solid foundations to respond to the needs of their students in each context. In this sense, the teacher can better understand how his or her work affects society from every point of view.

In the particular case of the English teacher, this conscious development of ethics and morality is fundamental, since with the teaching of another language, values belonging to an external culture are transmitted that could have positive or negative repercussions on the students, who must appropriate them in order to be comprehensively proficient in the language. The English teacher therefore needs the necessary balance so as not to fall into the terrain of promoting transculturation and the devaluation

of one's own culture, or the other way round, for example.

Not all teaching contexts and situations of future English teachers will be analogous. For example, the ESP teacher must work from the specificity that the area might demand in order to achieve the objectives that arise from the analysis of students' needs. That is a teacher who transmits not only the general cultural values of the English-speaking community, but also the identity of the members of the discursive and academic communities of the professional specialty to which their students aim, among others. For example, an teacher of English for specific dental purposes (ESDP), in addition to language, teaches students the relations of power (using Foucault's terminology) established by the target discursive community and teaches them to master their codes in order to become a member of it and achieve the desired status (which must happen in an ethical and moral context). However, in order for the student to be a successful member of the target community, the student must not lose the values of his or her own society to the extent that he or she knows and practices those of the academic community, and that is when the language teacher must be aware of his or her

influence in this regard in order to exercise a balanced practice.

In this context, and taking into consideration that the responsibility of the English teacher transcends the academic sphere, what should such training in ethics, morals and deontology be like for English teachers? Based on this question, the present essay was presented with the objective of discussing the ethical, moral and deontological training of EFL teachers in Latin America in the 21st century, when access to world information is increasingly greater, as well as the need to be proficient in English as a foreign language (for specific purposes or for integral communication).

Some discussion on the subject is necessary because, like Martínez, Buxarraís and Esteban (2002), I believe that perhaps today's society, characterized by globalization, is becoming more demanding in terms of the quality of integral university education. In this way, a topic is set on the table; it should be discussed by those who have the task of making transformations from the curricular in higher education settings.

1. Ethics, morals, deontology and teaching

For a start, it is necessary to be certain about the basic notions around which it takes. Regarding ethics, morality and deontology, in current literature, authors like Barrantes (2012) warns of the tendency to confuse them even when each one is located at a different level.

Van Nuland (2009) notes that the terms 'code of ethics' and 'code of conduct' have been used interchangeably by teachers and organizations, although there are differences between the terms 'ethics' and 'conduct' and, as a result, between the ways these texts are written. They should therefore not be regarded as equals. An analogous situation is observed in terms of ethics and morals or ethics and deontology, so in this section we will discuss each of them for better understanding.

The word ethics finds its etimological origin in the Greek words *ethos* (way of doing things, custom or habit) and the suffix *ico* (relative to). Morality comes from the Latin *moralis*, which seems to come in turn from the word *mos-moris* (way of living) (Etymological Dictionary, 2017). For Aristotle, ethics reflects more than custom, it reflects the way of being of the person, who orients his acts to happiness as an

end; but this in turn is only possible if such acts derive or arise from the virtuosity of man (Aristotle, 1959).

Ethics refers to an attribute of humans and not of their acts; whereas morality is the opposite: an attribute of the acts of humans and not of humans as such. In other words, a teacher may or may not be 'ethical' and his acts may or may not be 'moral'; but we will never speak of his acts as 'ethical' or not, for they derive from human conduct, in turn guided by internal attributes of the person derived from his virtuosity in Aristotelian terms. However, because of the terminological confusion referred to, erroneous expressions are found such as 'evaluations must be ethical, fair, feasible and accurate'. These types of expressions reflect disinformation and, at the same time, erroneously guide the teacher about the relationship and difference between ethics, morality and deontology. This phrase could well be reconstructed to say: the teacher must always be ethical and in terms of assessments, they must be fair, feasible and accurate.

Barrantes (2012) explains that, according to Western philosophical tradition, morality refers to norms, customs and patterns of behavior accepted by a society and that ethics transcends

them because it is a process implying greater awareness and rationality, that is, a reflection on these norms. Pérez and Velasco (2007) face morality and ethics and summarize the actions of each one pointing out that morality asks the question of what I should do and, therefore, it is related to habits and customs. Ethics, on the other hand, questions about why I should do it. That is a reason why it is located in a higher level of reflexive depth whose answer derives from the virtuosity of the individual and represents the bases on which its morality is based.

Now, just as the individual generates his own personal ethics from his virtuosity as a person (since in this essay the Aristotelian vision of ethics is assumed), one could also speak of professional ethics without this being confused with deontology, since I am not speaking of regulated actions for the exercise of his profession, but of his virtuosity as an EFL teacher (the scope of discussion in this essay). Of course, this ethics or virtuosity in the role of 'teacher' derives from his ethics or virtuosity as 'human' and is different from morality and deontology, but relates to them.

If we assume the Kantian perspective (Kant, 1978), which is different from Aristotle's ethical

one, an ethical teacher bases his actions on his own judgments about an obligation or duty determined by the goodwill of a relationship with a person, group of persons or an institution. For example, because of the relationship with students, with the educational institution in which it works, with the educational system within which it operates, and with the guidelines established by the academic and labor unions to which it belongs or accepts as an authority, for which it works on the basis of good will. Although the conceptions are different, the fact remains that it does not refer to actions, but to the reason for them.

Fredriksson (2004) points out that teachers should reflect on what would be seen as corrupt behavior and see such behavior disappear from their teaching, as it has an effect on their students. This is a reflection of the performance of an ethical teacher, who from his ethics wishes that his actions correspond to what is morally acceptable and in this way exercises his profession within the deontological parameters of the same.

Finally, in terms of morality and ethics Barrantes (2012) points out that:

...morality is the extent to which human actions conform to the norms established by society, whether or not they are considered within the legislation or regulations of a given society. Apart, ethics has to do with the human quality of people (p. 106).

The third element of the triad of this discussion has yet to be developed: deontology. Etymologically, it comes from the Greek *to deon* (convenient) and *logia* (knowledge or study), so it has been seen as the study of duty (Etymological Dictionary, 2017). The term deontology is attributed to the English philosopher of the utilitarian school Jeremias Bentham. Peiró (1944) explains that etymologically the term deontology is equivalent to 'treatise or science of duty', since it is constituted by the Greek words: *deontos* (deon genitive) that means duty, and *logos* that means speech or treaty. On the other hand, Barrantes (2012) explains that deontology is the discipline that deals with the duties of professionals seen as an ethical assessment of the actions of those who is practitioner of a certain discipline.

How are these concepts integrated into teaching life and work? For this purpose, it is illustrative to read about the three levels of teacher behavior expressed by Kawamura (2002), namely:

Level 1: behavior as a human being. It is the most basic level that all people possess. This is the intrinsic humanity that allows dealing with other human beings and social organizations. At this level we find the teaching of tolerance, the acceptance of differences and logical decision-making.

Level 2: citizenship. It includes the responsibilities that teachers have towards their students, the community and other professionals as part of a citizen's conduct, which includes integrity and responsibility. At this level there is attention on students' interests, which play an important role, especially in the context of ESP teaching. Kawamura (2000) points out that the teaching of a moral conscience to decipher good and evil in that citizen should be part of the curriculum and should therefore occupy an important place in education.

Level 3: expertise. It is the most specific of all. It relates to being very professional in every task related to professional performance. This level

includes aspects that are fundamental to generate a moral development in the students.

Those levels, as Kawamura (2000) call them, are analogous to the three concepts that guide this discussion and are interrelated. The first level is related to ethics (the virtuous of the person, from which derives the virtuous as professional), the second is located in the morality field (the correct as established in society) and the third, in the deontological plane (the correct approach to the exercise of the profession). The actions of the teacher will reflect each of these aspects, so it will be possible to speak of his ethics, the morality of his acts and his expertise or practice of the profession according to the standards established by his professional community for this purpose.

2- Ethics, morality and deontology in English teachers and English teacher trainees: the reality

In the teaching profession, these three concepts associated with human behavior (ethics, morality and deontology) must also be consciously oriented towards teaching behavior. This is the way Caetano and Silva (2008) perceived it. They emphasize that entering the

teaching practice involves an ethical and deontological requirement related to their personal and professional development. However, as Bachman (2000) state, in FL teachers training, the trend is towards the conscious consideration of ethical aspects related to evaluation. On the basis of what the aforementioned author has said that deontology and morality are sidelined in practice in the university training process, even when they are present in the work of the English teacher.

Álvarez, Rodríguez, Herrera and Lorenzo (2012) claim that the curriculum has led to a strong practicality observed in the increasing atomization (shortening to its minimal expression) of subjects or theoretical content and a notable disregard for the values that university students (and in particular teachers) should display, such as personal and professional ethics, morality and ethical foundations.

In a context like the one described in the previous paragraph, Bolívar's (2005) position is pertinent. Bolívar emphasizes that if a university student is to be integrally trained as a professional, three fundamental components must be included in the curriculum: knowledge of the discipline (the academic), practical skills

related to this field (the practical), and a framework for professional action (ethical framework).

If you give a glance to the curricula of education careers in Latin-American countries (Venezuela, for example) it is observed that in some cases there is a subject called Deontology, which 'studies' what is related to the duty to exercise the profession from the legal point of view. However, in the practical field, ethics and morals are not observed as fundamental elements in the integral formation of the future graduate who, in turn, will be the educator of new generations.

English teacher training is not far from this reality. It lacks a solid training in ethics, morality and deontology as a necessary triad in professional training and practice. This absence can be seen in the behavior of students and faculties themselves, even in apparently insignificant details, for example, the inclusion of peers in the delivery of evaluations in which they have not contributed (engaging in immoral and illicit performance). It is also seen in the student who uses any available illicit strategy to pass an evaluation or subject and in the teacher who complacently approves those who enjoy his sympathy and gives negative marks to those

who do not or who uses evaluation as a punitive tool.

In addition to the behaviors that are usually observed in some contexts involving English students and teachers, there is the conceptual confusion that is observed in ethics, morality and deontology that exposes the need for a clear awareness of the matter. For example, confusion about the possibility of a code of ethics for teachers, which is not possible, because although it is true that one can develop an ethics of the profession (which derives directly from personal ethics), this cannot be regulated in a code as happens in the deontological plane. That is to say, what concerns the exercise of the profession can be regulated within an accepted morality, but the virtuosity of the professional in the exercise of his profession cannot be regulated in the same way that the virtuosity of the individual as an individual cannot be regulated.

Despite the difference between ethics and deontology, some teacher training institutions continue to insist on generating so-called 'Codes of Ethics', the content of which refers to legal prescriptions that include sanctions; while ethics, as discussed earlier in this article, goes beyond deontology and morality. These codes

also consider teachers as one, ignoring the fact that not all teachers face the same academic and social challenges with their students and therefore these generic prescriptions are not necessarily equally applicable to all. For example, in the case of language teachers, it is necessary for them to be aware of the social transformations that, due to their intervention, may occur in their students because they are teaching a new language and therefore a new culture (which leads to important ethical implications) and to regulate their actions within an ethical and legal framework that considers such scenarios. However, this regulation should never be called 'ethics' or 'ethical code', since ethics is not prescriptive (it does not relate to what to do?) but more philosophical or transcendental (why do it?).

Then, it is necessary to have an in-depth discussion about these three concepts and their integration into initial and continuing teacher training. This discussion should be multi, inter and transdisciplinary and include experts in the philosophical, teaching, legal and educational fields, among others.

3. Ethics, morality and deontology in English teachers and English teacher trainees: a desirable scenario

In the context of language teaching, Barantes (2012) points out that the starting point must be the recognition that the greater the state of consciousness of the human being, the more fully he will develop his vocation to be a person. As a consequence of this, its potential to contribute, in solidarity and arguably disinterested, will also grow with the exaltation of the value of other human beings and of the immediate and global environment.

In some Latin American countries, there is a gap in ethical, morality and, in some cases, even deontological training that hinders the development of the full consciousness of which Barrantes refers to (2012). During university courses, in some institutions, the career of education includes a subject called deontology. Basically in that subject students discuss what is established in the legal norms of the career being studied, but it is not approached in such a way to generate deontological conscience in the future professionals. Then, during the professional practice, they show some behaviors opposite to what is studied in those norms. In addition, when one observes the profile of the

graduate and the thought of studies in different Latin American universities, the presence of what is ethical and deontological is not observed as part of the integral formation of the future trainer.

It is necessary that English teacher trainees and the in-service English teacher get training in this triad: morality, ethics and deontology. I agree with Aristotle (1959) who in his ethics for Nicomacheus affirmed that ethics is not studied to have a conceptual mastery of what virtue is, but to learn to become virtuous and good and that, according to Aristotle himself, to do it in another way (as if it were a matter of learning a subject) is a totally useless study.

How should this approach of ethical, moral and deontological formation be made in the future teacher? Taking into consideration Aristotle's forceful affirmation, it is necessary that those in charge of curricular reforms see the study of ethics as a transversal axis within the career and that it is related to all university work and undergraduate and postgraduate training and not as a subject that is approached from some subject or as a subject in itself.

I believe that this formation of virtuosity should be offer as part of a framework that functions as

a transversal axis because it allows two great achievements: the development of a person's virtuosity from his condition as a human being and the development of the same from his condition as an educator of other human beings. Thus, teachers will be able to develop their own ethics as professionals based on their ethics as a person, by understanding the concept and value of what ethics is and how it orients the paths of the human being.

In this way, it is possible to arrive at the development of virtuosity from which the morality and deontology have an immediate place. Consequently, the English teacher will not only be able to perform a better job but will also be at ease with it because he will develop it from his virtuosity, in a moral and deontological framework in harmony with his transcendental values. Nevertheless, I agree with Martínez et al (2002, p. 20) who warn that "the integration of ethical formation in the university requires a change in the teaching culture of the teaching staff..." because "only through a change in the teaching culture of the teaching staff and of the university institution will such ethical integration be possible" (Martínez et al., 2002, p. 20). That is to say, it is not enough to embody in a curricular proposal a transversal framework

that includes the ethics, morals, and deontology of the specialty, but that prior to its application there be an approach to the faculty (of all the areas that make up the career) that will be in charge of administering the training of future teachers.

Among the proposals of Martínez et al. (2002, p. 25) are that the current faculty transcend the theoretical knowledge of ethical elements and that they are able to integrate among their functions "...that of being a model in the treatment of ethical dilemmas", understood as the choice between two or more actions that face, each one, ethical obstacles that make difficult and almost impossible the decision about which option to take.

On the other hand, deontology in the field of language teaching should be formed, as Barrantes (2012) points out, from the knowledge of the epistemological framework of language teaching itself. In order to achieve a solid deontological foundation for EFL teachers, it is necessary to transcend their own knowledge of the applied linguistics that concerns them and also to have a clear perception of the object pursued (for example, in the case of English for specific dental purposes, the successful integration of the student into the target

discursive community). In this way, the teacher will have a clear idea to move in what Kawamura (2012) calls the level of expertise in the exercise of his profession. Once again it is clarified, it is not about taking a course whose subject is deontology and whose contents end up being meaningless for many students, it is a matter of generating a deontological conscience in the student that prepares him for the exercise of his profession and this must be done from all the subjects that he takes in the career.

It is now appropriate to remember that getting the diploma for an academic degree (e.g. as teacher) is just the confirmation that he is already a professional and that is why he is certified and recognized as such. In this sense, students must already have solid ethical, moral and deontological foundations associated with their professional performance.

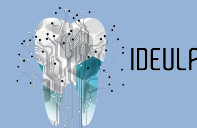
Barrantes (2012) recommends basing deontology in language teaching on openness to intersubjectivity and on a solid definition of what selfishness and otherness imply when diverse cultures meet through the learning of their languages. Those are the principles that should govern the transversal framework proposed in this article. In a context such as this one, the English teacher will be able to develop

an adequate *Weltanschauung* according to the profession he or she will practice and will then be able, as Barrantes (2012) proposes, to perform his or her posture capacity from this cosmovision, which he or she will have cultivated integrally in the development of his or her university studies.

Final Considerations

The aim of this article was to discuss the ethical, moral and deontological training of EFL teachers in the Latin American context. This discussion was made from a realistic perspective and aligned to the spirit of the present time in Latin America, in which the loss of values is marking the new generations and therefore the need for their rescue and the generation of ethical and moral awareness are increasingly necessary.

I may conclude that there persists, in the context of teaching, a lack of conceptual clarity that involves the terms 'ethics', 'morality' and 'deontology', which is observed in the deontological codes and the so-called codes of ethics that govern the profession. As far as the English teacher is concerned, there are no deontological codes that contemplate the aspects proper to FL teaching, even when there are very



particular ethical and professional factors that are distant from other teaching environments (teaching another culture without transculturizing, for example); rather, English teachers are governed by general codes that leave out important aspects related to the exercise of teaching in the teaching of a foreign language.

There is a need for an in-depth review of the training of English teachers (as in the other specialties) in terms of ethics, morality and deontology. In order to do so, it is necessary to discuss the need to generate awareness among

teachers of what each of these concepts encompasses and how they are and should be reflected in teaching practice and to carry out future studies in which the perception of students and teachers in service about these topics and their relationship with their professional practice, among others, can be known.

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