

REVISTA ELECTRÓNICA

Matices

EN LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

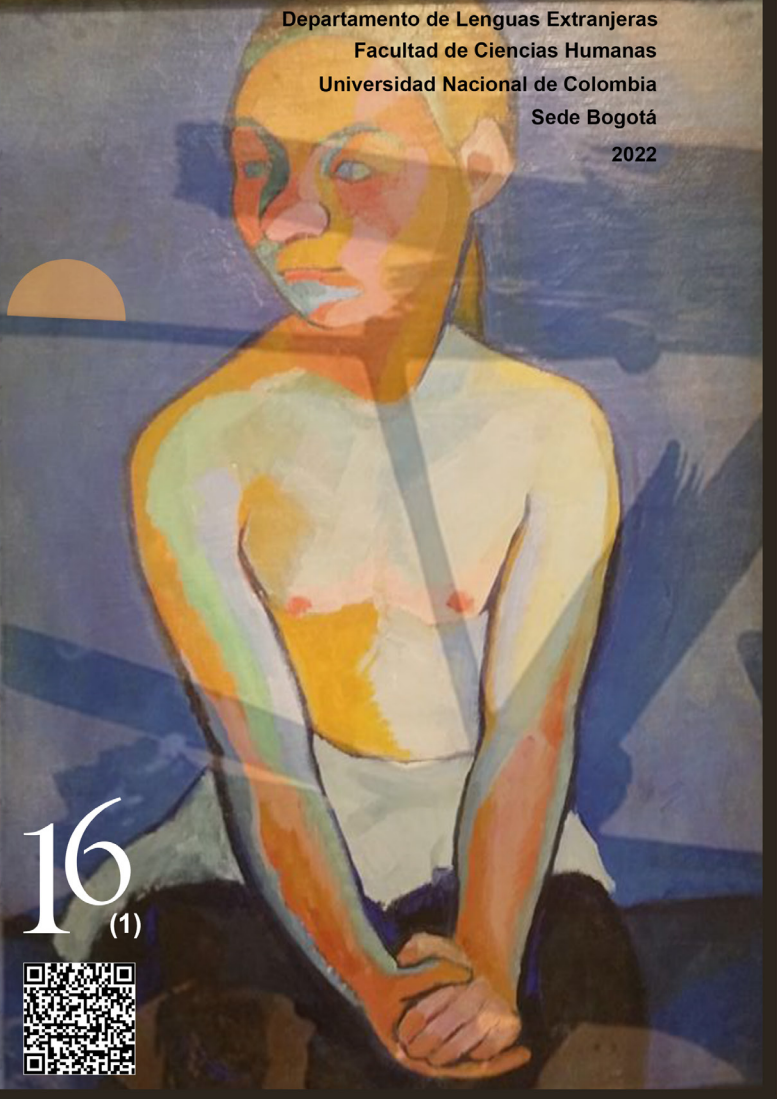
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EN LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS



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Carrera 30 N.º 45-03. Edificio 229
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revlenex_fchbog@unal.edu.co
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LOS CINCO ARTÍCULOS DEL VOLUMEN 16, Número 1 y las tres infografías del Segundo Concurso Nacional de Infografías de la Revista Matices del 2022 están relacionadas por el tema lingüístico y la enseñanza-aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero, proceso que implica considerar a los docentes, a los estudiantes, al contexto educativo y al contexto cultural y social (Krashen, 1982), así como también a los medios y materiales. En esa perspectiva, en primer lugar, se presentarán los artículos y después las infografías.

Es fundamental que el docente desarrolle una práctica reflexiva y autocrítica de su proceso pedagógico (Riquelme, 2020), es por ello que, en el primer artículo que se presenta, el autor Cliserio Antonio Cruz Martínez, de la Universidad Veracruzana, México, realiza un estudio donde explora la realidad de nueve docentes de inglés de cinco escuelas en Veracruz, encontrando que existe un desinterés por parte de los estudiantes en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés, derivando en un bajo nivel del dominio del idioma meta; asimismo, encuentra que existe una preparación inadecuada de los docentes, lo que conlleva a la ausencia de metodologías activas.

El segundo artículo, en cambio, se centra en los estudiantes como informantes. William Charpentier-Jiménez de la Universidad de Costa Rica explora las actitudes de los estudiantes hacia los hábitos de estudio de la pronunciación en inglés en una universidad pública de Costa Rica con estudiantes del nivel B2. Si bien es cierto que los aprendices reconocen la importancia

de estos hábitos, no se llega a la práctica real. Es por ello por lo que en el estudio se enfatiza en la necesidad de un currículo que fomente el desarrollo de hábitos de estudio para la mejora de la pronunciación, considerando la planificación del tiempo, la actitud hacia el estudio y un ambiente adecuado de estudio (Capdevila y Bellmunt, 2016).

En el tercer artículo, presentado por Cristina Rodríguez Pastor de la Universidad de Cádiz, España, se analiza la validez del programa online LingQ para el aprendizaje de idiomas; de forma específica, se describió el proceso de aprendizaje del francés. Entre las cualidades de la plataforma LingQ destaca el uso de textos auténticos acorde con los intereses de los usuarios, llevándolos a un aprendizaje autónomo y personalizado; que, en palabras de Berardo (2006), el material auténtico permite la experimentación de un lenguaje real, es muy motivante y permite el desarrollo de habilidades culturales y lingüísticas.

El cuarto artículo está relacionado con la evaluación lingüística del docente de idiomas, la cual debe ser sistemática y formativa para garantizar la calidad (Pastor, 2020). Al respecto, los autores Walter Araya Garita y Jennifer Céspedes Araya, ambos de la Universidad de Costa Rica, buscaron un sustento teórico que permitía identificar la validez del examen Universidad de Costa Rica – English Language Teacher Assessment (UCR-ELTA). Los investigadores encontraron que este examen dirigido a docentes de inglés permite evaluar habilidades lingüísticas y otras destrezas relevantes y que, además, es muy apreciado por los empleadores, ya que lo usan como parámetro de contratación.

Por último, para Pérez (2022), las lenguas son elementos clave en la formación de la identidad de los pueblos, pero su relevancia considera los aspectos históricos, políticos y sociales. Es así como el quinto artículo, presentado por Julián Esteban Escobar González de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia,

examina las relaciones entre la lengua y la identidad en el contexto de los debates sobre la reforma ortográfica del español en la Colombia del siglo XIX. El debate se enmarcó en cinco ejes temáticos: la autoridad de la RAE, la reforma ortográfica como símbolo de progreso, críticas a ideas patrióticas y antihispánicas, la reforma vista como anarquía y su relación con los partidos políticos. La investigación llegó a concluir que existe un vínculo entre la lengua y la identidad nacional, donde la ortografía fue un medio para la lucha ideológica en una Colombia del siglo XIX marcada por una crisis identitaria.

Para concluir, las tres infografías premiadas resumen investigaciones que complementan estos artículos:

La infografía que logró el primer lugar, del autor Crisithian Javier Aguilar Cabanzo, sintetiza excepcionalmente los hallazgos de un artículo científico sobre el uso de grabaciones en video como estrategia de mejora de la producción oral de un idioma extranjero. Pues, en la infografía se pone en evidencia cómo el uso de las estrategias tecnológicas permite una adaptación de los entornos educativos y, a través de ello, se puede llegar a una autoevaluación y al desarrollo de la autonomía educativa.

La infografía que logró el segundo lugar, de la autora Jennifer Zabaleta Rico, sintetiza un estudio sobre la planificación, el monitoreo y la evaluación como estrategias metacognitivas en la enseñanza de inglés. En la infografía se enfatizan los aspectos teóricos y prácticos para mejorar el proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas y para fomentar una mayor autonomía.

La infografía que logró el tercer lugar, del autor Cristian Alejandro Chavarro Gordillo, esquematiza el estudio sobre la lectura crítica como herramienta para desarrollar procesos cognitivos en estudiantes universitarios del idioma francés. Esta infografía permite identificar con claridad la conexión entre la

lingüística y el desarrollo cognitivo, fomentando así el desarrollo de competencias transversales.

Hermis Tolentino Quiñones.¹
[1] Editor invitado

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1 Ph.D. en Educación
Profesor investigador.
Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle, Lima, Perú
hermis_une@hotmail.com –Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9819-1655>

A collection of various accented and special characters scattered across a light blue background. The characters include: ð, Ǻ, ǻ, Ǽ, Ǿ, ǿ, ǿ̂, ǿ̃, ǿ̄, ǿ̅, ǿ̆, ǿ̇, ǿ̈, ǿ̉, ǿ̊, ǿ̋, ǿ̌, ǿ̍, ǿ̎, ǿ̏, ǿ̐, ǿ̑, ǿ̒, ǿ̓, ǿ̔, ǿ̕, ǿ̖, ǿ̗, ǿ̘, ǿ̙, ǿ̚, ǿ̛, ǿ̜, ǿ̝, ǿ̞, ǿ̟, ǿ̠, ǿ̡, ǿ̢, ǿ̣, ǿ̤, ǿ̥, ǿ̦, ǿ̧, ǿ̨, ǿ̩, ǿ̪, ǿ̫, ǿ̬, ǿ̭, ǿ̮, ǿ̯, ǿ̰, ǿ̱, ǿ̲, ǿ̳, ǿ̴, ǿ̵, ǿ̶, ǿ̷, ǿ̸, ǿ̹, ǿ̺, ǿ̻, ǿ̼, ǿ̽, ǿ̾, ǿ̿, ǿ̺̃, ǿ̺̄, ǿ̺̅, ǿ̺̆, ǿ̺̇, ǿ̺̈, ǿ̺̉, ǿ̺̊, ǿ̺̋, ǿ̺̌, ǿ̺̍, ǿ̺̎, ǿ̺̏, ǿ̺̐, ǿ̺̑, ǿ̺̒, ǿ̺̓, ǿ̺̔, ǿ̺̕, ǿ̺̖, ǿ̺̗, ǿ̺̘, ǿ̺̙, ǿ̺̚, ǿ̛̺, ǿ̺̜, ǿ̺̝, ǿ̺̞, ǿ̺̟, ǿ̺̠, ǿ̡̺, ǿ̢̺, ǿ̺̣, ǿ̺̤, ǿ̺̥, ǿ̺̦, ǿ̧̺, ǿ̨̺, ǿ̺̩, ǿ̺̪, ǿ̺̫, ǿ̺̬, ǿ̺̭, ǿ̺̮, ǿ̺̯, ǿ̺̰, ǿ̺̱, ǿ̺̲, ǿ̺̳, ǿ̴̺, ǿ̵̺, ǿ̶̺, ǿ̷̺, ǿ̸̺, ǿ̺̹, ǿ̺̺, ǿ̺̻, ǿ̺̼, ǿ̺̽, ǿ̺̾, ǿ̺̿, ǿ̺̺̃, ǿ̺̺̄, ǿ̺̺̅, ǿ̺̺̆, ǿ̺̺̇, ǿ̺̺̈, ǿ̺̺̉, ǿ̺̺̊, ǿ̺̺̋, ǿ̺̺̌, ǿ̺̺̍, ǿ̺̺̎, ǿ̺̺̏, ǿ̺̺̐, ǿ̺̺̑, ǿ̺̺̒, ǿ̺̺̓, ǿ̺̺̔, ǿ̺̺̕, ǿ̺̺̖, ǿ̺̺̗, ǿ̺̺̘, ǿ̺̺̙, ǿ̺̺̚, ǿ̛̺̺, ǿ̺̺̜, ǿ̺̺̝, ǿ̺̺̞, ǿ̺̺̟, ǿ̺̺̠, ǿ̡̺̺, ǿ̢̺̺, ǿ̺̺̣, ǿ̺̺̤, ǿ̺̺̥, ǿ̺̺̦, ǿ̧̺̺, ǿ̨̺̺, ǿ̺̺̩, ǿ̺̺̪, ǿ̺̺̫, ǿ̺̺̬, ǿ̺̺̭, ǿ̺̺̮, ǿ̺̺̯, ǿ̺̺̰, ǿ̺̺̱, ǿ̺̺̲, ǿ̺̺̳, ǿ̴̺̺, ǿ̵̺̺, ǿ̶̺̺, ǿ̷̺̺, ǿ̸̺̺, ǿ̺̺̹, ǿ̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̻, ǿ̺̺̼, ǿ̺̺̽, ǿ̺̺̾, ǿ̺̺̿, ǿ̺̺̺̃, ǿ̺̺̺̄, ǿ̺̺̺̅, ǿ̺̺̺̆, ǿ̺̺̺̇, ǿ̺̺̺̈, ǿ̺̺̺̉, ǿ̺̺̺̊, ǿ̺̺̺̋, ǿ̺̺̺̌, ǿ̺̺̺̍, ǿ̺̺̺̎, ǿ̺̺̺̏, ǿ̺̺̺̐, ǿ̺̺̺̑, ǿ̺̺̺̒, ǿ̺̺̺̓, ǿ̺̺̺̔, ǿ̺̺̺̕, ǿ̺̺̺̖, ǿ̺̺̺̗, ǿ̺̺̺̘, ǿ̺̺̺̙, ǿ̺̺̺̚, ǿ̛̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̜, ǿ̺̺̺̝, ǿ̺̺̺̞, ǿ̺̺̺̟, ǿ̺̺̺̠, ǿ̡̺̺̺, ǿ̢̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̣, ǿ̺̺̺̤, ǿ̺̺̺̥, ǿ̺̺̺̦, ǿ̧̺̺̺, ǿ̨̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̩, ǿ̺̺̺̪, ǿ̺̺̺̫, ǿ̺̺̺̬, ǿ̺̺̺̭, ǿ̺̺̺̮, ǿ̺̺̺̯, ǿ̺̺̺̰, ǿ̺̺̺̱, ǿ̺̺̺̲, ǿ̺̺̺̳, ǿ̴̺̺̺, ǿ̵̺̺̺, ǿ̶̺̺̺, ǿ̷̺̺̺, ǿ̸̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̹, ǿ̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̻, ǿ̺̺̺̼, ǿ̺̺̺̽, ǿ̺̺̺̾, ǿ̺̺̺̿, ǿ̺̺̺̺̃, ǿ̺̺̺̺̄, ǿ̺̺̺̺̅, ǿ̺̺̺̺̆, ǿ̺̺̺̺̇, ǿ̺̺̺̺̈, ǿ̺̺̺̺̉, ǿ̺̺̺̺̊, ǿ̺̺̺̺̋, ǿ̺̺̺̺̌, ǿ̺̺̺̺̍, ǿ̺̺̺̺̎, ǿ̺̺̺̺̏, ǿ̺̺̺̺̐, ǿ̺̺̺̺̑, ǿ̺̺̺̺̒, ǿ̺̺̺̺̓, ǿ̺̺̺̺̔, ǿ̺̺̺̺̕, ǿ̺̺̺̺̖, ǿ̺̺̺̺̗, ǿ̺̺̺̺̘, ǿ̺̺̺̺̙, ǿ̺̺̺̺̚, ǿ̛̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̜, ǿ̺̺̺̺̝, ǿ̺̺̺̺̞, ǿ̺̺̺̺̟, ǿ̺̺̺̺̠, ǿ̡̺̺̺̺, ǿ̢̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̣, ǿ̺̺̺̺̤, ǿ̺̺̺̺̥, ǿ̺̺̺̺̦, ǿ̧̺̺̺̺, ǿ̨̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̩, ǿ̺̺̺̺̪, ǿ̺̺̺̺̫, ǿ̺̺̺̺̬, ǿ̺̺̺̺̭, ǿ̺̺̺̺̮, ǿ̺̺̺̺̯, ǿ̺̺̺̺̰, ǿ̺̺̺̺̱, ǿ̺̺̺̺̲, ǿ̺̺̺̺̳, ǿ̴̺̺̺̺, ǿ̵̺̺̺̺, ǿ̶̺̺̺̺, ǿ̷̺̺̺̺, ǿ̸̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̹, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̻, ǿ̺̺̺̺̼, ǿ̺̺̺̺̽, ǿ̺̺̺̺̾, ǿ̺̺̺̺̿, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̃, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̄, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̅, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̆, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̇, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̈, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̉, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̊, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̋, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̌, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̍, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̎, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̏, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̐, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̑, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̒, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̓, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̔, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̕, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̖, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̗, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̘, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̙, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̚, ǿ̛̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̜, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̝, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̞, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̟, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̠, ǿ̡̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̢̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̣, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̤, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̥, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̦, ǿ̧̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̨̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̩, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̪, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̫, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̬, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̭, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̮, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̯, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̰, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̱, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̲, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̳, ǿ̴̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̵̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̶̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̷̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̸̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̹, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̺, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̻, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̼, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̽, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̾, ǿ̺̺̺̺̺̿

Voices from the Classroom: Unveiling Teachers' Perspectives on Implementing the 2017 'Aprendizajes Clave Inglés' in Telesecundarias*

Voces desde el aula: perspectivas de los docentes acerca de la implementación del plan de estudios 'Aprendizajes Clave Inglés 2017' en el nivel de telesecundaria.

Cliserio Antonio Cruz Martínez¹

Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa, México

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¹ PhD in Language Studies and Applied Linguistics

Lecturer

E-mail: clcruz@uv.mx - ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9444-1912>

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ABSTRACT

English teaching and learning have become a fundamental need. However, many Mexican schools lack the necessary tools to carry them out. To know how teachers implement the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave', this research identified teachers' difficulties, as well as the techniques they use to fulfil their labour as 'telesecundaria' teachers of the English language. In that same line of thought, the opinions of nine teachers of the rural communities of the municipality of San Rafael, Veracruz, Mexico, were explored. To collect the appropriate information, it was necessary to survey and interview the participants, who revealed the little importance given to the teaching of English, the lack of interest of the students and the lack of preparation of the teachers. Finally, it was concluded that English learning is paramount for the context of this inquiry and for that reason, it is necessary to create an adequate syllabus according to the students' level, as well as training and providing teachers with the knowledge and suitable material necessary to offer students quality learning.

Keywords: *Aprendizajes Clave, English, rural communities, syllabus, telesecundaria teachers.*

RESUMEN

La enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés se han convertido en una necesidad fundamental. Sin embargo, muchas de las escuelas mexicanas carecen de las herramientas necesarias para llevarlas a cabo. Con el fin de conocer cómo los docentes implementan el programa educativo de inglés, Aprendizajes Clave, esta investigación identificó las dificultades que enfrentan los docentes, así como las técnicas que utilizan para cumplir con su labor como docentes de telesecundaria de inglés. Para ello, se consideró la opinión de nueve docentes de telesecundarias de algunas comunidades rurales del municipio de San Rafael, Veracruz, México. Para recolectar la información adecuada, fue necesario realizar encuestas y entrevistas que revelaron, entre otras cosas, la poca importancia que se le da a la enseñanza del inglés, la falta de interés de los alumnos y también la falta de preparación de los profesores. Finalmente, se concluyó que el aprendizaje del inglés es fundamental y por ello es necesario crear planes de estudio adecuados al nivel de los estudiantes, además de capacitar y dotar a los docentes de los conocimientos y materiales necesarios para ofrecer a los estudiantes un aprendizaje de calidad.

Palabras Clave: *Aprendizajes Clave, comunidades rurales, docentes de telesecundarias, inglés, programa educativo.*

THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE ENGLISH teaching is increasingly recognised as crucial in this day and age. Nonetheless, many schools in Mexico lack the necessary resources to teach English appropriately and effectively, this is particularly true in rural educational settings (Izquierdo et al., 2021; Sánchez, 2023).

In fact, in the Mexican agenda, different proposals for teaching English as a foreign language have been developed. This study focuses on exploring one of those proposals, the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave', which emerged in 2017, by exploring the voices of the teachers who implement it. This English syllabus demands the teacher to be a competent user of English, be related to his linguistic analysis, must understand the child's development, the necessities, interests and abilities, as well as the difficulties that students could face in the process of learning a new language (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2019). It also establishes that students must already be familiarized with the language and have previous knowledge that allows them to acquire the new topics and increase their English level during telesecundaria education. With the implementation of this English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave', it is expected that

...students develop skills, knowledge, attitudes and learning strategies to participate and interact in social practices of the language, oral and written, typical of different communicative and routine cultural contexts, habitual and known, with native and non-native speakers. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017, p.173)

The Syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave' establishes expected learning outcomes that need to be reached by students at the end of the telesecundaria level, which determine that they have to be able to read, to write, to improvise, to interpret, to describe and to communicate on a variety of topics of personal, cultural,

and everyday interest. Also, based on the reference framework created by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the students are expected to reach the B1 level in which they can “participate in social practices of the language that demand communicative interaction in various social contexts, develop tasks or actions that promote, among other things, the real use of English” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017 p.173).

However, the teaching of English goes beyond having a well-organized syllabus and good expectations, since external situations that affect the teaching and learning of English may arise. As it was mentioned above, the responsibility in students’ learning process is divided into students, parents, and teachers, but also the educational authorities and government play an important role to ensure the syllabus is being well implemented.

This qualitative inquiry attempts to explore teachers’ perspectives from rural or non-urban telesecundaria schools realities, in the municipality of San Rafael, Veracruz, Mexico, where the 2017 English syllabus ‘Aprendizajes Clave’ is implemented. The study particularly aims to identify the use of techniques to implement the syllabus effectively to understand the potential constraints that the participants face. To achieve the objective, the research set the following questions to be responded: *what are teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the syllabus? How do they implement it?*

According to Olleta (2013, pp. 28), “Rural schools are considered inferior to schools located in urban areas, due to their location and the supposed economic and social backwardness they suffer compared to big cities”. This fact is transcendent to be inquired from the voices of rural high school teachers’ point of view. It is also expected to have a voice about their reality — teachers’ academic profile, techniques, the materials they use to

teach and the difficulties they have faced when implementing the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave' —. English learning is vital for this setting and further alike, and it needs the development of an appropriate syllabus aligned with students' proficiency level and providing teachers with adequate training to ensure high quality education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is needed to clarify the main concepts to understand the telesecundaria teachers' current situation and some previous studies on the implementation of a syllabus to compare the different realities that have been faced at the telesecundaria level in the Southeast of Mexico.

The Mexican Educational System

It is a set of principles, institutions, resources and technologies which attempts to provide educational services to the Mexican population. It is governed by the national legal framework related to education, reflected on the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States in its articles 3° and 4°; and in the Ley General de Educación (Ley General de Educación, 1993; Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1917, arts. 3-4). It has been established by the Mexican Constitution of 1917 and since that time has undergone several changes.

As reported by Pacheco et al. (2018), the Mexican Educational System is composed of pupils, teachers, educational authorities, educational plans, programmes, methods, and materials, as well as State educational institutions, of its decentralized agencies and those private institutions authorized to conduct studies. It is also divided into different stages of education: basic, upper telesecundaria education, and higher education. Basic education covers school education for children from three to fifteen

years of age and is provided in 12 grades. The education levels that conform to the basic education are: pre-school, primary, and telesecundaria which are taught over a period of 3 years for preschool, 6 years for primary school, and 3 years for telesecundaria school. This inquiry focuses on telesecundaria education.

In Mexico, telesecundaria education has been compulsory since 1993 and it is generally aimed for those among the ages from 12 to 15. As reported by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (2017, pp. 9-10) the main purpose of the telesecundaria school is to contribute to the development of students' capabilities after primary school since, the contents are based on the knowledge, skills and values that allow students to continue their learning with a high degree of independence, inside or outside the school.

To meet demand and expand coverage in localities particularly in small, usually rural and marginalized populations, some specific modalities have been established. As a result, telesecundaria, indigenous telesecundaria school, telesecundaria for working people, the community and community indigenous, the indigenous telesecundaria, among others, subsist (Ducoing, 2018). The telesecundaria modality was created to new audiovisual techniques for high school and thus, bringing useful knowledge, dosed and pedagogically systematized, to all Mexican homes. In addition, it was thought to give workers and housewives the opportunity to follow the courses from home, among others. Thus, with the firm hope of forging better prospects for the young generations, the state of Tlaxcala negotiated with the Mexican government the creation of the first national telesecundaria (Jimenez et al., 2010).

Rural education in Mexico

The rural schools are far from cities allowing access to education for the children who live in communities where agricultural activities are carried out. The types of service with the greatest

presence in areas of high and very high marginalization are indigenous and community, but the difference lies in the fact that these types of schools are the ones with the lowest number of students on average (Inafed, 2017).

Gameren and Hinojosa (n. d.) mention, “Individuals in rural areas have less access to professional education, and in general benefit less from the education, despite the efforts that are made through different institutions” (Gameren & Hinojosa, n. d., p. 13). The teacher must develop the intellectual capacities of their students so that they can participate socially in their community, region or country (UNESCO, 2021), but although teachers strive to perform their teaching tasks daily with quality, these are limited.

To unify the country culturally, José Vasconcelos, Mexico’s Secretary of Education in the 1920’s, planned and structured educational policies in Mexico in an attempt to promote national unity and cultural identity through education. He believed that by providing educational opportunities to rural communities, a broader national culture could be integrated. However, just as the schools of the big cities adapted to programs, methodology, school activities, and even to the professional training of teachers, rural schools had to adapt to the characteristics of the place where they were established (Inafed, 2017). That is why the syllabus of a rural school and an urban school should not be the same, since the students come from different backgrounds. Despite the fact that almost 7 million students from all states of the country attend schools located in rural areas, the SEP has created only one syllabus for both kinds of schools (Juárez, 2016).

Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave para la Educación Integral

In July 2016, the Secretaría de Educación Pública (Public Education Office) in Mexico presented a proposal to update the

Educational Model consisting of three documents. La Carta sobre los Fines de la Educación in the 21st Century, in which it details the kind of Mexican men and women are seeking to train with the Educational Model. The 2016 Educational Model explains the way in which it is proposed to articulate the components of the system to reach the maximum learning achievement of all girls, boys and young people. And finally, the Propuesta Curricular para la Educación Obligatoria 2016 contains a curricular approach for basic and upper telesecundaria education and covers both educational content and pedagogical principles.

The recommendations made in the consultation served as the basis for the preparation of the final version of *The plan and the study programs for basic education*.

The determination of the Plan y programas de estudio para la educación básica corresponds to the Ministry of Public Education, as established by the LGE in its articles 120, section I, and 48. Its character is obligatory and of national application. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017, p. 15)

On the other hand, the State must guarantee access to school for all children and young people and ensure that the education they receive provides them with meaningful, relevant and useful learning and knowledge for life, regardless of their socioeconomic background, ethnic origin or gender.

It is expected that upon graduation from compulsory education, the student can effectively develop language and communication, mathematical thinking, exploration and understanding of the natural and social world, critical thinking and problem solving, socio-emotional skills and project of life, collaboration and teamwork, coexistence and citizenship, appreciation and artistic expression, attention to the body and health, care of the environment as well as digital skills (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

For this inquiry, a qualitative approach was selected due to the fact that the focus of this study was to discover the teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave'. In other words, this study attempted to analyze the participants' voices and report detailed points of view in a natural setting. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is a developing model that occurs in a natural environment. By means of this approach, it was expected to know their reality experienced in a rural telesecundaria school when implementing the Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave, English.

An exploratory case study tradition was adopted (Yin, 2009) because the case study approach meets the characteristics and the objective of this inquiry. Creswell defines a case study as a problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a "case" or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, as cited in VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007, p. 81).

Firstly, teachers represent the group involved in a case. Secondly, the case is represented by the English syllabus 'Aprendizajes Clave'. Focusing on the syllabus implementation, teachers' perceptions and opinions and the difficulties observed in a situation as well as how they react and solve the problems it represents. Finally, the specific context is the rural public telesecundaria schools where the problem is developed.

The methods involved in the data collection process included semi-structured interviews and a survey. To collect relevant and appropriate information and achieve the general objective of this research, it was necessary to choose rural teachers who implemented the Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave. Thus, for the present investigation, the participants are nine (referred to as T1 to T9 in the findings) teachers of the institutions located in

Cementeras, El pital, Tepetates, Tres Encinos, and El Guayabal, San Rafael, Veracruz, Mexico.

Participants: nine cases

Teacher number one is 52 years old. She is from Maria de la Torre, a town in the municipality of Martinez de la Torre near San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 30 years, she works in the telesecundaria Miguel Aleman Valdes in the town of Cementeras. Teacher number two is 43 years old. She is from Potrero Nuevo, San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 18 years, she also works in the telesecundaria Miguel Aleman Valdes in the town of Cementeras. Teacher number three is 43 years old. He is from Martínez de la Torre the municipality next to San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 20 years, he works in the telesecundaria Ernesto Toral Lombard in the town of Tres Encinos. Teacher number four is 41 years old. She is from Jicaltepec, Nautla. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 17 years, she works in the telesecundaria Ignacio de la llave in the town of El Guayabal. Teacher number five is 39 years old. She is from Ignacio Zaragoza (La Poza), San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 16 years, she also works in the telesecundaria Ignacio de la llave in the town of El Guayabal. Teacher number six is 42 years old. She is from Paso Largo, San Rafael. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 20 years, she works in the telesecundaria Justo Sierra in the town of El Pital. Teacher number seven is 45 years old. He has a telesecundaria teaching experience of 22 years, and he works in the telesecundaria Justo Sierra in the town of El Pital. Teacher number eight is 50 years old. She is from Martínez de la Torre. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 15 years, she works in the telesecundaria Profr. Artemio Diaz Reyes in the town of Tepetates. Teacher number nine is 48 years old. He is from

the municipality of Misantla, Veracruz. With a telesecundaria teaching experience of 20 years, he works in the telesecundaria Profr. Artemio Diaz Reyes in the town of Tepetates.

Procedure for data collection

The process of data collection began in May 2023. I was authorized to apply the necessary investigation instruments by the City Hall of San Rafael with a letter of introduction. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and polls administered to a group of 9 telesecundaria teachers.

The data were analyzed by employing the thematic analysis method in order to find out the participants' views, opinions, experiences, or values from a set of qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that it is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set. This method, then, is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities.

For conducting this kind of analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide: familiarization with the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. For this inquiry when all the data was concentrated, similarities and differences in the teachers' answers were identified. The patterns in the answers were analyzed and thus organized into five categories which allowed the researcher to describe and examine the data.

FINDINGS

The importance of English language in the classroom

This first category shows the missimportance that is given to the English language inside these telesecundaria schools. On the

one hand, most participants mention that just two hours and a half per week are destined to teach English. Any language is acquired and perfected through practice. Bruner (1960) asserts that what determines the level of intellectual development is the degree to which the child has received adequate instruction along with practice or experience. However, in rural areas there seems not to be sufficient practice as some interviewees mentioned.

...pero como nada más aprenden lo que ven aquí en la escuela... Los chicos no lo hablan, en el pueblo no hablan inglés. Es normal, ¿no? Porque no lo practican en casa... (T8)

Vygotsky (as cited in Cameron, 2001, p. 38) argued that “when we interact, we use words to try to capture our own and other people's sense, our own particular contextual understanding and connotations for events and ideas”. In this case, it could be understood that lack of practice outside the classroom could stop language development. For this reason, the purpose of the curriculum cannot be carried out in these rural telesecundarias since in these rural areas students do not put into practice what they have learned in school.

On the other hand, the Educational Model in Mexico intends that basic and upper telesecundaria education contribute to train people who have the motivation and ability to achieve their personal, work and family development (UNAM, 2016). Additionally, according to Ortiz (as cited in Fernández, n. d.), knowledge of English is a mandatory requirement to work in international institutions, even in national ones. This means that the English subject plays an important role in education.

However, according to the data obtained from the survey, 78% of the participants agree that the subject of English does not receive the same importance as the other subjects. One of

the participants mentioned that it is essential that this subject receives the importance it deserves.

El inglés no ha sido una de las prioridades... considero que se debe de tratar de subsanar para que el inglés no sea una materia de relleno, sino que se le dé la importancia que realmente tiene y el chico pueda salir con los aprendizajes esperados que se están estableciendo... (T7)

This reveals that is not prior in these telesecundarias however, if the English subject received the adequate importance, if it was taught and practiced at home correctly, the students could achieve the results that the syllabus expects.

English teaching experience

With this information it was possible to know rural telesecundaria teachers' realities. To better clarify and present the most relevant information collected, the data were divided into three subcategories.

Teachers' knowledge of the English language

Some interviewees commented they have an essential English level to transmit the knowledge to their students and despite not having an advanced level, they think their basic level is adequate to teach their students. They expressed that even if they do not know any topic, it is their duty to be prepared. One of the participants said that taking English courses had allowed him to feel prepared for this challenge.

Siempre me ha gustado el inglés. No me siento con un nivel medio, o avanzado, pero lo básico e indispensable, sí. (T2)

...yo siento que mi nivel de inglés, si es apto para poder enseñar a los niños. ...Aparte del inglés que llevé en mis escuelas particulares, los complementé con cursos de Harmon Hall. (T4)

...Si el maestro no sabe debe buscar la manera de aprender para poder transmitir a los alumnos, si no, no tendría caso. Es nuestra labor. (T8)

These participants think telesecundaria teachers have to be capable of guiding their students to acquire the necessary knowledge, even with a basic level of English. Teachers have to be professional mediators and construct environments that help to achieve the expected learnings in the students (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

Those points of view are not shared by all teachers. Due to the fact that telesecundaria teachers are not specialized in every area they teach, some participants think they do not have the necessary skills to develop an adequate English class. Even so, they try to develop their classes as well as they can.

...no es nuestra especialidad, entonces el nivel no es tan adecuado, tú tienes que dominar una materia para poderla dar, y nosotros la llevamos, pero no la dominamos. (T9)

En telesecundarias tú sabes que damos todas las materias, por ejemplo, yo, mi especialidad es en ciencias sociales, o sea, nada que ver. Entonces doy a lo que Dios me da a entender... (T1)

In the eighth fraction of the article 8 of the Ley general del servicio profesional docente (2018), it is attributed to the Local Educational Authorities to “offer free, suitable, relevant, and consistent programs and courses with the levels of performance that are desired to be achieved, for continuous training. Updating of knowledge and professional development of Teaching Staff and Personnel with Management or Supervision Functions who are in service”.

One of the participants mentioned that unfortunately telesecundaria teachers do not receive the necessary English training: “...al maestro de telesecundaria le falta mayor preparación. Le

faltan opciones reales de formación en este idioma para crecer de manera más eficaz y práctica esta materia” (T7).

Finally, to achieve the English Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave's purpose, the teacher must understand the needs, interests, abilities and difficulties the student may present. In addition, s/he must master the language so that s/he can show students, among other things, the strategies that a native speaker uses in social practice (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017). Analyzing all these previous teacher's comments and the syllabus Aprendizajes Clave it could be understood that telesecundaria teachers just have a basic English level and although they try to fulfill their role, it is necessary for them to acquire more preparation to master this language as it is required in the syllabus.

Reasons to teach the English language

Most of the participants agree that their purpose to teach English is that their students acquire the expected knowledge or at least the basic knowledge to be ready for the high school, since telesecundaria is the last stage of basic education. Even when they do not have the adequate material and for them the basic English knowledge is essential for passing to the next grade or level.

Yo misma no me siento motivada porque no tengo libro.

Pero, que lleven un conocimiento básico, que aprendan lo básico para que pasen al siguiente grado. (T1)

Que los chicos aprendan porque deben estar preparados para el siguiente nivel... la preparatoria, su universidad. (T8)

Teachers expect their students to finish telesecundaria with an English level (basic) that allows them to improve and increase it in high school. It means providing students with the basic English knowledge to be ready for the English level that is taught in high school: “...que por lo menos los alumnos

lleguen a la preparatoria con un 20, 30, 40 por ciento manejando el inglés” (T₃).

Another participant mentioned that it is essential for students to have strong language bases to be able to develop and increase their English knowledge. For that reason, her principal objective is to lay those groundworks in her students. She exemplified what the basics means for them.

Mi objetivo principal es que sepan lo básico, los pronombres, los adjetivos posesivos, números, el abecedario... lo basiquito de inglés, que estén sentadas esas bases en ellos que es la parte esencial para que ellos continúen desarrollando esos aprendizajes pero ya teniendo como base lo básico. (T₄)

“The purpose of the second cycle (3rd and 4th grade of primary school) is for students to interact in immediate and familiar communication situations, through expressions used in habitual contexts” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017, p. 167). Taking into account the previous mentioned as well as teachers’ opinions, it could be understood that teachers pretend to teach their students at a different level than the syllabus marks telesecundaria students must have. Since teachers start from a basic knowledge as if they were in primary school, according to the syllabus, telesecundaria students must be able to converse in various situations with a neutral register. That is, they should be able to describe experiences, events, desires, and aspirations, as well as briefly justify their opinions or explain their plans (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

Design of English classes

It is important that teachers previously plan their classes to transmit the correct knowledge to their students. Moreover, the students can notice when a teacher prepares a class and when s/

he does not: “Si yo me preparo logro transmitir en mis alumnos el interés. Sí, lo reconozco” (T1).

To elaborate a didactic plan involves analyzing and organizing the educational contents, determining the objectives, intentions, and educational purposes to be achieved; in addition to establishing the sequence of activities in time and space (Ascencio, 2016).

Criteria for the didactic planning design

According to the English syllabus Aprendizajes Clave, the teacher must plan tasks or activities that preserve the social functions of language practices and enable the distribution, sequencing, and articulation of program content, as well as multiple opportunities to participate in them (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

One of the criteria that a teacher must take into account before planning a class is the students' previous knowledge. Tanner and Tanner (as cited in Keyes, 1997) mention that the function of the teacher was to impart knowledge by utilizing previous learning, and to accomplish this it was necessary for the teacher to come to know the student's previous knowledge or learning and experiences.

Some teachers answered that the criteria they consider to plan their English classes are the previous knowledge their students have.

Conocimiento previo de los alumnos. (T9)

Los conocimientos previos que tengan los alumnos... (T3)

Los aprendizajes básicos de mis alumnos porque no puedo hacer una clase si ellos no conocen lo básico, y de ahí parto. (T6)

The didactic plans respond to the different needs of the students, the pedagogical styles of the teachers and the particularities of the educational organization. Other relevant criteria

mentioned by the participants were the expected learnings, the purposes, the objectives and the evaluation.

El tema que se va a ver, los aprendizajes esperados, el propósito, las acciones, las estrategias con las que las va a abordar, la evaluación... (T4)

Propósitos, objetivos, el enfoque del programa, los recursos con los que uno... tiene a la mano, y los aspectos que se van a evaluar... (T7)

According to the Secretaría de Educación Pública (2017), the expected learning by the syllabus is that telesecundaria students can identify and understand the general meaning and main ideas of various oral and written texts that are simple, brief, clear, and in standard language when they deal with familiar issues (study, work, free time, etc.). On the other hand, the evaluation should consider among other things, the performance of the student during the development of the activities, the evidence of learning achievement, and also the levels of mastery and proficiency.

Resources for teaching

Materials or teaching resources are means or instruments that favor the teaching and learning process. Nerici (as cited in Madrid, 2001) mentions that the didactic material replaces reality and represents it in a way that facilitates its objectification. On the one hand, these participants mentioned the resources they have to teach English are mostly technological resources.

varias opciones, tenemos un televisor como parte del sistema telesecundaria, manejamos algunos videos que la propia modalidad nos da. Tenemos proyectores para trabajar con audio y video, diapositivas, aplicaciones que también se le sugiere al alumno, que pueden descargar y tenerlas en su móvil. Trabajamos con cuadernillos, trabajamos con libros digitales. (T7)

This means that telesecundaria teachers in San Rafael, Veracruz are updating their teachings and making use of technology. Despite the rural area in which they are teaching and the lack of internet in some of these schools, they try to facilitate in their students the learning process. It is important to remember that since 1968, the Mexican government has used television to bring telesecundaria education to hard-to-reach rural areas. Now, technological development has allowed the diversification of teaching.

Hoy, con el desarrollo de todas estas herramientas digitales que se han utilizado con fines educativos, también nos han permitido variar o diversificar, las estrategias y formas de trabajo, entre ellas pues trabajar con libros digitales. (T7)

“The effective use of digital learning tools in classrooms can increase student engagement, help teachers improve their lesson plans, and facilitate personalized learning” (American University, 2020). Other participants mentioned that apart from the book that the SEP gives them and the use of technology, they look for or prepare extra material that allows them to complement the topics and reinforce their students' knowledge.

Vamos elaborando con los alumnos algunas láminas, y las tenemos a la vista, mandamos a hacer unas lonas con algunas palabras básicas, por ejemplo, las question words, los pronombres... (T1)

Yo uso videos, libros, material didáctico que yo personalmente hago o compro... (T6)

Usamos el libro, juegos interactivos, material que adquirimos de manera extra nosotros, cuadernillos... (T9)

These are some realities that the participants share with each other. Telesecundaria teachers in San Rafael are interested in their students acquiring basic knowledge of English. That is why

they not only use the resources offered by the SEP, but also rely on technology to offer their students the information they need to learn. In addition, they personally prepare support materials that facilitate learning in their students.

Activities within the classroom

The English syllabus Aprendizajes Clave expects that telesecundaria students will be able to read classic tales, literary essays, and comics, paraphrase information, participate in conversations, and write instructions, to name a few (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017). However, in San Rafael, the telesecundaria teachers' reality is a little bit different practicing these four skills: "En la escucha les pongo el video y a veces van ellos repitiendo. La lectura no se da en mi salón de clases porque si no la sé pronunciar yo, ¿Para qué se las enseño?" (T1).

This participant mentioned that due to her lack of oral and reading skills, she cannot practice reading in her classroom. This is really important "because reading offers a productive approach to improving language-vocabulary and word power" (Manaj, 2015, p. 30).

There are also other teachers who try to practice reading and writing skills.

Utilizo el diccionario para la traducción y la escritura, tratamos de hacer las actividades prácticas, para que se desarrolle lo oral, lo básico nada más, interactuar con ellos. Los diálogos que vienen ahí en el libro, primero lo leo yo, y después ellos lo practican. Al finalizar la sección viene un apartado donde ellos tienen que escribir un texto similar al ejercicio uno que en ocasiones es un diálogo o un texto... entonces ellos tienen que crear uno propio teniendo como base el primero. (T4)

Normalmente el plan trae un escrito, una historia y ellos la van traduciendo, la vamos traduciendo juntos, palabra que no sepamos ya la buscamos en el diccionario, o la bajamos de

internet y ahí checamos la pronunciación correcta... Hacen textos describiendo lugares, se describen a ellos. (T₃)

Most teachers use translation as a learning strategy. For them it is necessary to translate the text since the students still cannot understand texts in English. According to what the participants mentioned, it can be deduced that it is not possible for them to carry out all the activities indicated in the syllabus.

Students' motivation

It is important to highlight that the learning process of any language depends on different factors, one of them is the motivation for learning. It means that every learner may have a clear goal. According to what teachers say, the students who like English make a greater effort in understanding the contents within the classroom. It can be said they are motivated to learn, because English represents a challenge for them, it is a new language, so they want to face this challenge and also acquire the necessary skills that this subject demands.

A ellos les gusta, les llama la atención aprender otro idioma, creo que la respuesta ha sido positiva y esperamos que así continúe. (T₇)

La mayoría están interesados. El grupo que tengo es muy bueno, es muy listo en todo. Para ellos todos los retos los motivan. (T₂)

Si les gusta mucho, a veces platicamos con los maestros que les gusta más el inglés que el español porque es algo nuevo. (T₈)

However, other teachers said that some students think English is boring and a difficult subject and show interest just because it is part of the curriculum and they may need it to graduate from telesecundaria school. Consequently, the learning process is more difficult for them because they do not have the desire to learn English.

Hay apatía por parte de algunos alumnos, porque hay alumnos que, si les gusta, y se les da fácil, pero al alumno que se le complica, dice que no le gusta, por lo mismo de que se le complica. (T₂)

También hay a quien si le gusta y si se esmera en poner atención y hay quien de plano dice no, a mí no me gusta. (T₅)

It is argued by Dörnyei & Honggang (as cited in Fithri, 2018) that motivation gives the essential impetus to initiate learning a second or foreign language and later to sustain the long learning process. That means constructing students' motivation in English classes is an important aspect because it helps students to persist with the learning process. Contrary to those students who are not interested in learning English because they think it is a difficult subject, the learning process will be more difficult. When they make these assumptions, their learning process is affected because they do not have a reason that encourages them to continue learning English.

Playful classes

Making playful classes is a good strategy to capture the student's attention, mainly those for whom learning a foreign language represents a challenge. Teachers realized that preparing dynamic classes and meaningful activities contributes to a lighter and more effective learning environment. They said that the use of videos, audio, and music is a useful tool to attract the attention of students and thus keep their interest in the classroom, as well as keep them motivated to learn English.

...diseñando actividades dinámicas, usando estrategias diversas, contextualizadas y de interés del muchacho. Y aquí hablemos también de que aprovechamos el interés genuino del alumno por ejemplo en poner música en inglés es un recurso que también utilizamos, y por ahí tratamos de motivarlos

escuchando una canción interpretada en inglés, que a ellos les agrade y partir de eso para promover la motivación. (T7)

... iniciamos con una actividad para llamar la atención pues no falla una canción, la música es un lenguaje universal... Pues todos los alumnos quieren saber. Normalmente yo ocupo música en inglés, porque eso llama la atención del alumno. También te tienes que valer de otros recursos, videos, música o lo mejor una película. Y así vas abordando poco a poco. (T3)

The opinions of the previous teacher coincide with what Ritsumeikan (2011, as cited in Ningsih, 2019, p. 3) states that songs and music play an important role in the development of children who learn a second language. The use of music within the classroom increases the motivation of the students because it is an activity that they enjoy. This method brings some benefits to the learning process as increasing students' motivation and also their imagination, creativity, and eagerness to learn and succeed.

Also, the use of videos and interactive activities have been useful strategies in the teaching process. The use of other sources of information as the Youtube platform to share with students different videos in English and other more up-to-date materials to attract the attention of students.

Cuando ponemos videos y estamos trabajando de manera interactiva... haciendo actividades, es interesante para ellos, pero cuando les pongo analizar un texto con palabras complejas, se aburren. Es lógico, entonces si me tengo que ir más como si fueran en kínder, relacionar imágenes, relacionar palabras para que ellos vayan socializando todo eso. También uso otros tipos de videos, ya no nada más los que me marca la SEP sino que uso videos en Youtube, en plataformas que son más atractivos para los chicos. Y el material que implemento como tarjetas, loterías... echa uno a volar la imaginación. (T6)

In the learning process, teachers should be aware of the significance of motivation in learners' language learning, and through some changes, they can help learners increase their motivation (Alizadeh, 2016). The participants mentioned that they try to facilitate the learning process for students who do not like English, using the appropriate methodologies. The use of music, videos, and didactic materials to make the class entertaining increases the students' motivation as well as the interest in the acquisition of this knowledge.

Also, the English Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave establishes that teachers have to choose or develop printed and multimedia resources that guarantee permanent contact with different models and styles of the use of English (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary that teachers adapt the contents and use the necessary methods to help students, who do not like English, to become more interested and motivated to learn it.

Student future in the rural area

According to what teachers said some of the students feel unmotivated because the possibilities of access to professional education are very low in rural areas. Therefore, some of the students are not interested in learning English because they consider that learning a second language may not be essential in their academic training or in their work life; and the probabilities of working in the agricultural activities of the community are higher than concluding a college degree: "Hay niños que dicen -¿Y a mí para que me va a servir el inglés, si me voy a terminar yendo a cortar plátano? Qué es lo que se da por ejemplo en la región de aquí" (T6).

Other students show disinterest in learning English because of the poor opportunities for development in rural areas: "Si, algunas veces muestran desinterés, dicen '¿Yo para que lo necesito?'

Tienen todavía la idea de que al estar en una zona rural no van a necesitar el idioma” (T9).

The English language is a means of linguistic communication that is widely used in a global context; becoming an indispensable tool for human talent in terms of the economic, technological, and scientific development of a nation (Harmer, 2007, as cited in Gil, 2021, p.17).

However, rural areas in Mexico are excluded by society. They often face several difficulties, as the inadequate delivery of public services, poor infrastructure and housing conditions, and fewer economic and educational opportunities (Gertler et al., 2022). Therefore, these problems cause some students in the rural communities of San Rafael, to lose the interest and motivation in the acquisition of a second language since in a rural community it is commonly considered that people, especially young people who, for family or work reasons are directly linked to the agricultural world so English language learning is not considered to provide a benefit in the countryside or in the agricultural work (Caputo, as cited in Márquez, 2014, p.3).

In this sense, the role of the teacher is very important because having close contact with students should raise awareness and encourage them to learn a second language to have better opportunities for development in the future and not only to pass the telesecundaria education. Gutiérrez & Criollo (cited in Gil, 2021, p.17) state that learning a second language represents many advantages, including mental flexibility, the development of cognitive functions and strategies for problem solving, communicative skills, and openness to the vision of new cultures.

Rural context and educational program

This category is divided into two subcategories where teachers' realities, in the implementation of the Syllabus in this rural context, are present in detail.

This first section shows the teachers' disagreement with the textbook proposed by the Syllabus 2017. They said, the content level of textbooks is not consistent with the realities of the students. They commented that most students had never had English classes before high school. Therefore, students have a basic level or any knowledge of the language, which makes the process of teaching English difficult as teachers cannot begin with what is stipulated in the textbook, but they should start from a basic level by implementing their own materials or adapting the contents of the textbook.

No me gusta para nada el libro, tiene un nivel muy avanzado para el nivel que tienen mis alumnos. (T1)

Vienen textos muy complejos, y pues tengo primero que interpretarlos bien yo para poderlos explicar, los temas si vienen más complejos, como si el niño ya dominará el inglés y no lo domina, el niño viene en ceros. (T6)

Nuestros alumnos no manejan el nivel que traen los libros que propuso este modelo educativo 2017. Aunque nos proponen un libro de texto, no lo podemos implementar y si alguien lo implementa, yo considero que sería de manera no aplicable, no consiguiendo resultados, o no adaptándose a las características y necesidades del grupo. Porque si nosotros aplicamos una evaluación diagnóstica en inglés, tenemos que recurrir forzosamente a clases básicas. (T7)

As mentioned above, teachers require different materials to develop optimal English classes. One of the main tools for teachers, and often the only one available, is the textbook provided

by the SEP. The implementation of the English Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave requires the availability of quality, diverse and relevant educational materials. In general, this implies the timely and sufficient delivery of free and updated textbooks aligned with curricular purposes at all levels and modalities (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

Unfortunately, the reality is different since textbooks used in public schools for teaching English do not meet the necessary requirements. Pamplon and Ramírez (2018), affirm that textbooks present multiple problems, as low quality, unequal distribution, the equation of characteristics and levels of children, and insufficient consistency with the formal curriculum or with the theoretical approach on which they should be based.

The telesecundaria school as a source to learn English

In this part, the telesecundaria teachers' said the local primary schools and preschools do not include English in the curriculum as the Aprendizajes Clave 2017 requires. The first contact with the English language of telesecundaria students is at this educational level and not in preschool. That is why their students have no clear knowledge of the English language nor the basics of the subject when they enter telesecundaria school. They expressed that, if the students see the basics of English from preschool, they would be able to achieve the objectives of the program.

En primaria, los alumnos tienen que tener el nivel básico de inglés, y entonces dan por hecho que los alumnos de secundaria ya vienen con ese nivel básico de inglés, y aquí nos están mandando un libro con un nivel de mucho avance para ellos. Audios en inglés, cuando el alumno apenas aquí en la secundaria comienza a conocer por primera vez el

inglés. Las primarias de aquí alrededor no enseñan ni lo básico, ni colores, ni números, nada. Ese es el detalle. (T3)

The Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave Inglés establishes that the English subject for the initial grades of basic education (preschool and primary school) has the purpose to promote students' familiarity and contact with English as a foreign language (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017). In this way, when they enter telesecundaria school, they will know the basics of English, and during the course of telesecundaria education, they will only consolidate a basic English proficiency and thus be able to actively participate in communicative situations that require the conventional use of the language.

Teachers also said it is important to take into account their environment and be realistic with the situation they face in rural communities since if they do not have the right materials, and the students' knowledge is not adequate for the level, they will not be able to achieve the goals that the plans and programs establish.

Adaptation of teaching materials and strategies

In this part teachers shared how they face the inadequacy level of the textbook, and the lack of English knowledge of the students when they enter telesecundaria school. The participants said that they have to adapt the strategies, not at the level expected but at a lower level according to the students' English knowledge. Teachers said that the textbook is difficult to understand even for them. That is why they have had to use other teaching techniques and didactic materials to achieve a basic understanding of English in the student.

No puedo hacer una clase si ellos no conocen lo básico, y de ahí parto. Me cuesta trabajo, porque no voy con el libro,

tengo que ir adaptando. Empezar a trabajar desde cero por eso es que me cuesta trabajo tomar el libro 2017, entenderlo. Tengo que ir a lo que ya tengo atrasado para que puedan empezar a entender e irlo adaptando o acoplando. (T6)

Participant number seven and participant number nine commented that they have to adapt the activities within the classroom because they are not adequate for the English level of the students. Teachers also commented that they have to be prepared for the new plans that may be implemented in the future to continue adapting the materials and techniques and also help the students to learn the basics of English.

Tenemos que adaptar los libros a los nuevos planes y con los conocimientos que tiene el niño. Aquí el detalle es que para tener excelencia pues tenemos que tener todas las herramientas y si tú te vas a un plan y tus libros son de otro plan pues no va a haber excelencia. Tenemos que adecuarnos, como ahorita en la actualidad que vienen otros nuevos planes pero los libros van a seguir siendo los mismos, te tienes que adecuar. (T9)

In teaching English, teachers play a central role in the success of the language proficiency expected in the students. The participants, being telesecundaria teachers, showed a commitment to the students' learning. Even though the difficulties they have to face in the implementation of the Syllabus, they make an effort to find the necessary resources for students to learn.

According to the Syllabus, Aprendizajes Clave Inglés, teachers must consider the degree of complexity of language products based on the level of proficiency of their students, so that these products are both feasible and challenging

(SEP, 2017). In this case, teachers have been aware of the importance of complying with this statement. The fact they have to adapt the techniques and the material to achieve a better English understanding in the students and also by considering the realities of their teaching conditions and the impossibility of implementing the Syllabus in telesecundaria as is expected, participants are being competent professionals and are showing commitment with their labor.

Proposals to improve the English teaching in rural telesecundarias

According to the participating telesecundarias' teachers, it is important that the government is interested in the reality of the majority of telesecundarias. In other words, first, to improve the teaching of English in rural telesecundarias, a syllabus designed for the actual level of the students should be created. Second, the government must provide teachers with useful teaching materials for the development of interactive and attractive classes for students. And thirdly, teachers have to be trained with refresher courses available to them and adjusted to their schedules and possibilities.

A syllabus according to the students' reality

Telesecundaria teachers care about their students' English knowledge. As mentioned, in these rural areas the students begin to become familiar with the English language for the first time in telesecundaria. Although this should not be the case, it is the reality in which these teachers live. For that reason, the teachers ask the government to recognize that these rural telesecundaria students are not prepared to receive the English level this syllabus 2017 requires. And also, they ask for a modified syllabus based on their rural context and in their students' English level.

Que la nueva propuesta que va a salir con este nuevo gobierno, se adapte a las características reales de los chicos, al nivel de aprendizaje que tienen del inglés... los materiales que surjan a partir de esta nueva propuesta realmente corresponda al nivel de los muchachos. (T7)

También sería modificar los planes y programas porque si nos damos cuenta todos vienen encaminados al nivel nacional, entonces en el medio rural modificarlos al contexto del medio rural. (T9)

Most teachers' opinions reflect that telesecundaria teachers in these rural areas have to implement a syllabus that allows teachers to teach the English level their students need. In the previous categories it was mentioned that English is not taught in the primary schools nor in kindergartens of these five communities. So, the teachers of these telesecundarias are forced to adapt their classes and their materials to the level of their students. This makes planning their classes a bit more complex. They must look for extra material and try to get their students basic knowledge of English. For that reason, teachers need a syllabus that recognizes the English level of the students and in this case that starts from basic knowledge of English.

Didactic materials that complement the learning of the students

These nine teachers manifest that they only received a book as a whole material. But they mentioned that it is not enough. Accordingly, another mentioned proposal to improve the English language in these rural areas was to equip the teachers with didactic materials that complement the English knowledge of the book.

Por último, dotarnos de herramientas didácticas que complementen al plan y programas para poder desarrollar nuestras clases. (T4)

...más material, no nada más un libro, creo que más material que nos ayude con los chicos. Material didáctico, ellos aprenden más manipulando las cosas. (T5)

This participant mentioned that students learn through manipulation. The use of materials allows students, among other things, to manipulate, observe and discover new knowledge. It could be understood that it is difficult learning English just with the theory or the activities in the book. So, the government should prepare, not just a book but complementary material that allow students to practice the theory: “Que la SEP nos otorgara buenos videos, material, eso es lo básico. Porque nosotros somos todólogos, tenemos que sacar adelante ese trabajo que tenemos a cargo” (T8).

Teachers ask for digital and didactic materials that allow them to develop fun English classes. Since they are not specialists in the field, they expect the government to provide them with materials that complement the topics of the English book. With these materials, teachers want their students to interact and practice the knowledge they have learned. This is expected to improve the teaching of English within these rural telesecundarias.

Teacher training

Nunan (1988) mentioned that “some teachers felt that syllabus development should be carried out by people with specific expertise, and believed that they were being asked to undertake tasks for which they were not adequately trained” (p.19). Although some years have passed, it can be verified

through the voices of these teachers that they think similar, they also feel inadequately trained.

...que nos mandaran un maestro, (capacitado o especializado en el idioma inglés) o tal vez que cada maestro se especializara más, tampoco me voy a hacer a un lado pero no nos da tiempo, nos piden tantas cosas. (T1)

However, as already mentioned, education in telesecundarias is taught by a teacher who teaches all the subjects of a course without being totally specialized in each one of them. Therefore, the participants believe that teacher training would help improve the teaching of English in these telesecundarias.

Se debería comenzar por la preparación docente. Porque hay maestros que yo se que no tienen conocimientos en esta asignatura y por lo consiguiente ni siquiera dan la materia. (T4)

Me gustaría más oportunidades para la actualización del magisterio. (T7)

A lo mejor, que nos dieran más capacitación a nosotros porque nosotros tenemos que pagar cursos para poder llevarlo. (T5)

It is not enough for teachers to have completed their university career, but they must be in constant training since knowledge increases and/or changes. According to Vázquez (2017), training “is beneficial for teachers and students, since it maintains a clear direction and allows them to acquire new tools to deal with emerging needs” (p.1).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to explore teachers' reality when they implement the 2017 English Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave in rural telesecundarias schools in San

Rafael, Veracruz. For achieving the research objective, nine participants from five telesecundarias of this municipality gave voice to their perspectives. However, there is still need for doing further research in each of the telesecundarias in the municipality in order to get a more in-depth perspective of the reality of these five telesecundarias is the same throughout the municipality, or perhaps in all rural areas in the context of the hereby research.

All in all, with the information reported by these nine teachers of rural telesecundarias, generalisations cannot be reached not drawn, but the conditions that these five telesecundarias face during the implementation of the Syllabus 2017 Aprendizajes Clave Inglés can be deeply understood in the Mexican context and further alike.

First and foremost, it can be concluded that the English courses do not receive the necessary importance, and telesecundaria students do not have the adequate level the syllabus expects them to reach. What is more, telesecundaria teachers do not receive appropriate training to provide quality English classes. Although some teachers have a basic level of English, they do not follow the proper or suitable methodologies to enhance the students' language development, nor do they cover the need of students to construct the competences that the Syllabus Aprendizajes Clave stipulates.

Interestingly, teachers strongly believe it is necessary to change the way of teaching English in rural telesecundarias. They are asking for a new syllabus adapted to the English level of rural telesecundaria students, to be provided with didactic materials, and to be trained with courses in English teaching and learning.

What was found in this research may be relevant to continue in the search for solutions that could lead authorities

and the government to consider all the contexts and realities of the telesecundaria English teachers in Veracruz, Mexico, and provide syllabi according to their needs and the ones of students in rural communities alike.

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Pronunciation Study Habits of EFL Students in the Context of Costa Rican Public Higher Education*

Hábitos de estudio de pronunciación de estudiantes de Inglés como lengua extranjera en el contexto de la educación superior pública costarricense

William Charpentier-Jiménez¹

Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica.

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¹ Master's Degree in English Language Teaching
Professor

E-mail: william.charpentier@ucr.ac.cr –ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8554-7819>

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ABSTRACT

This study explores students' attitudes toward English pronunciation study habits at a Costa Rican public university. In spite of their relevance, these study skills have not received enough attention in the last few years. The sample consisted of 24 females and 9 males, all with a B2 level. The study employed a quantitative, direct needs assessment design. The researcher used a survey to obtain students' perspectives about their independent study habits. Students' attitudes were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. The researcher interpreted data by using descriptive statistics. Data analyses suggest that: 1) there is some correlation between exposure to pronunciation study habits and students' preferences; 2) an important number of pronunciation study habits receive little attention; 3) students perceive study habits as an essential component for improving their pronunciation, but they do not dedicate enough time to study pronunciation independently; and 4) exposure to these study habits is not systematic during language learning. In agreement with the reviewed literature, these results demonstrate that pronunciation study habits are not consistently present in the curriculum, which can have implications for bilingualism development. In addition, the analysis shows that a more straightforward and organized type of instruction may broaden and improve students' independence. Lastly, these results indicate that a more organized curriculum that clearly emphasizes pronunciation study habits would favor ESL learners' speech education.

Keywords: *Bilingualism, English pronunciation, independent study, language learning, study skills.*

RESUMEN

Este estudio explora las actitudes del estudiantado hacia los hábitos de estudio de la pronunciación en inglés en una universidad pública costarricense. A pesar de su relevancia, estas técnicas de estudio no han recibido suficiente atención recientemente. La muestra consistía en 24 mujeres y 9 hombres, todos con un nivel B2. Se utilizó un método cuantitativo con un diseño de evaluación de necesidades. El investigador utilizó una encuesta para obtener la perspectiva del estudiantado acerca de sus hábitos de estudio. Las actitudes del estudiantado fueron evaluadas en una escala Likert de 5 puntos. El investigador interpretó los datos utilizando estadística descriptiva. Los resultados indican que: 1) existe alguna correlación entre exposición a hábitos de estudio para la pronunciación y las preferencias del estudiantado; 2) un importante número de hábitos de estudio reciben poca atención; 3) el estudiantado considera los hábitos de estudio esenciales para mejorar su pronunciación, pero no dedican suficiente tiempo a estudiar la pronunciación independientemente; y 4) la exposición a estos hábitos de estudio no es sistemática durante el aprendizaje de lenguas, pudiendo afectar el desarrollo del bilingüismo. Conforme con la literatura revisada, estos resultados demuestran que estos hábitos de estudio no se encuentran consistentemente presentes en el currículo. Igualmente, el análisis muestra que una instrucción más directa y organizada podría mejorar la independencia del estudiantado. Finalmente, estos resultados indican que un currículo más estructurado que claramente enfatice los hábitos de estudio para la pronunciación favorecería la educación de la expresión oral del estudiantado de ILE.

Palabras clave: *Aprendizaje de lenguas, bilingüismo, pronunciación en inglés, técnicas de estudio.*

PRONUNCIATION IS A GROWING TOPIC of study in applied linguistics. Since English has acquired a reputation as a global language, achieving speech intelligibility has become essential (Irawan, 2023). Students must complete an advanced proficiency level to communicate and work in the global marketplace. In addition, pronunciation reveals more about a person's proficiency level since «pronunciation is the most noticeable factor when people communicate for the first time» (Talebzadeh & Gholami, 2015, p. 54). It «is the salient feature of our language competence. It is the lens through which we are viewed in each interaction we have» (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 279). Therefore, students must achieve the desired pronunciation to communicate effectively in academic or social settings, avoid misunderstandings, or be perceived as uneducated. Finally, improving one's skills helps students learn other skills better and faster. This happens because «automatic processing is involved when the learner carries out the task without awareness or attention» (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 44). When students' pronunciation is deficient, they should self-monitor more closely. Among the various theories of self-monitoring, two self-monitoring theories deserve special attention. First, Levelt's Model of Speech Production provides a comprehensive framework for speech production, encompassing stages of conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. It emphasizes self-monitoring through an internal feedback loop to detect and correct errors, introducing the perceptual loop theory, where speakers use their comprehension system to monitor their own speech similarly to how they understand others' speech (Levelt, 1989). Second, Articulatory Phonology focuses on the coordination of articulatory gestures, suggesting that speakers monitor and adjust the spatial and temporal coordination of these gestures to ensure accurate speech production (Browman & Goldstein, 1992). Other authors mention that students often

focus «attention on the message just before or while it is uttered in order to check for accuracy, clarity and appropriateness» (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 478). This could make them sacrifice fluency for clarity or pronunciation for grammar.

Additionally, some professors find it challenging to teach pronunciation. For example, some professors worry about «students' inactive participation and low English proficiency» (Chen & Goh, 2011, p. 6). Levis and Grant (2003) note that many English language instructors have difficulties deciding on pronunciation foci, providing individual pronunciation feedback, and designing interactive pronunciation instruction. According to Chen and Goh (2011), the problem becomes more evident in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. In these cases, time and teaching resources are scarce, and classes are large and include students of varying abilities. Thus, the inherent difficulty of English pronunciation has increased the importance of study habits.

Teacher-centered classes hinder pronunciation development because students tend to distance themselves from learning (Chen & Goh, 2011). In other contexts, «there is insufficient time to address every aspect of learners' phonological difficulties in the classroom» (Munro & Derwing, 2006, p. 521) since there are many pronunciation features to address. A possible solution to this predicament is to develop study skills, which are defined as «abilities, techniques, and strategies which are used [...] for study purposes» (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 565). Learning to learn becomes essential since it includes «the acquisition of attitudes, learning strategies and learning skills that will be applied in future learning situations and make future learning more effective» (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 332). Thus, students, professors, and policymakers should

develop an awareness of students' study habits to improve language acquisition and pronunciation.

This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring students' study habits to improve their pronunciation. The findings will also contribute to a better understanding of what students and professors do to improve pronunciation. Equally important, the results may encourage the development of materials and documents to guide students in their autonomous learning. Currently, no BA in English or English teaching program explicitly advises students on how to study or what activities to engage in outside of class to enhance their pronunciation. Therefore, since no guidelines exist, professors' advice is not uniform or scarce, and students often struggle to find what works best for them. Moreover, as stated above, pronunciation teaching requires explicit recommendations for students to become autonomous learners and continue learning after university studies.

Aims

The main objective of this article is to explore students' awareness of pronunciation study habits. In addition, this article also focuses on how students in a BA in English as a Second Language program at a public Costa Rican university perceive their own pronunciation study habits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of pronunciation instruction has been extensively studied in recent years. Several studies have focused on the theory of pronunciation and instruction (Blanche, 2004; Derwing & Munro, 2015; Hismanoglu, 2006; Milovanov et al., 2010; Morgan, 2003; Munro & Derwing, 2006; Sicola, 2008; Tominaga, 2009; Yao, 2008). Others have emphasized the use of technology to improve students' pronunciation (Ali, 2016; Charpentier-Jiménez,

2020; Levis, 2007; Lord, 2008). However, few attempts have been made to investigate students' study habits when learning English pronunciation. As a result, this section explores the most common pronunciation linguistic features in English, the possible sources of pronunciation problems, and the relationship between pronunciation and teaching. It also provides a broad overview of autonomous learning and its relationship to study habits.

Pronunciation Features

Since its early stages, pronunciation theory has advanced significantly. However, not all language professors or students have studied the intricacies of the theory. For example, according to Fraser (2011), phonetics and phonology are «among the branches of linguistics with least impact on applied linguistics. [...] One reason for their lack of impact might be that they are often perceived as highly complicated topics, dominated by theoretical issues of limited relevance to practical applications» (p. 584). Both concepts contribute to our understanding of how pronunciation works. On the one hand, phonetics involves studying sounds and how they are produced, transmitted, and perceived (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). On the other hand, phonology tries to «demonstrate the patterns of distinctive sound found in a language, and to make as general statements as possible about the nature of sound systems in the languages of the world» (Crystal, 2008, p. 365). Although Matthews (2014) acknowledges that several factors make «the relation of phonetics to phonology [...] problematic» (p. 300), advanced language learners, especially those enrolled in an English or English Teaching major, should be acquainted with these concepts.

Although pronunciation learning includes various elements, several authors (Brown, 2022; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Lane & Brown, 2010; Roach, 2009) have described pronunciation features

from two main perspectives: segmentals and suprasegmentals. For example, Matthews (2014) mentions that segmentals deal with single units (vowels and consonants), while suprasegmentals «extend over more than one successive minimal element» (p. 391). Therefore, suprasegmental features of a language include stress, rhythm, and intonation but are not limited to these. On the other hand, segmentals are further divided into vowels and consonants. Despite author differences, English has 25 consonant and 21 vowel sounds (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; International Phonetic Association, 1999). Having a good command of both linguistic features helps students improve their pronunciation and confidence when speaking.

Pronunciation Problems

A variety of factors make learning proper pronunciation difficult. The most common are the learners' age; the quality and quantity of instruction and exposure to the target language; the learners' aptitude, attitude, and motivation toward learning; and the differences between the native and target languages (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Therefore, this section focuses on the differences between the native and target languages.

According to Juan-Checa (2017), some languages are more phonetic than others. This means they have a phonemic orthography, indicating that the written alphabet and pronunciation are similar. In this regard, Spanish is more phonetic than English. Additionally, Juan-Checa (2017) stated that «Spanish practically does not distinguish between short and long vowels» (p. 462). Spanish also uses only 18 consonant sounds, while English has 25; only 11 of these sounds are identical or very similar. Therefore, students face two main challenges. On the one hand, they have to deal with a written system that does not always help decide the correct pronunciation since this system differs drastically from

the students' set of rules. Furthermore, students tend to over differentiate, which Matthews (2014) defines as «the failure, in acquiring a second or foreign language, to suppress distinctions that are made in one's first or native language» (p. 282). As a result, language learners often develop an approximate system or interlanguage. Interlanguage is a linguistic system a person creates and uses while learning a second language; it often involves overgeneralizing the known rules of the target language or familiar patterns from the student's first language (Crystal, 2008; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Therefore, it is normal for students to rely on their native language to communicate in the target language (L2). However, as previously mentioned, both systems do not always combine well, and «It's not easy to erase the default settings of your speech without a great deal of practice, as those who have undergone dialect coaching or tried to speak like a native in a foreign language know» (Shariatmadari, 2020, p. 185). In other words, students' familiarity with a set of Spanish pronunciation rules may mislead them, resulting in communication breakdowns and a lack of confidence.

Teaching Pronunciation

The role of pronunciation in applied linguistics has been extensively explored. However, three prominent aspects deserve particular attention to aid pronunciation in the classroom: pronunciation and language policy, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). For example, in terms of pronunciation policies, authors have suggested integrating pronunciation into all classes (Kayaoğlu & Çaylak, 2013) while maintaining a separate class to concentrate on pronunciation features (Kayaoğlu & Çaylak, 2013; Naiman, 2003). In addition, Foote (2018) has advocated for hiring professors with certified qualifications and ethical practices in

pronunciation services. However, McGregor and Reed (2018) developed a more holistic perspective to integrate pronunciation. Their model consists of a 5-stage curriculum-design process for the integration of pronunciation. The authors' proposal includes taking institutional and learner factors into account and conducting a needs assessment «with awareness-raising and subsequent prioritization of features for improvement» (McGregor & Reed, 2018, p. 89). They also suggest providing adequate teacher training and developing students' autonomy to continue their learning process.

Furthermore, the use of technology to aid pronunciation has also garnered much attention in recent years. Although some teachers complain that teaching pronunciation is time-consuming, research shows that including it is feasible and does not hinder the achievement of other course objectives (Darcy et al., 2021). Charpentier-Jiménez (2020) points out that students urge technology implementation in class, especially on MALL devices. Other authors have emphasized how technology improves and aids in acquiring pronunciation features in class (Gordon, 2021; Saleh & Gilakjani, 2021; Zárate-Sández, 2020) and out-of-class contexts (Everly, 2019; Kartal & Korucu-Kis, 2020; Meisarah, 2020). A growing number of researchers have also focused on using automatic speech recognition for second language pronunciation training (Ali, 2016; Cucchiarini & Strik, 2018) and automated speaking assessment (Isaacs, 2018). Thus, as can be seen, pronunciation teaching has taken advantage of novel technologies, which also aid students improving their study habits and becoming independent learners.

Besides using technology, face-to-face pronunciation sessions are influenced by three main components. First, teachers perceive pronunciation training to be as important as other linguistic features (Foote et al., 2012), demanding in terms of material and class preparation (Nangimah, 2020), and challenging to teach, especially

in tertiary education contexts (Atar, 2018). Teachers may also be antagonistic toward the curriculum, textbook, or allotted time for teaching pronunciation (Couper, 2021). Moreover, some teachers, especially novices, believe they need more training or are unsure about teaching pronunciation (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Baker & Burri, 2016; Couper, 2017; Huensch, 2019). Second, students' perspectives play an essential role in pronunciation training. Students find pronunciation training highly important (Sardegna, 2020). Not only does pronunciation help with their communicative skills, but it also impacts their confidence (Kang, 2015). These are other reasons students demand more attention to pronunciation instruction in their study plans (Alghazo, 2015). Finally, techniques and activities can significantly influence how instruction is delivered. For example, Shabani and Ghasemian (2017) claim that teachers' personalities influence the techniques and activities they use in class. While some teachers advocate for more explicit pronunciation instruction (Mohsen, 2016; Pardede, 2018; Zhang & Yuan, 2020), others have sought newer and more innovative approaches to pronunciation, as the benefits of neuro-linguistic programming (Caballero & Rosado, 2018), the use of the motor skill approach (Messum & Young, 2021), and the implementation of Praat (a freeware program used by phoneticians) as a tool students can use (Boersma, & Weenink, 2024; Osatananda & Thinchana, 2021). Still, listening to improve pronunciation remains paramount (Hamad et al., 2019; Karyuatry et al., 2020; Mohsen, 2016), and using phonetic symbols to aid pronunciation remains beneficial in specific contexts (Mompean & Fouz-González, 2021).

Study Habits

Although the concept of study habits has not been widely researched, the role of autonomy has received considerable attention in recent years. Autonomy, defined as «the ability to take charge of

one's learning and to be responsible for decisions concerning the goals, learning processes, and implementation of one's language learning needs» (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 44), includes study habits but can also occur during direct instruction. On the other hand, study habits are defined here as those autonomous, purposeful activities students carry out outside of class.

One of the main problems for students «in their attempts to study or practice autonomously [is] their limited abilities to monitor their speech for errors» (McCrocklin, 2016, p. 25). To overcome this situation, some authors have recommended implementing automatic speech recognition (ASR) (Evers & Chen, 2021; McCrocklin, 2016; Pérez-Castillejo, 2021), which has become more available in the last few years. Automatic speech recognition is «the process of speech-to-text transcription: the transformation of an acoustic signal into a sequence of words, without necessarily understanding the meaning or intent of what was spoken» (Renals & Hain, 2010, p. 299). Therefore, students can practice their pronunciation by dictating, issuing verbal commands, or having simple conversations with voice assistants. Although ASR is not perfect, students can access immediate, non-judgmental, and always-available feedback.

Pawlak (2010) mentions that learning pronunciation in a second or foreign language (L2) demands a certain degree of autonomy. To this end, some authors recommend using pronunciation learning strategies (PLS). For example, Peterson (2000) describes PLS as «steps taken by students to enhance their pronunciation learning» (p. 7), while Pawlak (2010) defines them as «deliberate actions and thoughts that are consciously employed, often in a logical sequence, for learning and gaining greater control over the use of various aspects of pronunciation» (p. 191). Thus, PLS are not necessarily used as study activities but rather with the broader term of autonomous learning. As a

result, PLS «could serve as a basis for constructing an inventory that could be deployed in different studies» (Pawlak & Szyszka, 2018, p. 316). They could serve as a basis for developing a more detailed or contextualized list of study habits on which students can rely to improve their pronunciation.

As can be seen, pronunciation encompasses several characteristics that learners should acquire to communicate effectively. Unfortunately, some of these characteristics have proven problematic for EFL and ESL learners, especially in contexts where exposure is limited. In addition, although exposure may come from different sources, it is recommended that students receive direct instruction and be presented with various materials and approaches to improve pronunciation. Finally, students should also develop autonomy to achieve intelligibility. Thus, study habits are a relevant component of independence and deserve more attention.

Despite the growing body of research on pronunciation in language learning, a critical review of the literature reveals a significant gap in the exploration of actual study habits, particularly those related to pronunciation, among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. While numerous studies have emphasized the importance of pronunciation and its impact on language proficiency and communication (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Levis & Grant, 2003), less attention has been given to how students develop and engage with pronunciation study habits outside the structured classroom environment.

Moreover, existing research predominantly focuses on instructional strategies and teacher perspectives on pronunciation (Baker & Burri, 2016; Couper, 2017), neglecting the learner's autonomous engagement with pronunciation activities. This oversight is particularly notable in contexts like Costa Rica, where English is taught as a foreign language and opportunities for naturalistic language exposure may be limited.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating the self-directed pronunciation study habits of TESOL students at a public university in Costa Rica. It explores not only the types of study habits that students engage in but also their perceptions of the effectiveness of these habits in improving their pronunciation skills. By focusing on student-initiated study practices, this research contributes new insights into the autonomous learning strategies that are most beneficial for ESL learners, thereby providing a foundation for more targeted and effective language instruction strategies that can be incorporated into curriculum design and teaching practices.

METHOD

Participants

This study included adult Costa Rican students currently taking their third year in an English or English Teaching major at a public university. The researcher created an electronic mailing list of 39 students interested in participating in the study. Finally, 33 students decided to participate in the study. The age distribution was as follows: 26 participants were between 20 and 24 years old, 5 were between 25 and 30 years old, and 2 were between 31 and 35 years old. Regarding gender, the group included 24 females and 9 males. All participants shared a language proficiency of B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), indicating an upper intermediate grasp of the language. The participants were selected because they had already taken three or four courses devoted to pronunciation. The database included every participant who agreed to participate in the study. Participants did not receive any compensation for their collaboration. All participants speak Spanish as their first language.

Materials

The materials included written consent and a 15-item descriptive survey incorporating a list of 20 study habits pertaining to pronunciation. The written consent was sent to students electronically. A checkbox labeled «agree to terms and conditions» was included to certify voluntary participation in the study. The list of 20 study habits was created after surveying the literature and informally consulting ten former students who had already completed their study plan. The final list was reduced to include all possible options students could access.

In addition, the 15-item descriptive survey was designed to analyze students' perceptions of the value of study habits and the guidance they have received from professors. The final version of the survey was pilot-tested with ten students who had already concluded their study plan, and the survey was later revised based on the results of the pilot testing.

The survey was divided into four sections: a) demographic information, b) students' study habits to improve pronunciation, c) the perceived importance of study habits in the program, and d) an optional open-ended question. The survey used two question formats: forced-choice and open-ended questions. Except for the open-ended question, items included checklists or Likert scales for all sections. For example, some items asked the participants to rate the program's stress on their study habits. These items were placed on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). This format, or a similar one, was also used for other questions.

The last part of the survey contained one optional, open-ended question. This question invited participants to comment freely on their perspective of their study habits or the advice they received during the major. The total time to complete the survey was estimated at 8 to 10 minutes.

Procedure

This study used a quantitative, direct needs assessment design, exploratory research. The researcher created a list of 20 study habits based on the literature consulted and the opinions of graduate students. The list was whittled down to include only practices participants could carry out. For example, the following practices are not possible in this context: remedial classes on campus, open language labs, or language immersion groups. In addition to time constraints, the number of study habits was limited by the need to elicit as many responses as possible.

The researcher requested voluntary participation from students to collect data. First, the purpose of the study was explained via Zoom. Afterward, students were directed to a link to submit an email indicating their willingness to participate in the study. Then, the first email containing written consent and a hyperlink to the online survey was sent. Next, students were instructed to read the survey carefully and complete the options or answer the questions, depending on the section. The survey was conducted in the following order: a) demographic information, b) study habits, c) the perceived importance placed on study habits in the major, and d) an optional open-ended question.

Data Processing and Analysis

The data were processed and analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2016. Since the majority of items in the survey were Likert scales, the analysis conducted included a quantitative summary of students' answers. In addition, the analysis included descriptive statistics where nominal data, percentages, and the interquartile range were included to compare students' answers.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The following description of the results presents students' awareness of pronunciation study habits and their perceptions of their inclusion in the study plan. The first section includes participants' demographic information. The second section summarizes students' awareness of pronunciation study habits. Finally, the third section reports participants' perceptions of pronunciation study habits directly taught during the BA program.

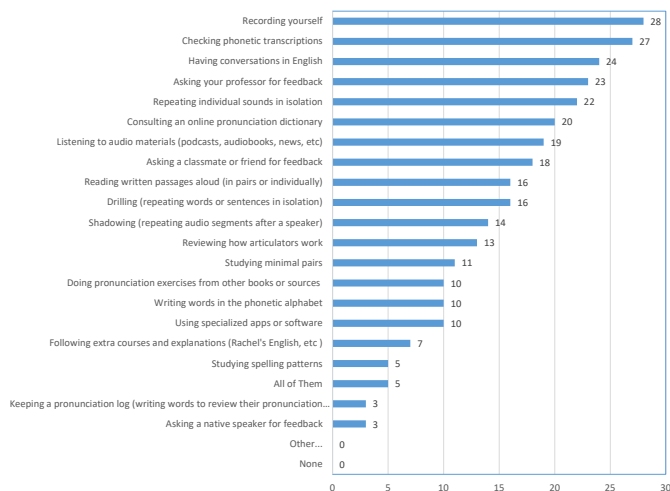
Demographic Information

Of the 33 students who answered the survey, 23 (69.7%) were females and ten were males (30.3%). No student chose to be identified as non-binary or omitted to answer the question. Overall, 22 students (66.7%) reported their ages between 18 and 24. Ten students (30.3%) belonged to the 25 to 34 age range. One student (3%) was between 35 and 44. All students are native Spanish speakers and study English as a foreign language. Regarding studies, students enrolled in the BA in English ($n = 30, 90.9\%$) or English teaching ($n = 3, 9.1\%$). Both majors share the same core language courses, including pronunciation courses.

Professors and Pronunciation Study Habits

To explore students' perceptions of pronunciation study habits, 20 behaviors or activities were extracted from a list of 25. Some items from the initial list were discarded based on the students' context and the pilot test. An initial question asked students if their professors' recommendations about pronunciation study habits had been good and sufficient. Data show that three students (9.1%) strongly agree with this perception, while 26 (78.8%) agree. Two students (6.1%) had a neutral opinion and two more (6.1%) disagreed with this idea. Professors' recommendations effectively reach more than 85% of the population interviewed.

Additionally, students ranked the study habits recommended by professors. As can be seen in Figure 1, only *recording yourself* and *checking phonetic transcriptions* received more than 75% ($n \geq 25$) of opinions. These two activities are the ones that professors recommend the most. The second set of answers falls between 50% and 74% ($n \geq 17, \leq 24$) of recommended practices. Mainly, these recommendations include human interaction. For example, *having conversations in English*, *asking professors for feedback*, and *asking a classmate or friend for feedback* are among the activities that professors recommend as good options to improve students' pronunciation. The third quadrant of recommendations falls between 25% and 49% ($n \geq 9, \leq 16$). This section includes the highest number of recommendations ($n = 8$). Some of the recommendations in this part are related to pronunciation exercises that can be done individually, as *shadowing*, *reading aloud*, or *drilling*. The final series of recommendations by professors belongs to the bottom 25% ($n \leq 8$). Professors do not seem to recommend *following other courses*, *asking native speakers*, or *keeping a pronunciation log*. It is relevant to mention that five students mentioned that professors had recommended all the habits listed; however, no student could mention another habit not listed in the possibilities.

Figure 1 Summary of study habits recommended by professors

Note. $N = 33$.

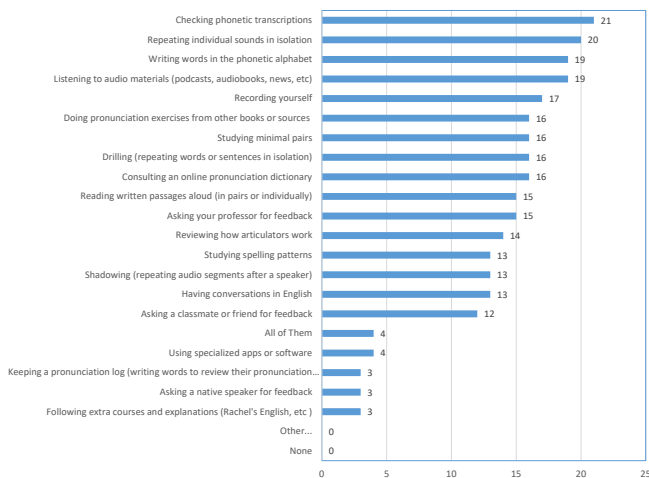
Source: Compiled by the author based on survey responses.

Materials and Pronunciation Study Habits

Sometimes, professors do not directly mention pronunciation study habits; however, some of them are included in the course syllabus or in the materials that faculty have deemed necessary at some point. One of the questions in this section asked students if the recommendations about pronunciation study habits included in the syllabus or anthology had been good and sufficient. Data reflect that syllabi and materials do not necessarily include pronunciation study habits compared to professors' recommendations. Only 18 students (54.5%) agreed, while 13 (39.4%) remained neutral. Two students (6.1%)

disagreed with this notion. In sum, syllabi and materials seem to reach only half of the population adequately.

As before, students ranked the study habits recommended in the syllabus or the course anthology. As Figure 2 shows, no pronunciation study habits reached 75% ($n \geq 25$) of opinions. The second series of answers falls between 50% and 74% ($n \geq 17, \leq 24$) and emphasize metalinguistic components like *checking phonetic transcriptions* and *writing words in the phonetic alphabet* together with *repeating individual sounds in isolation* and *listening to audio materials*. Interestingly, for example, *recording yourself* ranked first in professors' recommendations but barely surpassed the 50% ($n = 17$) of opinions here. The third set of recommendations (between 25% and 49%; $n \geq 9, \leq 16$) includes eleven pronunciation study habits. This correlates with the perception students have regarding the incorporation of pronunciation study habits in course materials. Only *following extra courses and explanations*, *asking a native speaker for feedback*, *keeping a pronunciation log*, and *using specialized apps or software* received less than 25% ($n \leq 8$) of recognition. Three of these activities are again at the bottom of the list of recommended pronunciation study habits. Similar to our previous analysis, four students mentioned that professors had recommended all the habits listed; however, no student mentioned a habit not listed in the questionnaire.

Figure 2 Summary of study habits included in the syllabi or anthology

Note. $N = 33$.

Source: Compiled by the author based on survey responses.

Pronunciation Study Habits Incorporated by Students

Data on students' opinions of study habits also presented students' perceptions of the use of time. For example, 19 students (57.6%) stated that they dedicate extra class time to studying pronunciation even if they have no related homework. On the other hand, 14 (42.4%) students admitted that they did not dedicate extra study time to pronunciation if it is not mandatory. When asked how many hours they dedicated to studying pronunciation per week, only one student (3%) chose more than eight hours. Another student (3%) selected between six and eight hours. Four students (12.1%) invested four to six hours. The majority of students ($n = 14$, 42.4%) allotted between two

and four hours of their time studying pronunciation. The second largest group ($n = 11$, 33.3%) devoted less than two hours. Finally, two students (6.1%) recognized that they did not dedicate time to practicing pronunciation. In addition, students were asked what language component they dedicated more time to. Table 1 shows that students place oral skills as the top linguistic feature. This indicates that oral skills are an essential aspect that students want to improve.

TABLE 1 *Students' extra-class time investment according to the language component*

Scenario	n	%
Oral skills	9	27.3%
Writing skills	7	21.2%
Listening skills	5	15.2%
Vocabulary acquisition	5	15.2%
Grammar features	4	12.1%
Reading skills	2	6.1%
Other: a mix between vocabulary acquisition and oral skills	1	3%

Note. $N = 33$.

Source: Compiled by the author based on survey responses.

Participants also provided their perspectives on the importance of pronunciation study habits and oral skills. For example, 19 students (57.6%) strongly agreed that dedicating extra class time to studying pronunciation improved their skills. Nine (27.3%) agreed, while 5 (15.2%) had a neutral opinion. In addition, 15 students (54.5%) strongly believed that improving their pronunciation was one of their main goals. Again, nine students (27.3%) agreed with the same idea, and six (18.2%) had a neutral

opinion. Finally, the optional, open-ended question reveals that some students acknowledge that pronunciation teaching has room for improvement:

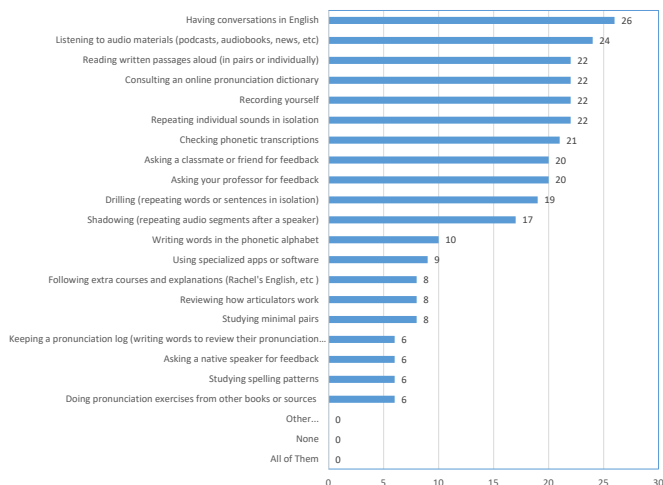
Participant 7. In order to improve pronunciation more than intonation itself, I believe that professors should take more time to work with student (*sic*) that need it. It is easy to single them out and it would be very positive for them if professors would take the time to correct them and teach them. (Participant 19)

Participant 8. Some oral courses focus more on how to do research than on how to develop our oral skills. (Participant 21)

This evidences that, although students regard pronunciation as a relevant and desirable skill to master, the time they dedicate to it and the type of instruction they receive may need improvement.

Evidence also suggests that students favor some pronunciation study habits when doing independent work. Figure 3 summarizes students' preferences. Following previous analyses, the interquartile range shows that only Having conversations in English received more than 75% ($n \geq 25$) of opinions. The second set of answers ($n \geq 17, \leq 24$) includes half of the study habits provided ($n = 10$). In this case, students preferred more pragmatic and less metalinguistic activities. For example, asking for feedback, repeating sounds or phrases in different manners, and listening. The third quartile of study habits incorporated by students (between 25% and 49%; $n \geq 9, \leq 16$) consists of only two choices: *Using specialized apps or software* and *Writing words in the phonetic alphabet*. However, the last quartile (25%; $n \leq 8$) of answers includes seven habits. Among them, *Asking a native speaker for feedback* and *Keeping a pronunciation log* remain the least popular pronunciation study habits, appearing last in all three analyses. Finally, as in previous analyses, no student recommended a study habit not mentioned in the list provided.

Figure 3 *Summary of study habits acquired or further developed while taking English courses at the university*



Note. $N = 33$.

Source: Compiled by the author based on survey responses.

This analysis provided insight into students' perceptions of pronunciation study habits. The findings also revealed which aspects were more salient or less popular, as well as the amount of time students devoted to improving their pronunciation outside of class.

DISCUSSION

In light of the data analyzed, several conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, students consider pronunciation study habits as an effective tool to incorporate. However, they admit that they do not invest enough time in studying pronunciation. Some studies (Chen & Goh, 2011; Munro & Derwing, 2006;

Shariatmadari, 2020) have emphasized the importance of practice in improving pronunciation skills. Independent practice is essential to improving pronunciation; however, it also requires students to devote time to it, something that not all students do. Students also point out that the type of instruction they receive may sometimes be insufficient. The importance of instruction in language acquisition cannot be denied. Pronunciation training has unique characteristics as material development, planning, and the role of the professor (Darcy et al., 2021; Foote et al., 2012; McGregor & Reed, 2018; Nangimah, 2020) that need particular attention. If students notice that instruction may need improvement, solutions as faculty training, calibration, and material development will improve class and independent work.

Second, some pronunciation study habits consistently rank at the bottom of the lists. For example, *Asking a native speaker for feedback*, *Keeping a pronunciation log*, and *The following extra courses and explanations* were part of the last quartile range. Although these habits may be absent due to teachers' preferences and personalities (Shabani & Ghasemian, 2017), students need more changes to learn to monitor their production (McCrocklin, 2016). Combining these three study habits could help them learn or reinforce the subject matter from an optional extra course, check their pronunciation with a native speaker, and finally, review their mistakes using a pronunciation log. In addition, despite technology's benefits for oral skills (Ali, 2016; Charpentier-Jiménez, 2020; Levis, 2007; Lord, 2008), its use remains relatively low. For example, *Using specialized apps or software* ranks at the bottom of the third quartile in recommendations from professors and use on the part of students. It also ranks in the fourth quartile in materials and syllabi. This corroborates the fact that some pronunciation study habits have a low impact on students' acquisition of oral skills.

Third, a substantial discrepancy exists between what professors recommend, what students find in materials or syllabi, and what they actually do when studying independently. For example, only three activities from all data analyzed made it to the top quartile: *Having conversations in English*, *Checking phonetic transcriptions*, and *Recording yourself*. To improve their pronunciation, students should develop pronunciation learning strategies to overcome any flaws in their oral skills (Pawlak & Szyszka, 2018). The role of professors and course materials is to guide students in their learning process; however, students do not necessarily follow the advice given. *Asking a classmate or friend for feedback*, *Doing pronunciation exercises from other books or sources*, and *Having conversations in English* obtained inconsistent scores in at least one of the categories. Other categories, as *Checking phonetic transcriptions* and *Repeating individual sounds in isolation*, seem more balanced and useful in all categories. Although it is not possible to know why some categories are more uniformly distributed, this discrepancy should be taken into account and further examined.

Finally, the results obtained in this study call for curricular reform. For example, materials and professors' opinions need to be more consistent. These data could promote curricular changes in second language acquisition programs. By analyzing students' current practices and exposure in terms of pronunciation study habits, professionals in charge of the curriculum may consider the necessity of including pronunciation study habits in materials and syllabi. In addition, faculty could receive better training on how to guide students during their independent work. The researcher invites other language teaching institutions to replicate this study. Students need a more structured program to decide in a more informed manner how to prepare independently and improve their oral communication skills and pronunciation proficiency.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to explore the study habits of English as a Second Language students at a public Costa Rican university, particularly focusing on pronunciation, a critical component of language learning that has not been sufficiently emphasized in the curriculum. The findings reveal that while students recognize the importance of pronunciation study habits and their potential to enhance learning outcomes, there is a significant gap in the time and effort dedicated to this aspect of their studies.

Firstly, the data indicate that students perceive pronunciation study habits as vital for improving their English skills, aligning with previous research that underscores the importance of pronunciation in achieving effective communication and academic success (Chen & Goh, 2011; Munro & Derwing, 2006). Despite this recognition, the majority of students reported insufficient engagement with pronunciation outside of classroom settings, suggesting a disconnect between their perceptions and actual study practices.

Moreover, the results highlight a lack of systematic exposure to pronunciation study habits within the language instruction at the university. This observation suggests that while students are aware of the benefits of these habits, the current curriculum does not adequately support or promote these activities, leaving students to navigate their learning independently. This finding aligns with the literature, which suggests that pronunciation is often neglected in language teaching, with inadequate emphasis on developing autonomous learning skills that could bridge this gap (Levis & Grant, 2003; Derwing & Munro, 2015).

The study also contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into the specific pronunciation study habits that are most and least favored by students. Activities involving direct interaction and practical application, as having conversations

in English and checking phonetic transcriptions, were among the most valued. Conversely, less practical and more isolated activities, like keeping a pronunciation log, were less favored, which may reflect students' preferences for more engaging and interactive forms of learning.

In conclusion, the findings from this study not only reinforce the importance of pronunciation study habits in ESL education but also highlight significant areas for improvement in how these habits are integrated into language programs. To bridge the identified gaps, it is recommended that curriculum developers and educators enhance the systematic inclusion of pronunciation activities and support students in becoming more autonomous learners. Future research should continue to explore effective strategies for integrating pronunciation study habits into language learning, with a focus on developing practical and engaging approaches that align with student preferences and educational outcomes.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has two main limitations that deserve attention. First, the study focused on a BA in English and a BA in English teaching, where students learn the language and learn to analyze the language from a more linguistic or academic perspective. The syllabi concentrate on metalinguistic features as transcriptions. Students also have specific oral courses that are usually the most demanding in terms of credits and time. Therefore, these results may not be generalized to what occurs in other programs that focus on general English or English for occupational purposes, among others.

Second, the number of groups and professors in this university is usually large and diverse compared to other universities with the same majors as this study includes. For example, there are

usually eight groups in the first courses, and oral courses may go from seven to three groups, depending on the level. Therefore, the type of previous exposure students received may have been different and affected the results. For example, some students may have had a professor who consistently stressed pronunciation study habits, while others focused on more traditional activities.

Researchers should replicate this study in other language programs according to students' language needs and level. For example, not all populations need to learn how to transcribe or read phonetic transcriptions. In addition, not all students may have access to language apps or native speakers. Therefore, other pronunciation study habits may be taken into account to fit specific language programs.

Further research should also be undertaken to determine the impact of including pronunciation study habits more systematically in a language program. In addition, professors' opinions should be explored to discover why they advise students to use some pronunciation study habits but not others and why some are not included in course materials more systematically.

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Appendix 1

Study Habits in the BA in English and English Teaching at a Costa Rican Public University.

The purpose of this survey is to determine to what extent pronunciation study habits have been properly addressed in the B.A. in English and English Teaching. It also seeks to discover what perception students have regarding this issue.

This survey should take no more than 10 minutes of your time. All answers are anonymous. Your participation in this brief survey is greatly appreciated.

Written Consent

I hereby confirm that I have read the written consent titled “Fourth Year Students’ Perception of Pronunciation Study Habits” and accept to participate in this study.

1. Mark only one option.

_____ Participate _____ Do not participate

Demographic Information

The University of Costa Rica does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, or national origin. In order to track the reach and effectiveness of our learning experiences and ensure we address the needs of all, please consider the following questions:

2. What is your gender?

_____ Male

_____ Female

_____ Non-binary / third

_____ Prefer not to say Other:

3. What is your age?

_____ Below 18

_____ 18 – 24

_____ 25 – 34

_____ 35 – 44

_____ 45 – 54

_____ Above 54

_____ Prefer not to say

4. What is your native language?

_____ Spanish

_____ English

- ____ Prefer not to say
 ____ Other: _____

5. What major are you enrolled in?
 ____ English only
 ____ English Teaching only
 ____ Both
 ____ Prefer not to say

Pronunciation Study Habits Recommended by Professors

Answer the following questions taking into account any advice professors have given you about pronunciation study habits in any course of the study plan.

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "Professors' recommendations about pronunciation study habits have been good and sufficient."
 ____ Strongly Agree
 ____ Agree
 ____ Neutral
 ____ Disagree
 ____ Strongly Disagree
7. What types of pronunciation study habits have your professors recommended you? Please choose all that apply.
 ____ All of them
 ____ None
 ____ Recording yourself
 ____ Studying minimal pairs
 ____ Studying spelling patterns
 ____ Having conversations in English
 ____ Reviewing how articulators work

- ___ Checking phonetic transcriptions
- ___ Using specialized apps or software
- ___ Asking your professor for feedback
- ___ Asking a native speaker for feedback
- ___ Writing words in the phonetic alphabet
- ___ Repeating individual sounds in isolation
- ___ Asking a classmate or friend for feedback
- ___ Consulting an online pronunciation dictionary
- ___ Drilling (repeating words or sentences in isolation)
- ___ Shadowing (repeating audio segments after a speaker)
- ___ Reading written passages aloud (in pairs or individually)
- ___ Doing pronunciation exercises from other books or sources
- ___ Listening to audio materials (podcasts, audiobooks, news, etc)
- ___ Following extra courses and explanations (Rachel's English, etc)
- ___ Keeping a pronunciation log (writing words to review their pronunciation later) Other:

Pronunciation Study Habits Recommended in the Syllabus or Course Anthology

Answer the following questions taking into account your studies in the BA in English or English Teaching. Please consider the core block courses (oral courses, writing courses, literature courses, and grammar courses) in *Lenguas Modernas* only.

8. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "The recommendations about pronunciation study habits included in the syllabus or anthology have been good and sufficient."
- ___ Strongly Agree
 - ___ Agree
 - ___ Neutral

- ☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree
9. What types of pronunciation study habits have you seen in the course syllabi or anthologies? Please choose all that apply.
- ☐ All of them
☐ None
☐ Recording yourself
☐ Studying minimal pairs
☐ Studying spelling patterns
☐ Having conversations in English
☐ Reviewing how articulators work
☐ Checking phonetic transcriptions
☐ Using specialized apps or software
☐ Asking your professor for feedback
☐ Asking a native speaker for feedback
☐ Writing words in the phonetic alphabet
☐ Repeating individual sounds in isolation
☐ Asking a classmate or friend for feedback
☐ Consulting an online pronunciation dictionary
☐ Drilling (repeating words or sentences in isolation)
☐ Shadowing (repeating audio segments after a speaker)
☐ Reading written passages aloud (in pairs or individually)
☐ Doing pronunciation exercises from other books or sources
☐ Listening to audio materials (podcasts, audiobooks, news, etc)
☐ Following extra courses and explanations (Rachel's English, etc)
☐ Keeping a pronunciation log (writing words to review their pronunciation later) Other:

Pronunciation Study Habits Incorporated by Students

Answer the following questions based on your own study habits.

10. How many hours of extra class time per week do you dedicate to improving your pronunciation?
- ☐ Less than 2 hours
 - ☐ Between 2 and 4 hours
 - ☐ Between 4 and 6 hours
 - ☐ Between 6 and 8 hours
 - ☐ More than 8 hours
 - ☐ I do not dedicate extra class time to work on pronunciation.
11. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I dedicate extra class time to study pronunciation even if I have no homework related to pronunciation."
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
12. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "Dedicating extra class time to studying pronunciation improves my pronunciation skills."
- ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
13. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "Improving my pronunciation is one of my main goals."
- ☐ Strongly Agree

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. To what language component do you dedicate most of your study time?

- ☐ Grammar features
- ☐ Listening skills
- ☐ Oral skills
- ☐ Reading skills
- ☐ Vocabulary acquisition
- ☐ Writing skills
- ☐ Other: _____

15. What types of pronunciation study habits have you acquired or further developed while taking English courses at UCR? Please choose all that apply.

- ☐ All of them
- ☐ None
- ☐ Recording yourself
- ☐ Studying minimal pairs
- ☐ Studying spelling patterns
- ☐ Having conversations in English
- ☐ Reviewing how articulators work
- ☐ Checking phonetic transcriptions
- ☐ Using specialized apps or software
- ☐ Asking your professor for feedback
- ☐ Asking a native speaker for feedback
- ☐ Writing words in the phonetic alphabet
- ☐ Repeating individual sounds in isolation
- ☐ Asking a classmate or friend for feedback

- _____ Consulting an online pronunciation dictionary
- _____ Drilling (repeating words or sentences in isolation)
- _____ Shadowing (repeating audio segments after a speaker)
- _____ Reading written passages aloud (in pairs or individually)
- _____ Doing pronunciation exercises from other books or sources
- _____ Listening to audio materials (podcasts, audiobooks, news, etc)
- _____ Following extra courses and explanations (Rachel's English, etc)
- _____ Keeping a pronunciation log (writing words to review their pronunciation later)
- _____ Other: _____

16. Please add any other comment you believe necessary.

Review of LingQ as a PALL after one year of regular use*

Análisis de LingQ como PALL tras un año de uso

Cristina Rodríguez Pastor[†]

Universidad de Cádiz, Cádiz, España

* Article of reflection

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[†] PhD in English Philology.

Professor–researcher

E-mail: cristina.rodriguez@uca.es – ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0273-7036>

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ABSTRACT

This article sets out to analyse LingQ, an online platform for language learning created in 2007 by the polyglot Steve Kaufmann. Framed in CALL, an auto-ethnographic approach will be used to examine the author's experience of platforms and apps for language learning (PALL) during a year of autonomous study learning French on the platform. The study will try to demonstrate the alignment of LingQ's theoretical underpinnings with some of the main language learning theories which, at first, might seem incompatible. The analysis will show how the platform supports the learners' immersion in authentic texts, providing comprehensible input according to their interests while promoting vocabulary and grammar acquisition through noticing. In addition, it will explore how it leverages the role of culture as a booster of integrative motivation.

Keywords: *Authentic texts, autonomous study, CALL, comprehensible input, grammar, immersion, noticing, PALL, vocabulary.*

RESUMEN

El presente artículo realiza un análisis de LingQ, una plataforma online para el aprendizaje de lenguas creada en 2007 por el políglota Steve Kaufmann. Partiendo del marco de CALL, se empleará un enfoque auto-etnográfico para examinar la experiencia de la autora con las plataformas y aplicaciones para el aprendizaje de lenguas (PALL) durante un año de estudio autónomo, aprendiendo francés a través de la plataforma. El estudio pretende demostrar la forma en que LingQ se alinea con los principios teóricos de algunas de las principales teorías del aprendizaje de lenguas que, en principio, pueden parecer incompatibles. El análisis mostrará cómo la plataforma apoya la inmersión de los aprendices en textos auténticos, proporcionando input comprensible acorde con sus intereses, al mismo tiempo que promueve la adquisición de vocabulario y gramática a través de la captación. Asimismo, se explorará cómo se vale del papel de la cultura como refuerzo de la motivación integradora.

Palabras clave: *CALL, captación, estudio autónomo, gramática, inmersión, input comprensible, PALL, textos auténticos, vocabulario.*

THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE PLATFORMS and apps for language learning, hereafter referred to as PALLs (Bączkowska, 2021), has been steadily increasing every year. Over the past 25 years, several of these platforms have been launched, including Rosetta Stone created in 1999, LingQ in 2007, Babbel in 2008, Busuu in 2008, Memrise in 2010, Duolingo in 2011, Lingopie in 2019 and more. However, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020 led to a surge in PALLs to meet the growing demand for online language instruction (Loewen et al., 2020). As research in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has consistently shown (Liu et al., 2015; Karjo & Andreani, 2018; Loewen et al., 2020; Rebolledo & Gonzalez, 2023, etc.), there are many benefits to using PALLs. They offer flexibility, providing the opportunity to learn at one's own pace, set goals, and access a variety of resources, including videos, audio, grammar explanations, flashcards, and more. They can be used autonomously for self-guided study or as a complement to formal language instruction, both inside and outside the classroom. They provide easy access to authentic target language, immediate feedback, and the appeal of an attractive design. In addition, they often focus on cultural aspects associated with the target language communities to boost integrative motivation and promote cultural awareness.

Karasimos (2022) notes the difficulty of selecting the most suitable option, as we navigate an overwhelming sea of platforms that promise to turn us into fluent users of a language in a short period of time. When the platform is used as a complement to formal instruction, teachers can guide students in their choice, but when learners are studying autonomously, the decision-taking is more complex and personal. Once a platform has been chosen, another challenge that learners face is that of persevering in its use on a regular basis.

When assessing the platforms' effectiveness, positive language learning outcomes appear to be reduced to vocabulary and grammar learning. More specifically, several studies have pointed out the limitations of many of these platforms in enhancing the learners' oral communicative competence (Lord, 2016; Bączkowska, 2021; Metruk, 2022, etc.). However, despite these valid concerns, "it is possible that the discrete grammar and vocabulary instruction provided by some apps may be able to positively affect the development of productive language skills thought to draw more heavily on implicit (or proceduralized/automatized) language knowledge" (Loewen et al., 2020, p.213).

With these issues in mind, and to gain insight into the type of learning outcomes expected from PALL users and how platforms contribute to the development of their communicative competence, this study focuses on LingQ, a platform that has not received the attention it deserves in the literature (Karasimos, 2022). Though some authors have included it in their comparative studies (Liu et al., 2015; Bączkowska, 2021; Karasimos 2022, etc.), I have not succeeded in finding any in-depth analysis of LingQ. Other PALLs as Lingopie, Busuu, and Rosetta Stone were initially considered to be compared to LingQ, however, their inclusion would have compromised my objective of performing the detailed analysis that was found to be missing.

Returning to the previously mentioned studies of LingQ, Liu et al. (2015) conducted a careful comparison of 4 PALLs to examine their pedagogical merits as social network sites. However, as 9 years have passed since its publication and many changes have been introduced to the platform, an updated review is due.

Bączkowska's (2021) study, on the other hand, includes the analysis of no fewer than 30 PALLs and finds LingQ lacking in the following aspects: (1) it does not develop productive skills,

(2) it does not cater for beginners, and (3) it does not encourage creativity. As for Karasimos' analysis of 5 PALLs (2022), he notes that LingQ does not provide a fixed itinerary for the user's progress. He also agrees with Bączkowska that it is not suitable for beginners.

In this context, the study aims to explore an updated version of LingQ from the perspective of a language learner user as well as its pedagogical affordances from a language teacher's point of view. Specifically, the following research questions (RQs) will be addressed:

RQ1: What are the main theoretical and pedagogical principles that underlie the way the platform works? Are they reflected in its design?

RQ2: What kind of language learning practice does the platform facilitate in terms of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation?

RQ3: How are language skills developed?

RQ4: What level of learner agency does it provide?

RQ5: Does it contribute to developing Intercultural competence?

LINGQ. SITE OVERALL DESCRIPTION

Created in 2007 by the Canadian polyglot Steve Kaufmann and his son Mark, this platform offers a large library of contents mainly built by its users. The number of languages currently supported is 45. Its main emphasis is on providing language learning resources and tools to help learners immerse themselves in their target languages and enhance their comprehension in context.

Among its contents the platform offers:

- Mini-stories: Aimed at beginners, they introduce short simple stories narrated in different persons, tenses, and

modes (affirmative, negative, and interrogative). They involve a lot of repetition.

- Guided courses: Arranged by competence levels, each comprises several lessons. It is worth noticing that not all guided courses have been put together by LingQ (some have been supplied by users), however the platform is responsible for most of the content in the beginner courses. They provide a more structured learning plan.
- A wide range of contents, organized in topics, is provided in the shape of authentic text including audio and often video. Topics include Books, Podcasts, News, Business, Entertainment, Sports, Technology, Health, Science, Travel, Politics, Food, History, Kids, Lifestyle, Songs, Language, Language YouTubers, Pronunciation, Grammar, and Culture.

Regarding the features of the platform:

- Each of these topics corresponds to a “shelf” in the “library” (see Figure 1). The mini-stories and the guided courses are also on different shelves. If users are not interested in the content offered by the platform in the library, they can import their own content from a file on their computer or the internet. Although the mini-stories and guided courses are created by the platform, most of the content is authentic imported by the users, building the platform's library. This is the main focus of this review.

In terms of access, users have the premium and the freemium options. The latter is free of charge, with no limit of time but users only have access to basic services. In a later section these limitations will be clarified. Also, it is a cross-platform application, allowing for access on both computers and mobile devices.

Regarding language levels, LingQ does not refer specifically to CEFR levels, instead rather vague labels are employed, namely: Beginner (1 and 2), Intermediate (1 and 2) and Advanced (1 and 2). Depending on the language, each level assumes a specific number of known words.

There is also a “Community” section that includes an extremely active forum (11,500 posts and 559 active users per week) where users can ask and answer questions related to the platform and to language learning in general, express and exchange opinions, raise complaints, meet other users, etc.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: UNDERLYING LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORIES

To understand Steve Kaufmann’s approach to the creation of LingQ, a review was conducted of his guide to language learning, *The Linguist* (2003), published 4 years before the launch of the platform. In his work, Kaufmann combines chapters focused on his biography, where he narrates key episodes of his life that contributed to his transformation into a polyglot, with his beliefs concerning the fundamentals of language learning. It would appear that these beliefs (which will be detailed in the following sections) draw from three main theories of knowledge, each of them initially in conflict with the rest: Behaviorism and Cognitivism, in particular, Krashen’s Monitor Theory and Schmith’s Noticing Hypothesis.

In general terms, Behaviorism viewed language learning as a process of habit formation, which was facilitated by imitation,

reinforcement and repetition (Littlewood, 1998). Kaufmann (2003) echoes these beliefs when he states that “you need to overwork the language processing capability of your brain by constant and frequent repetition during a period of intense learning” (p.131). The structure of the mini-stories reflects this belief. This highly controlled input aims to help learners consolidate grammatical structures and vocabulary through repetition.

In contrast with Behaviorism, Cognitivism (which gained ground in the world of ELT in the 1970s and 1980s) focuses on the mental processing of information involved in language acquisition. Stephen Krashen, who was one of the main proponents of cognitivism and language acquisition, developed the Monitor Theory, a series of hypotheses about how adults attain their ability in a second language: (1) the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, (2) the Monitor Hypothesis, (3) the Natural Order Hypothesis, (4) the Input Hypothesis, and (5) the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

In his first hypothesis, Krashen (1981) distinguishes between acquisition, an unconscious process focused on meaning, and learning, a conscious process where attention is drawn to form. Although to him both processes are important and are connected, he holds that the acquisition process is key because it is the same that children activate when they are exposed to their first language. The Monitor Hypothesis posits that conscious learning only acts as a monitor or editor that checks and corrects one's language output. He identified different types of Monitor users depending on the extent to which they use their conscious knowledge in their production. While extreme monitor users might be excessively concerned with using conscious knowledge to polish their speaking and writing in detriment to their fluency, “under users” of monitor might hardly profit from this knowledge to improve their output. The Natural Order

Hypothesis suggests that language is acquired in a predictable sequence, and this order is not affected by explicit instruction. The Input Hypothesis states that learners acquire language by understanding input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence (“comprehensible input”). Finally, the Affective Filter Hypothesis highlights the role of emotional factors in language acquisition. According to this hypothesis, negative emotions as anxiety or lack of motivation can raise the affective filter and hinder language acquisition, while positive emotions can lower it and facilitate acquisition. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on hypotheses 1, 2, 4, and 5. As Atkinson (2011) puts it, this theory:

Featured the provision of input to a language acquisition device, which, depending on whether (1) the input was “comprehensible”, and (2) an “affective filter” (...) was “up” or “down”, gained access to that input for processing purposes. If it did, and there was enough input, language acquisition automatically ensued. (Atkinson, 2011, p.13)

Based on this theory and in collaboration with Tracy Terrel, Krashen formulated The Natural Approach, a language teaching method that emphasizes subconscious, immersive language acquisition over explicit grammar instruction. This approach is rooted in the belief that language learning in adults mirrors the way children acquire their native language, advocating for a low-stress, communicative environment where learners are exposed to comprehensible input. Their main hypothesis is that: “We acquire language when we obtain comprehensible input, when we understand what we hear or read in another language” (Krashen & Terrel, 1983, p.1). They insist that comprehension leads to production.

As Kaufmann admitted (2022), at the time he wrote his guide, he was unfamiliar with Krashen's theory. However, this study will try to show that most of his principles support the underpinnings of the Monitor Theory. LingQ's slogan, displayed on its website², is: "Learn Languages from Content You Love". Similarly, as we scroll down, we can find the following marketing claim: "Immerse yourself in your new language. Everyone learns to speak their native language. Why not use the same approach with a second language? Surround yourself with meaningful input that matters to you". And later on: "Watch your comprehension and confidence grow. As you flood your brain with natural content and rapidly acquire words and natural phrasing, feel your comprehension skyrocket. With comprehension comes confidence and the ability to feel comfortable in any situation".

From a language learning perspective, these exhortations are unmistakably in line with Krashen's influential theory about second language acquisition and his focus on subconscious processes.

Later on, in the early 90s, Richard Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, with his emphasis on attention and awareness in language learning, ran counter to Krashen's theory of a dual system that prioritized subconscious "acquisition" over conscious "learning". Although he agreed with Krashen in that "improvement in second language performance follows on the heels of understanding" (Schmidt, 1990, p. 147), according to this hypothesis, for input to turn into intake and thus lead to acquisition, forms need to be noticed and processed consciously (Schmidt, 1990; Robinson, 1995; Ünlü, 2015). In other words, learners must pay conscious attention to the language features they are exposed to before they can effectively learn and use them. These features can belong to

2 <https://www.lingq.com/en>

any aspect of the language (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, pragmatics) and, although their frequency of occurrence plays an important role, they need to be noticed to result in acquisition. The same happens with corrective feedback of the learner's mistakes, if they go unnoticed they will not contribute to their development.

In his blog, Kaufmann refers to the "language learning tripod" as the three feet that good language learners should stand on to succeed:

- **Attitude:** Moving away from an ethnocentric position and being prepared to embrace, not just the target language but also its culture. In this category, he also highlights willpower and confidence in success (2019a). This concept clearly connects with Gardner and Lambert's identification of integrative motivation (1972).
- **Time spent with the language:** This is paramount but we need to spend it learning in an enjoyable way for each of us (2019b).
- **Noticing:** Directly connected to Schmidt's hypothesis, he describes it as an ability we develop as we immerse ourselves in the language, it is "the key learning skill". To be able to start noticing we need "lots of exposure" (2019c).
- In the following sections, these aspects will be explored in more detail.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study based on an explorative-descriptive approach in which an auto-ethnographic method is used. Thus, I will rely on my own experience learning French as a second foreign language in LingQ for one year. The mean time devoted to the platform each day was 60 minutes. This experience was registered in a field journal that served as a reference to

analyze the platform through the table that will be presented subsequently as my survey instrument. It should be considered that I am a native speaker of Spanish and a teacher of English as a foreign language. English is my first foreign language. As for my proficiency level in French, I currently have a certified B1 CEFR level.

As clarified in the Introduction, unlike other studies that compare different language learning platforms (Gruba & Clark, 2013; Liu et al., 2015; Karjo & Andreani, 2018; Karasimos, 2022; Bączkowska, 2021), this one will be centered on only one, in an attempt to conduct a more detailed analysis.

It is important to acknowledge the potential limitations of this methodology. One such limitation is that the observations may be perceived as subjective and influenced by a number of factors, including the linguistic background, level of education, age, motivation, time available, digital competence, and other variables.

Survey instrument

Table 1 was designed in order to provide answers to the RQs posed at the beginning of this article. It is based on the model proposed by Karasimos (2022, p.154) but adapted to this research topic.

TABLE 1 *Observation table*

Evaluation Criteria	Analyzed Aspects
INPUT	What kind of input is provided? How? Is it contextualized? Is it comprehensible?
LANGUAGE SKILLS	Analysis of how reading and listening skills are addressed. Does the app provide the learner with opportunities for speaking and writing? How? Does it facilitate opportunities to interact with other participants or native speakers?
VOCABULARY	How is vocabulary learning facilitated?
GRAMMAR	Is there an explicit approach to grammar? How does the app foster the learning of grammar?
PRONUNCIATION	How does the app address pronunciation?
CULTURE	Does the app contribute to building cultural awareness of the target language in the learner?

Source: Author.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Tapping into my user experience for one year as a data source, I analyzed the platform according to the variables described in the former table. My aim in this section was to examine each of these aspects from an objective perspective to gather information for further discussion.

Input

Kaufmann (2003) highlights the central role of “an input flood which trains your mind and prepares it for the more difficult task of expressing yourself in the new language” (p.103). LingQ provides input in the shape of text, audio and video. Among its sources are the media, blogs, podcasts, YouTube, etc. It is the user who decides which content to work on. Except for the mini-stories and some of the guided courses, the available input

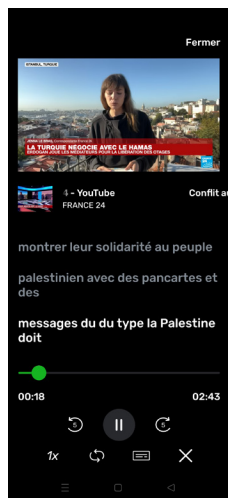
is authentic and non-targeted, this is, “no specific vocabulary or grammar structures/forms are the focus of instruction” (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021, p.299). However, on the shelves related to language learning (i.e. Language YouTubers, Pronunciation, and Grammar) content is obviously targeted.

To import content, users can do it through an importing panel or they can use a browser extension to import it directly from the internet. This extension also allows them to import just selected text, not the whole page. The language is always contextualized because, even when it is just a selection of text, they have the option of returning to the original URL source. Some of the most common types of content imported by users are YouTube videos, blog posts, Netflix subtitles, song audio and lyrics, and e-books. Imported content is saved as a “private lesson”. If we want to share it with the community, we need to “like” the content.

It should also be noted that when users import content, they are asked to save it into a “course”. Each user organizes their own courses and names them following any criteria that suit their purposes: by source, topic, language focus, etc.

When an audio or video (file) is imported, if they do not have an integrated transcript, LingQ can generate it (using Whisper AI). However, the result is not always accurate since it depends on the permissions of the original source and, in the case of videos, on whether the subtitles are available or automatically generated by YouTube. In the case of transcriptions of YouTube-videos, we can click on a little button below that opens a pop-up window to watch the video (with the subtitles option). If we are on the app, the video is reproduced in sync with the text, as we can see in Figure 3. The advantage in this case is that the input is more contextualized because, along with the phrase that is being said (highlighted in white), the previous phrases are accessible.

Figure 3 Video in LingQ



Note: LingQ's app reproduction of a YouTube video in sync with the transcript.

Source: LingQ.

In the Premium option, if a text does not have audio in its source, the platform can automatically generate it, however, the result is frequently artificial. Despite this, what is important to notice is that, for every text, students always have access to its written and oral form.

On the basis of the user's level, each piece of content displayed in the library indicates the percentage of new vocabulary. In addition, on the picture representing the lesson (Figure 4, inside the red circle), the blue oblong shows the number of new words. The yellow oblong indicates the number of words the learner is currently studying that appear in the lesson. Finally, the white shape shows how many words they know or they have told LingQ that they know (see "Vocabulary" section) are in

the lesson. At the bottom-left, learners can see the name of the course (Inner French) to which this content in particular belongs. Generally, the course is named after the source of the content.

Figure 4 Lesson cover in LingQ's library

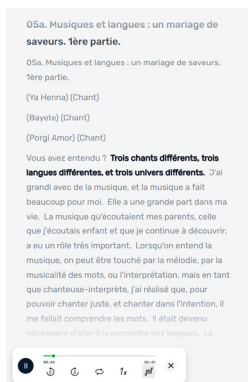


Source: LingQ.

If a piece of content is too challenging, learners have the option of activating “Simplify Lesson (AI)”, a function that provides a simplified version of the text, thus making the input more comprehensible. However, this function is not available for all contents.

C) Listen to the text (available for both page and sentence view). For each lesson, it is possible to check the length of the audio before opening it (see Figure 4). If the original source does not contain the audio, the platform generates it (in the settings, it is possible to choose between a male /female voice and different accents). Users can choose when to listen to it (before/after reading the text or as they read it) as well as the reproduction speed. As shown in Figure 7, another interesting option is the possibility of synchronizing audio and text (karaoke-style text scroll):

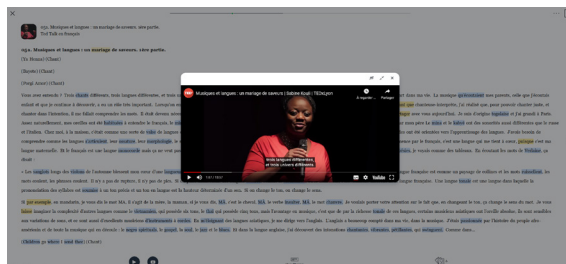
Figure 7 *LingQ's listening tool*



Source: LingQ.

D) As remarked in the previous section, if the source of the text is a YouTube video (see Figure 8), there is the option of watching it (with the subtitles on or off). Again, it is up to the user whether they do it before or after they read the text, or select the sync option.

Figure 8 YouTube player in LingQ



Source: LingQ.

In any case, the platform encourages its users to combine both language skills, i.e. to listen to what they read and read what they listen to, as a way of amplifying their exposure to input and multiplying the possibilities of noticing the patterns of the language.

It is important to note that reading in LingQ is interactive since individual words or phrases can be clicked to get the definitions and listen to their pronunciation, so it is an assisted reading tool. Also, through the sidebar options, users can activate “Show translation”, which appears below each line (only in the Premium version).

When opening a lesson (see Figure 5):

- New words are highlighted in blue.
- Words highlighted in yellow are those whose meaning has been previously checked and saved.
- Un-highlighted words are those which the platform interprets are known to the user.

If a word highlighted in blue is ignored, once the page is flipped, the platform incorporates it into the user’s list of Known Words.

In LingQ, learners develop their receptive skills through meaningful input, because it has been chosen by them based on their interests and preferences. Although the platform advises beginners to start with the guided courses and the mini-stories, no fixed plan is laid out for them to work on these skills. One day they can concentrate on reading a newspaper article about a current issue and the next they may move on to watching the subtitled trailer of a film and read the transcript afterwards.

Regarding interaction and productive skills, LingQ provides learners with different ways to practice their output:

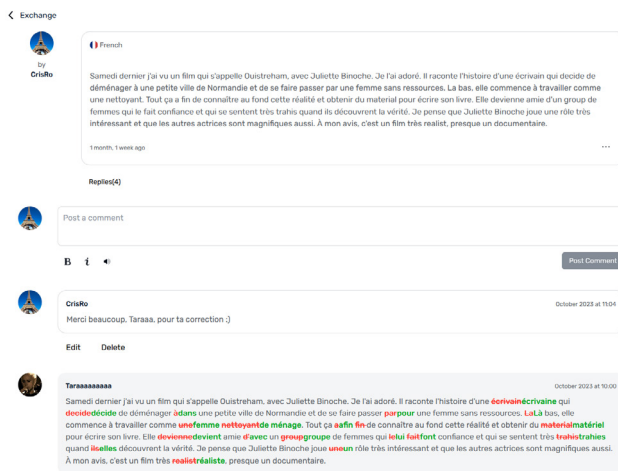
- Booking individual conversation lessons with a tutor via Skype. This is a paying option. The platform offers several tutors of different origins and accents and users can choose among them to have a lesson. Lessons can be 30, 45, 60, or 90 minutes long.
- Contacting other users through the forum to arrange online meetings for communicative exchange.
- Writing a text and submitting it to a tutor (paying option) or uploading it to the platform community to have it corrected by other users (free of charge). If this option is chosen (“Writing exchange”), submitted texts have a limit of 200 words. In any case, there are no set topics for writing. Users decide what they want to write about.

As for the submission of texts for correction, before uploading them, the platform provides a tool to check spelling. It is important to note that this tool just highlights the words that contain mistakes without showing the right form.

Concerning the native language of the users who correct submitted texts, although it is generally understood that only native speakers should do it, there are no restrictions. Once the text has been uploaded to the platform, it is public and availa-

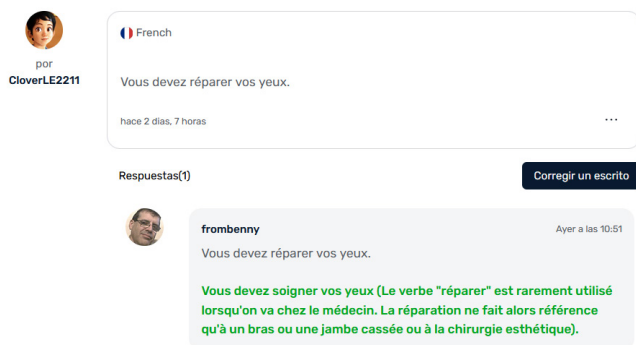
ble for the community to correct. Sometimes the same text is corrected by different users. In my experience, these corrections are received in a matter of hours.

Figure 9 *Peer-correction of writing task*



Source: LingQ.

As shown in Figure 9, corrections consist of adding or deleting information to the original text. Some users add clarification for their corrections, but not as a rule (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Clarification of correction in writing exchange

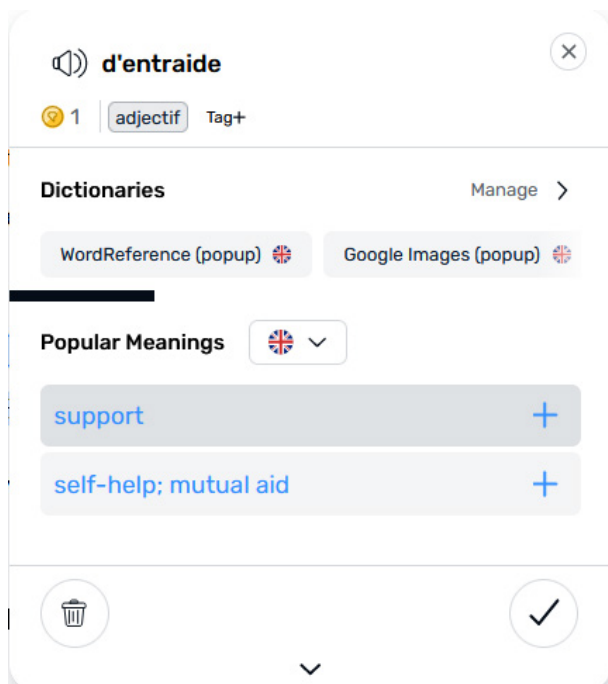
Source: LingQ.

Going through the writing exchange section allows learners to check the corrections made to the texts of other learners and learn from their mistakes.

Vocabulary

For LingQ, the more words learners know, the higher their potential in a language. As previously explained, when users click on a word (or a phrase) and select a specific meaning to save it to their own vocabulary list, a LingQ is created. The platform encourages users to create as many as possible, keeping in mind that, in the free version, the limit is 20 LingQs in total.

Figure 11 Pop-up window opened when clicking a word



Source: LingQ.

As shown in Figure 11, “*d’entraide*” is the word I clicked on in the lesson I was reading. In the pop-up window (LingQ widget), it is possible to listen to its pronunciation as well as see the tags allocated by the platform, edit them and add our own (Figure 11). Regarding the meaning of the word, these are the options:

- a. Click on any of the dictionaries provided, which have been previously selected in the Settings section, among different options. The languages of the dictionaries can

be selected, so it is possible to get monolingual and/or bilingual translations and definitions. When users click on a dictionary, another pop-up window takes them to that entry in the selected dictionary. This option only shows the meaning but does not allow to save it.

- b. Check the “Popular meanings”, i.e. the translations and definitions other users have supplied for this word (here the language can also be selected). Once the meaning which best suits the context in which the word is set has been selected, the user clicks on it to save it. It is possible to save more than one meaning in the same or in different languages.
- c. Type their own meaning.

Saved meanings are not definitive; they can be edited afterwards.

In the “Vocabulary” section users can find the list of all their LingQs (Figure 12).

Figure 12 *Layout of the Vocabulary section*

☐ cuisson		"du food prépare" "quelle cuisson vous obtenez?"
☐ cuite		"...régler à sa première cuite"
☐ culture		"culture nous aurons de quoi..."
☐ d'ailleurs		"...qui fonctionne plutôt bien, d'ailleurs, c'est tout..."

Source: LingQ.

Each entry includes its meaning (it can be more than one in any of the selected languages), tags, as well as its “Source”, i.e. the fragment of the sentence in which the word was integrated when clicked on. Although this source text provides each entry with

some context, it is not always enough to retrieve the meaning, as will be analyzed later on.

In the “Status” column, the entry shows a number which goes from 1-4, depending on its degree of consolidation in the user’s memory. As the Help page explains: “LingQs start with status 1 (unfamiliar); as you become more familiar with the word, increase its status. If you get the word correct twice in a row during review exercises, the status will automatically increase by 1” (LingQ, 2023a). When the status shows a tick, it means that the word has become known.

Although Google Images is available among the integrated dictionaries when a word is clicked on to check its meaning, unfortunately for visual learners, images cannot be saved into their LingQ entries.

Vocabulary which has not been found in the “lessons studied” (i.e. texts read in the platform) can be manually imported into LingQ. The only disadvantage is that these entries are not saved with a source text.

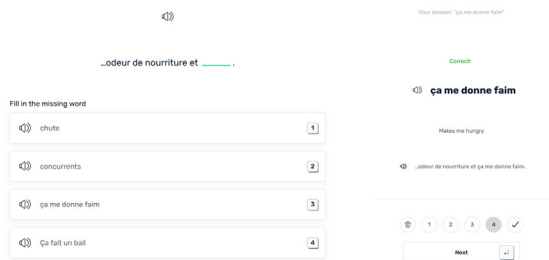
The vocabulary section provides a “Review” function to revise the saved vocabulary through cards with the option of doing it through the Spaced Repetition System (SRS). As one of LingQ’s help videos explains, this system “presents newer words and lower-status words more frequently. LingQs that were saved a long time ago, LingQs that were recently reviewed and LingQs that are closer to being known will be shown less frequently” (2022a). In Settings, users indicate how many cards they want to practice in each review session. Each word/phrase is reviewed twice in a session in shuffled order through different types of activities. There are five types of review activities:

- Flashcard: It requires learners to provide the meaning of a word or phrase. The source text is shown for support.

- Reverse flashcard (how would you say this in the target language?). It shows the meaning and learners have to guess what the word is in their target language.
- Cloze test.
- Dictation.
- Multiple choice to select the right meaning.

In the vocabulary practice, the source text associated with the term is key in the resolution of the flashcards and the cloze tests (as seen in Figure 13). In the rest of the activities, the source text is shown in the feedback.

Figure 13 Source text as a prompt in cloze tests



Source: LingQ.

Therefore, the repetition of these activities contributes to reinforcing the mental connection between the two. In addition, during revision sessions, the same term is tested twice through different techniques. This is, halfway through the session, the same set of terms is revised again in scrambled order. Knowing that the solution lies in a term that has previously come up reduces the learner's cognitive effort to retrieve the correct answer. Thus, the probabilities of providing the correct answer rise, as well as the learner's motivation.

If the “Sentence view” option is chosen, users will also have the possibility of revising the vocabulary and structure of a sentence through two types of activities:

- A matching exercise between words and their translation.
- An aided reverse translation (see more detail in “Grammar”).

During vocabulary revision, the feedback of each exercise card shows an edition icon that allows users to optimize the saved information about each term. Thus, if some relevant information is lacking (e.g., that it is feminine or plural) or a more accurate translation/definition is needed, they can edit it. From the “Edition view” it is also possible to have access to other examples of the same term in other contexts that other users have saved. A click on any of them leads to the text (lesson) in which the user LingQed it.

At the end of each lesson, there is a tick to indicate users they have finished reading the text. The moment they click on it they are provided with the following feedback: known words added, LingQs created, following lessons (in the same course) and recommended lessons. They are also given the option of reviewing its vocabulary through the same type of exercises described before.

Grammar

Given the fact that Kaufmann considers it “a distraction from learning the language” (2003, p.121), there is not an explicit approach to grammar. For LingQ it is through extensive and intensive reading and listening that we contribute to building a metalinguistic awareness; in Krashen’s words, a “feel for grammaticality” (1981, p.4). Therefore, it is worth analyzing from a grammatical perspective some of the input provided by the platform. Let’s start with the input specifically designed by LingQ, i.e., the mini-stories and some of the guided courses (mainly those addressed to beginners).

In the mini-stories, repetition is the main characteristic, transforming the structures from affirmative into negative and then into interrogative, as well as a transition from third to first-person singular (see Figure 14). Regarding the automatization of structures through repetition, the platform affirms: “Through frequent exposure, it will become more and more permanently lodged in your brain and ready to be used in communication eventually” (LingQ, 2022b).

Figure 14 *Extract of LingQ mini-story for beginners*



3 - Catherine adopte un chat
LingQ Mini Stories - France

Histoire trois: Catherine adopte un chat

Catherine s'**ennuie** au travail et à la maison.

Elle fait la **même** chose tous les jours.

Elle veut un nouveau passe-temps.

D'abord, elle essaie de cuisiner.

Mais sa nourriture n'a pas bon goût.

Ensuite, elle essaie de nager.

Mais elle a peur de l'eau.

Catherine rentre à la maison à pieds et voit un magasin d'animaux.

Dans le magasin d'animaux, elle voit un chat !

Catherine achète le chat et est maintenant très heureuse.

Voici la **même** histoire racontée différemment.

Je m'**ennuie** au travail et à la maison.

Je fais la **même** chose tous les jours.

Je veux un nouveau passe-temps.

D'abord, j'essaie de cuisiner.

Mais ma nourriture n'a pas bon goût.



Source: LingQ.

The beginner-guided courses consist of collections of thematic lessons in which learners can find basic dialogues related to everyday situations. The course “Patterns” is an exception

in that it is organized around words or groups of words that appear frequently in the language, i.e., key verbs, connectors, conjunctions, etc.

Both types of content aim to help learners start noticing and fixing frequently occurring phrases of the target language. Phrases are claimed to be the cornerstone of language acquisition: “I found it easier to learn the structure of a new language from frequent exposure to phrase patterns rather than trying to understand abstract grammatical explanations of that structure”. (Kaufmann, 2003, p. 42)

This insistence on the importance of phrases for the acquisition of “correct language” (p.121) clashes with the type of texts sometimes found in the lessons. When they are imported from a YouTube video with subtitles automatically generated, learners instantly perceive that the transcription is very confusing since it follows a word number criterion instead of syntactical criteria to separate the lines. Consequently, what the learner finds is an unpunctuated text with broken sense units/phrases and a lack of coherence (see Figure 15).

Figure 15 *Transcription from a non-subtitled YouTube video*

Conflit au Proche-Orient : la Turquie négocie avec le Hamas • FRANCE 24 - YouTube
FRANCE 24

Conflit au Proche-Orient : la Turquie négocie avec le Hamas • FRANCE 24 - YouTube
alors depuis plusieurs jours on voit des

rassemblements à travers tout le pays à

Istanbul à **Ankara** et dans différentes

villes de la Turquie on observe des

cortèges assez importants de Turcs venus

montrer leur solidarité au peuple

palestinien avec des **pancartes** et des

messages du du type la **Palestine** doit

être libre et **l'occupation** doit cesser

on a observé aussi des drapeaux

israéliens en feu ou des manifestants

réclamé que l'armée turque **interviennet**

en **renfort** à **Gaza** mais ça ce sont des

comportements qui restent **quand même**

assez à la marge en réalité ce qui est

surtout exprimé par la **major** la majorité

Source: LingQ.

As previously explained, when working on a lesson, learners can approach its reading from an intensive point of view analyzing each sentence. They switch to “Sentence view” and then, click on “Revise sentence”. One of the revision activities consists of an aided reverse translation of the sentence into the target language, by clicking on the word chunks offered in a bank below (see Figure 16). The problem is that these sometimes do not correspond to sense units, and no syntactic criteria have been applied to split them up.

Figure 16 *Unscramble activity in Revise sentence*

Traduire la phrase

Nathalie Pécheux, a divorced literature teacher, goes from being a caring mother to a sickly jealous one almost overnight.

Nathalie Pécheux,	professeure de	lettres divorcée,	passé quasiment
au lendemain	du jour	de mère	attentionnée à
			jalousie malade.

Source: LingQ.

As shown in the example, the word chunks do not reflect sense or syntactic units at times. E.g., “*lettres divorcée*” is not a useful chunk, “*professeure de lettres/ divorcée*” would be more meaningful.

Instead of a syntactic or lexical rationale, chunks are formed following the criteria of the number of words in the sentence. If the sentence is short, chunks will be individual words or two-word chunks. If they are longer, each chunk can be composed of 3, 4, or 5 words (as in Figure 17).

Figure 17 *Chunking in long sentences*

Traduire la phrase

Emmanuel Macron wanted to affirm his deep, intimate solidarity with Israel, right from the start of his trip to the Hebrew state and the Palestinian territories on Tuesday October 24.

Emmanuel Macron souhaitait

affirmer une solidarité

profonde, intime avec

Israël, dès les

premières heures de

son voyage dans

l'Etat hébreu et

les territoires palestiniens,

mardi 24 octobre.

Passer

Soumettre

ا

Source: LingQ.

Another aspect that should be noted in this section is the grey-shaded tags that the system automatically provides for every word when clicking on them, which correspond to grammatical categories. They are also clickable, taking us either to the Grammar guide or to a dictionary (if the tag is the verb in its infinitive form, clicking on it takes us to its conjugation). As for the Grammar guide, it is specific for each language, concise and straight to the point. In LingQ's terms³, looking for grammar rules makes sense when it helps us notice:

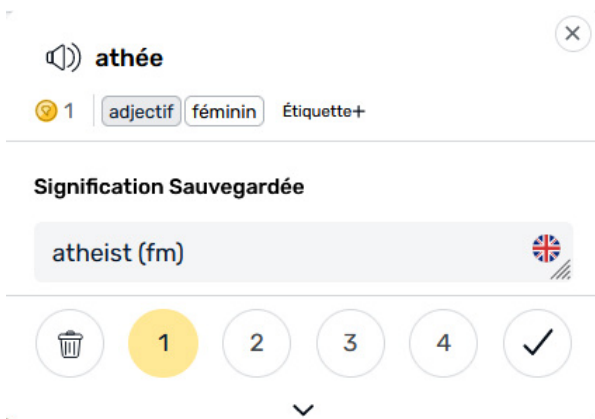
Though the LingQ system is designed to help you learn a language without obsessing over technical grammar terms, there

³ <https://www.lingq.com/en/grammar-resource/french/>

comes a time in our French studies when we need to get stuck in to (sic) the rules and quirks of the language. That's where the LingQ French Grammar Guide comes in. (LingQ, n.d.)

Once a LingQ is created, the term cannot be edited. So if the word is plural or feminine it cannot be saved in its unmarked form. The same happens with conjugated verbs. This is because each term is directly associated with its source (context), which cannot be altered. The key is to pay attention to the tags and the saved meanings. Since both can be edited, it is important to make sure they reflect the morphosyntactic characteristics of the word (Figure 18). The attention given to form contributes in this case to the development of a grammatical conscience (noticing).

Figure 18 *Editing tags and meaning*



Note: In this LingQ, I specified the gender adding one tag (white) and indicating it in brackets in the saved meaning

Source: LingQ.

Pronunciation

The work on pronunciation is basically receptive: as they read their lessons, learners can click on individual words/phrases to listen to their pronunciation as well as listen to the audio of the whole text. Also, when revising their vocabulary, they can access the pronunciation of the word (both isolated and in their source text) and there is a specific type of exercise, which is the dictation of a word/phrase. This is the only moment in which their phonetic competence is actively required.

In the description of his approach, Kaufmann (2003) encourages learners to notice the pronunciation nuances of their target language, as they listen intensively and practice imitation and repetition to make them stick (p. 43). This type of repetition is different from the “tiring and annoying” (p. 38) drills he recalls from his early experiences of language learning because input in LingQ is provided in context. However, a focus on pronunciation should never interfere with the learner’s efforts to communicate: “Learn to be your own toughest pronunciation critic when you are working on it alone, and then forget about it and be relaxed when speaking to others” (p. 125). This is connected to Krashen’s views about the optimal monitor user.

Culture

Kaufmann (2003) argues that: “It is important to participate in the culture of a country, in order to be in a state of mind to absorb the language” (p. 64). Being aware of the complexity of the definition of the concept of culture and the limitations of the present study, it should be clarified that, when he refers to culture, he focuses on the cultural features of the different communities of speakers of that language as an official one.

In LingQ, cultural understanding is generally gained through exposure to authentic content in the target language. Each of

the shelves of its library offers opportunities to access cultural aspects linked to the target language, directly or indirectly. Take for example shelves as “News”, “Entertainment”, “Lifestyle”, “Books”, or directly “Culture”. It should be noted that, in my case, since French is my target language, the country of reference is not just France with its variety of cultures, but those of *La Francophonie*. For example, in the News Feed, it is possible to find sources like Le Monde, France Info, Le Journal de Montréal, and Africa News.

Likewise, the concept of culture in LingQ is very broad and encompasses high and popular culture, or, in Tomalin and Stempleski's terms (1993), “big and little C culture” (pp.6-7). Learners can find an array of content from readers of classical novels to songs, TV programmes or cooking blogs. Examples of such variety for a French intermediate level are: the lyrics of Stromae's song “L'enfer” (“Hell”), a TED Talk entitled “Le bonheur est une question de choix” (“Happiness is a matter of choice”), the “Journal en Français Facile” (“News in Easy French”), “L'Etranger” (“The Stranger”) by Albert Camus in chapters, or a vlog on “Comment trouver un appartement au Québec” (“How to find an apartment in Quebec”).

The platform will contribute to building intercultural competence if the learner is receptive to integrative motivation. Kaufmann refers to it as part of the attitude needed to be a successful language learner: “The ability to elevate yourself, get above your own culture and deliberately project yourself into the new culture, the desire to want to be part of that culture and to find aspects of that culture that you enjoy” (2019a). If the learner does not have this attitude, the presence of these elements embedded in the input might simply go unnoticed by them.

Finally, it is important to remember that LingQ's library is built by its users, who may be biased as foreign language learners

when selecting cultural content. Therefore, their approach to searching the web for content might be the result of a reductionist and oversimplified view of the target culture.

DISCUSSION

To answer RQ1 concerning the main theoretical and pedagogical principles of the platform, LingQ is consistent with Krashen's Monitor Theory in many aspects: emphasis on acquisition over learning, the need for immersion in comprehensible and extensive input before concentrating on output and attention to the learners' interests as a way of protecting the affective filter. Also, the insistence on avoiding excessive attention to form in favour of a focus on meaning points, at the optimal monitor user. However, vocabulary practice fosters rote learning, repetition and habit formation, all of them in line with Behaviorism. In addition, content addressed to beginners promotes the acquisition of structural patterns through dialogues in stories.

Furthermore, translation has a specific role in the platform: meanings consist of translations if monolingual dictionaries are not chosen and it is available in the reader tool for whole texts. In flashcards, reverse flashcards and multiple choice activities, if the saved meaning of the term was a translation and not a definition, what learners are required to do is a translation task. It is also present in the sentence view revision exercises. Neither in Behaviorism nor in Krashen's theory was there a place for translation. For Behaviorism, it was regarded as a source of interference and a distraction from the language learning goal. For Krashen, although he does not outright reject the use of translation, he insists on the need to focus on immersive language experiences, where learners are engaged in activities that provide comprehensible input in the target language. So, in this aspect, LingQ, incorporating arguments like those of Cook (2010) or

Pintado Gutiérrez (2018), moves away from these two theories, reassessing translation as a linguistic resource that should be enabled to learners as pedagogical support.

Regarding Kaufmann's aforementioned "language learning tripod", one of its feet is the importance of time spent with the language. Despite being a self-paced platform, it tries to motivate learners toward building a habit of spending some "quality time" with the target language every day by showing their "Streak", which is the number of consecutive days they have hit their daily goal. Set when signing up, the daily goal consists of earning a certain amount of coins by reading, listening, adding Known Words or increasing the status of their LingQs (either manually or through review exercises). To repair a lost streak, they can use the coins they have accumulated. The more coins the learner earns, the more time they have spent with the language. Creating LingQs is another key way of gaining coins. Each word has a different value depending on their frequency of use: the most common words are more valuable.

Another key "foot" is the ability to notice. When learners click on a word to see its meaning, they must decide whether to save its meaning (by clicking on it and creating a LingQ) or not. They may just check its meaning but not keep the word. This decision is taken based on relevance ("how important do I think it is to include this word on my vocabulary list?"). The transition from blue to yellow highlighting to non-highlighted supports learners' ability to focus on what is important and useful. Another aspect that encourages noticing is switching to sentence mode, which allows learners to break down long and difficult texts into more manageable pieces, lowering the cognitive load and favouring the affective filter.

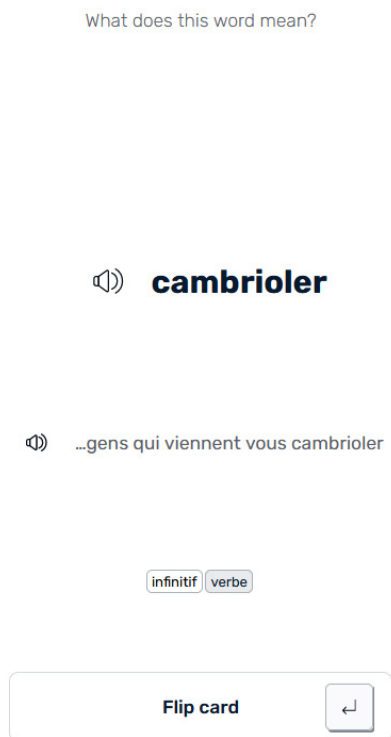
The need to notice has also been analyzed, not just formal aspects (structures, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.), but also cultural aspects

linked to the target language that might not be so evident sometimes. This is related to Kaufmann's third foot of the language learning tripod, "Attitude" and to RQ5, related to LingQ's contribution to the development of intercultural competence.

In terms of the treatment of language components (RQ2), LingQ focuses mainly on vocabulary. For Kaufmann, learning words from meaningful content is the main task of language learning and this is reflected in the platform's powerful tool to save and edit vocabulary. The platform's design invites learners to a process of continuous construction. In my experience, one example is the flexibility of meaning selection when creating LingQs. It can be done in any language and include as many as considered necessary. I started mostly with English translations (and Spanish only a few times) before considering definitions in French. When the French definitions supplied by other users were insufficient or inaccurate, I typed my own meaning (copying and pasting it from one of the monolingual integrated dictionaries available in the platform). The problem with devoting too much time to meaning selection when creating LingQs is that learners may lose the thread of their reading text, slowing them down. It is best to refine this afterwards once the lesson is finished. They click on "Revise lesson", go through all the key vocabulary and edit anything they need.

Another example lies in the realization of the importance of creating LingQs in contexts (source texts) which are really useful to deduce the meaning of the word. If this is not kept in mind, vocabulary revision (especially flashcards and cloze tests) is completely discouraging. In the example in Figure 19, users are required to guess the meaning of "cambríoler" ("to burgle") in the context of the sentence "gens qui viennent vous cambríoler" ("people who come to burgle you"), which gives no support for meaning.

Figure 19 *Lack of context in source text*



Source: LingQ.

When this problem is spotted, one solution would be to delete the entry on the vocabulary list, find that word in a clearer context, select the text, import it as a lesson, open the lesson, and click on the word to create the LingQ. Although in both examples the refining process and decision-making contribute

to cognitive retention, it is also dependent on the linguistic and pedagogical expertise of the user.

As considered, from Kaufmann's perspective, reading and listening contribute to the acquisition of knowledge about the language, as Krashen put it: a "feel for grammaticality" (1981, p.4). Although grammar in LingQ is implicitly addressed, it encourages attention to form (noticing) as significant in the learning process so, the type of tasks learners are required to do require implicit and explicit learning.

Regarding RQ3, LingQ is overwhelmingly addressed to reading and listening. One of the strengths of the platform is its multimodality in terms of receptive skills. Although learners are expected to devote time every day to work on all four skills, they can ignore writing and speaking and still achieve their daily goals. However, the use of this platform has enhanced my speaking due to my effort to notice the form to include it in the vocabulary lists. I feel more confident and fluent when participating in conversations in French away from the platform. This approach of attention to form (the importance of conscious reading in significant tasks) as a way to enhance productive skills does not seem so much a contradiction of Krashen's avoidance of form as an extension of his theory.

According to Bączkowska (2021), regarding the learning outcomes, learners in LingQ are not tasked with any activity in which they need to use their creativity. However, I disagree because in their writing tasks learners can choose the topic and approach it in the way they prefer. Also, creativity is encouraged when creating LingQs and adding tags or their own definitions. Users can also create their own lessons and courses, making the platform a versatile tool not just for learning, but also for teaching.

In LingQ, users direct their own learning by searching for the content they are interested in and working from there.

A frequent source of demotivation in language learning platforms comes from content which learners find unappealing and texts which are disconnected from their interests. In LingQ, learners choose the input they prefer from an infinite pool of possibilities. Although some authors criticize LingQ's lack of a "structured learning path" (Karasimos, 2022), it relies heavily on the user's responsibility to choose the content that is really comprehensible for them (i.e., that poses a real challenge for them in terms of learning). For beginners, the platform offers more adapted and sequenced content (i.e. mini-stories or guided courses). Since this kind of learner might find it challenging to look for content to import, they might prefer a more conventional approach.

Before choosing a lesson, learners see its percentage of new vocabulary and therefore decide what level of comprehensible input they are ready to confront. So, in terms of learner's agency (RQ4), the learner decides what to read, listen, watch, who to speak to, what to write about and how to do it all. They also decide if they want to check the translation or not. In comparison with other PALLs, LingQ is aimed at a more sophisticated and disciplined learner, who has taken responsibility for their learning.

Finally, returning to the platform's contribution to intercultural competence (RQ5), Kaufmann's view on cultural participation in language acquisition aligns with LingQ's approach, offering a wide range of cultural content through authentic material. Nevertheless, the success of this approach is contingent upon the learner's attitude. It depends on the learner's willingness to embrace the new culture. Without this mindset, these cultural insights might remain unappreciated. Additionally, LingQ's user-curated library may present a limited view of the target culture, influenced by learners' perspectives and expectations.

In light of the limitations outlined in the methodology with regard to the numerous variables that could potentially influence

the user experience in different ways, it appears reasonable to align them with some of the aspects addressed in this section, specifically the ability to notice, the cultural sensibility, the time spent on the platform, or the digital proficiency to address the platform's shortcomings. With regard to the aforementioned issue, the lack of intuitiveness in the platform interface may consequently impact the user experience.

CONCLUSIONS

LingQ describes itself as a “choose-your-own-adventure tool” (2023b) in reference to the infinite ways in which users can adapt it to tailor their learning experience. In line with this, the absence of fixed guidelines for sequencing learning, as observed by Karasimos (2022), may be precisely where the distinctive quality of this platform lies, as it allows for a greater degree of autonomy on the part of the learner.

In response to Bączkowska's criticism (2021), this study has demonstrated that the platform has the potential to foster creativity, caters to beginners and facilitates the practice of productive skills, although this latter point is limited in scope.

Bearing in mind that it is mainly focused on receptive skills, the advantages of using the platform for learning new vocabulary through context are numerous. In this case, it is the learner who takes responsibility for finding and “processing” their comprehensible input. They are also encouraged to monitor their own progress through vocabulary practice, translation in context and writing tasks. This is a specific quality that previous general approaches (Liu et al., 2015; Bączkowska, 2021; Karasimos, 2022, etc.) have failed to take into account.

Despite these benefits, the platform might be found wanting in possibilities for communicative interaction. However, LingQ does not claim to cater for the development of these skills,

instead, it fosters “intensive and repetitive exposure to enjoyable language material” (Kaufmann, 2003, p.103).

As a frequent online reader, I usually come across new words and expressions. Regrettably, these often slip from memory or are noted in rarely reviewed notebooks, leading to a regrettable loss. The practice of cataloging and consistently revising this vocabulary through SRS proves beneficial.

Interestingly, using this platform requires no additional effort for learners already engaged in regular reading as a part of their educational process. Signing in does not require daily engagement with sequenced content or grammatical exercises. Any selected reading material inherently transforms into a language-learning lesson. Consequently, LingQ is an excellent springboard for those looking to enhance their communicative competence and language awareness, despite the time commitment demands and focus on literacy.

I hope that this study of a year-long use of the platform with a particular interest in identifying its underlying theoretical principles will offer a more nuanced and updated analysis than previous approaches. Further studies on the platform could examine its possible didactic applications in face-to-face formal environments at different levels. Another interesting line of research would be to perform quantitative analyses that could allow more specific insight into the different features observed in the current study.

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UCR-ELTA: Constructing a Standardized Proficiency Test for English Teachers in Costa Rica*

UCR-ELTA: la construcción de un argumento de evaluación para una prueba estandarizada de dominio lingüístico de los docentes de Inglés en Costa Rica

Walter Araya Garita¹

Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica

Jennifer Céspedes Araya²

Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica

* Article of scientific and technological research

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¹ Master's Degree in English Teaching as a Foreign Language
Language Research and language professor

E-mail: walter.arayagarita@ucr.ac.cr – ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5340-6384>

² Master's Degree in English Teaching as a Foreign Language
Language professor

E-mail: jennifer.cespedesaraya@ucr.ac.cr – ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1084-7120>

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the most relevant principles for creating a sound assessment cycle to start building and systematizing a validity assessment argument based on the decision making processes for the design and foundation of the test called Universidad de Costa Rica–English Language Teacher Assessment (UCR-ELTA) are presented. The theoretical analysis supports the need for (1) the contextualization of a standardized test for English teachers' language proficiency in Costa Rica, (2) the reflection on the requirements that this test must comply with, (3) the acknowledgement of the arguments in favor and against this type of testing, and (4) the description of the processes of test design, implementation, validation, and improvement; the UCR-ELTA parameters and validity of interpretation are better founded as a result. This leads to the conclusion and recognition not only of (a) the fact that this test has considerable benefits to better understand the characteristics of the proficiency level of the target population, but also of (b) the fundamental need to create an explicit and transparent assessment system which allows to foresee and attend to all those issues that might negatively affect the target population.

Keywords: *Contextualization of a standardized test, Costa Rica, English teachers' language proficiency, standardized test, UCR-ELTA.*

RESUMEN

En este artículo se analizan los principios para llevar a cabo procesos de evaluación más relevantes con el fin de iniciar la construcción y sistematización de un argumento de validez con base en los procesos de toma de decisiones para el diseño y sustentación del examen llamado Universidad de Costa Rica–English Language Teacher Assessment (UCR-ELTA). El análisis teórico respalda la necesidad (1) de la contextualización de una prueba estandarizada para medir el dominio lingüístico de las personas docentes de inglés en Costa Rica, (2) de la reflexión de los requisitos que una prueba de esta naturaleza debe cumplir, (3) del reconocimiento de los argumentos a favor y en contra de este tipo de evaluación, y (4) de la descripción de los procesos de diseño, implementación, validación, y mejora. Además, se busca fundamentar de mejor manera los parámetros de validez de la interpretación de los resultados de esta prueba. Esto lleva a la conclusión y reconocimiento no solo de que (a) una prueba de esta naturaleza tiene beneficios considerables para comprender mejor las características del dominio lingüístico de la población meta sino también (b) que hay una necesidad fundamental de crear un sistema de evaluación explícito y transparente que permita contemplar y atender todos aquellos aspectos que pueden perjudicar a la población meta.

Palabras clave: *Contextualización de una prueba estandarizada, Costa Rica, dominio lingüístico de las personas docentes de inglés, prueba estandarizada, UCR-ELTA*

IN 1824 (MARÍN-ARROYO, 2013), the formal teaching of English began, and this practice has been developing and evolving. This long-lasting tradition has probably contributed to the fact that Costa Rica has been one of the countries where English is spoken the best as a foreign language in Latin America according to the various rankings published (see Education First, 2023). Consequently, the different policies implemented in Costa Rica translated into covering more than 25% of the preschool population, 92% of the primary school population, and 92% of the secondary school population (Política Educativa de Promoción de Idiomas, 2019). In spite of this positive outcome, the country continues to seek to improve through evolving policies and strategic plans more systematically addressing English teachers' language performance.

In this regard, the University of Costa Rica has strongly invested in research and design processes that respond to what are considered good qualities and principles of assessment as reliability, localization, practicality, tailoring, and fairness (see O'Sullivan, 2016; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Furthermore, according to Marco Nacional de Cualificaciones para las Carreras de Educación (2021), there has been a historical interest in promoting the training quality of future teachers. This has enriched the processes of hiring and evaluating education professionals (including English teachers), improving the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, attending to educational quality gaps, and addressing the limited number of accredited educational majors.

Based on this scenario, in this document, the processes of design, administration, interpretation, validation of the Universidad de Costa Rica–English Language Teacher Assessment (UCR-ELTA) are defined, described, and explained. Even though there are quite valid arguments against the application of stan-

standardized tests to make high-stakes decisions, the fact is that there is an evident need to ensure, in some way or the other, that English teachers can handle the linguistic demands of the target language as part of the pedagogical knowledge that they must develop and acquire (Dadvand & Behzadpoor, 2020) and which are framed in the evident need to correspond to historical transformations and education-related contexts in the present and future in Costa Rica. In this sense, this article aims at presenting and reflecting on the conceptual, constructive, and theoretical support for the UCR-ELTA.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on Araya Garita et al. (2022), Coombe et al. (2007), Brown and Abeywickrama (2019), it is evident that standardized testing has been a complex practice in educational settings because it must meet specific criteria framed in language testing principles of validity, authenticity, reliability, practicality, and washback. In addition, localization in standardized testing is a must (O'Sullivan, 2016), especially because the needs and the contexts of specific populations vary from place to place.

On the one hand, standardized testing complexities pose a great challenge for stakeholders, assessment professionals, and test takers. In other words, "standardized language testing may seem overwhelming and intimidating" (Araya Garita et al., 2022, p. 122). On the other hand, there are also controversies connected to the use of standardized testing as it is considered by some as a tool to control (Shohamy, 2001; Fulcher, 2010). In spite of the evident criticisms associated with standardized language testing, it has become a widely used tool to monitor the current situation of a specific educational context under very particular circumstances to later design and implement better national policies.

In this fashion, there are some challenges that the Costa Rican system of education has been facing: access to it, teacher-focus policies, learning environments and infrastructure, and the management of the educational system (CONARE, 2019). For this reason, the UCR-ELTA can provide meaningful information on the applied, contextualized, and task-based linguistic knowledge English teachers make/have of the L2, contributing, as CONARE (2019) proposes, to the creation of a national system of educational evaluation that allows to place teacher in ability levels that, in some cases, could encourage the improvement of competencies (p. 7), among other benefits.

Taking into account the potential evaluative, professional, and national implications of a test as the UCR-ELTA and considering that every single language assessment has a direct impact in the real world (Bachman & Palmer, 2010), the relevance of clarifying the steps followed to collect information and make decisions based on the interpretation of test results is indispensable. When constructing an argument for assessing one's language ability, it is necessary, in addition, to acknowledge with careful consideration and transparency what the reach of the interpretations should have for the test users and how their impact will be responsive to a well-thought and theoretical ground that may not fully fit into a specific context but that is enriched by it as much as possible. In this sense, the test is

designed to cater for the local needs of the test population. This may mean choosing appropriate cultural topics and making sure the processes of test design, piloting, administration, and scoring reflect local needs and expectations. In more recent localization movements, this has also involved localization of language use in context to include the spread and changing shape of English in countries that use English as an official language. (Coombe, 2018, p. 28)

To cater to those needs, a key participant in this process is the target population to be assessed: The language teacher must be taken into consideration when designing a specific test as UCR-ELTA. Slomp (2005), when reflecting on the assessment of test takers' writing skills, argued that collaboration is fundamental for building up a well-rounded and dialogic assessment process. Historically, it seems that assessment specialists have underestimated the contributions of the various actors involved in the process (e.g., language experts, experienced teachers, test-takers in general, and other stakeholders). Furthermore, Slomp (2005) also reinforced the idea that

rather than minimizing the expectations for test validity on the basis of construct complexity and the difficulty involved in defining measurable constructs, assessment specialists should recognize the need to engage in collaborative design... Validity-based research provides both the rationale and the push for collaborative assessment design in language education. The issue is real, the time is now. (p. 153)

In addition to the collaboration with stakeholders and the target population, the final block towards building a solid validity argument for a standardized test is aligning a test with language proficiency descriptors as those provided by Council of Europe (2020) and the test takers' and administrators' characteristics (O'Sullivan, 2016, p. 148). In the same manner, the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE, 2020) further emphasized that, as a minimum standard in test construction, the test must be linked to a theoretical construct (p. 26). One may think that the analysis and construction of standardized tests have plateaued; however, validation of language assessment is a never-ending, ongoing process (Chapelle, 2012; Brown &

Abeywickrama, 2019) that can shed light on a multiple variety of language-related aspects.

Assessing teachers is a critical action that aims at creating opportunities for reflection and improvement and informing any relevant decision-making processes (Loredo, 2021). Standardized testing, therefore, is one of the possible tools to collect information for making these decisions, and it is highly practical when assessing large target populations. Even though the UCR-ELTA falls into the category of a high-stakes diagnostic test, it must also respond to the ongoing nature of language evaluation (Loredo, 2021) that is discussed throughout the literature. This is a systematic process to collect reliable and valid evidence of language teachers' performance that permits the Ministry of Public Education to hire new teachers or give them tenure based on specific criteria that is technically and scientifically sound based on the Costa Rican context. In other words, assessment is a mean for strengthening the national teacher profiles (Loredo, 2021, p. 7) and policies. As a result, to have sound foundations to construct a test (Bachman & Palmer, 2010) as UCR-ELTA and to contextualize it (Coombe, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2016) for a fairer assessment practice, it is necessary to take into consideration different aspects: national regulations, language teachers' assessment expectations and attitudes, and test-related standards.

Language Proficiency Tests and Qualifications: Requirements in Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, the Marco Nacional de Cualificaciones para las Carreras de Educación (2021), based on international trends set by UNICEF, ONU, OCDE, CEFR, among others, outlines the minimum requirements an English Teacher must comply with, and they revolve around communicative and interactive skills, language ability (C1-CEFR based), teaching-related

knowledge, use of technology, global citizenship skills, language assessment knowledge, among others. These requirements and competencies can also be found in various types of qualifications-based examinations and frameworks such as the Cambridge Teaching Framework (see Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2022).

It can be noted, as a result, that the qualifications and competencies language teachers must have and develop are responsive to a multiple set of professional, cultural, and educational needs. Furthermore, an English teacher must be able to deal with the language in multiple ways to be able to respond to the needs of their populations and the world; in this case, there must be evidence of how well they can work with the language to determine if they have developed a proficient level. Unfortunately, scrutinizing their language abilities is not positively viewed by many language-teaching professionals.

Teachers' Language Assessment and its Connection to Professional Development

There are many benefits for the different actors involved in an assessment process. Not only are these benefits related to a quantitative value but also to a qualitative insight gained through the reflections that this process triggers. At the same time, these reflections work as a basis for improving teachers' language proficiency and for other stakeholders to make appropriate decisions to benefit the language assessment system.

Around the world, there have been some relevant experiences and examples to take into consideration when understanding the impact of teachers' language assessment. For example, Chu and Jaca (2019) have defined professional development that is "primarily concerned about keeping one's skills career fresh and on top of the game... [it] takes into account the skills and

knowledge employees acquire to optimize their personal development and job growth” (p. 421). They also add that professional development “refers to the skills, knowledge and ongoing learning opportunities undertaken to enhance an individual’s ability to carry out their jobs and achieve professional growth” (p. 421). In addition, Harding (as cited in Chu & Jaca, 2019, p. 421) stated that Continual Professional Development (CPD) is key to improving one’s performance. This also implies the recognition of the teachers’ responsibility for their own improvement and needed fulfillment as educational professionals. As a result, the implications of CPD require evident effort, awareness, and resources, especially for a language teacher.

If carrying out rigorous and consistent assessment is the first step in this cyclical process of improvement in professional development, Davidson et al. (as cited in Chu & Jaca, 2019) highlighted the importance of being aware of other activities and measures to expand teachers’ CPD: self-reflection, skills and knowledge expansion, collaborative learning and sharing, and training and workshop engagement. This complex scenario also implies that the authorities and higher-education institutions must ensure the availability of resources to meet the quality standards for language teacher training.

Sarwar et al. (2014) reinforced this idea of continuous assessment considering a study carried out in Pakistan in which the main finding suggests the need of improving speaking skills in teacher education programs (p. 7), and, in Costa Rica, the panorama seems to be somewhat similar; in fact, the diagnostic processes (e.g. TOEIC tests applications in 2008 and 2015) showed that training can have a positive impact on teachers’ language performance, and that there is indeed an impact on higher education and teacher training (Diálogo Interamericano y Unidos por la Educación, 2018, pp. 33-34).

Expectations About Teacher's Language Proficiency and Professional Development: A Competency-based Approach

Language teacher assessment is complex not only because of the cyclical and reflective systems it responds to but because of the external expectations that are pressed on it. These demands come from the diversity and interconnectivity of the world which seem to pose major needs on handling information (Rueda, 2009, p. 3); these demands also have a direct impact on how English teachers are viewed in the world and on what they need to be able to do to be considered professionally prepared. Therefore, understanding and developing the necessary teaching competencies have also become relevant, and having a proficient command of the second language is one of them. Rueda (2009), when discussing the competency-based approach in tertiary education, indicated that a competency involves the ability to face complex demands while supporting oneself and using psycho-social resources, skills, and attitudes in a particular context (p. 3). Therefore, a “competent” English teacher will be the one who can handle the language and the teaching skills and knowledge necessary to responsibly carry out work-related tasks. For this reason, assessment and standardized testing can shed light on the linguistic notion of the competencies of the English-language teachers.

Teacher's Attitudes Towards Standardized Testing

Historically, tests have been perceived as punishment. Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) mentioned that those who are assessed (in general) “are not likely to view a test as positive, pleasant, or affirming” (p. 1), and it is expected that English teachers may share this view. When discussing teachers' perspectives on examinations administered to their students, Kellaghan et al. (1982) considered that

if teachers perceive standardized tests and the constructs measured by them to be inaccurate, biased, unstable, or unimportant, they probably will be less likely to utilize test results in a practical way than if they perceive tests in a more favorable light. Even in those cases where teachers do have favorable perceptions, we should consider the weight teachers say they accord to test information relative to other forms of evidence about pupils (e.g., observations, prior teacher recommendations, classroom tests) before we suggest a strong relationship between standardized testing and various classroom practices. (p. 64)

Based on a general impression, English teachers seem to have a similar view regarding tests that are administered to them in order to measure their proficiency level. This negative perspective on testing and assessing might be reinforced when the test results, consequences and impact affect the test-takers' lives directly, and this view seems to still be present nowadays. In this way, Bachman and Palmer's (2010) observation on building an argument for assessment provides theoretical support to create a more consistent, transparent, and reliable system of assessment that considers the needs of the test takers.

Difficulties When Assessing Teachers and the Role of Standardized Testing

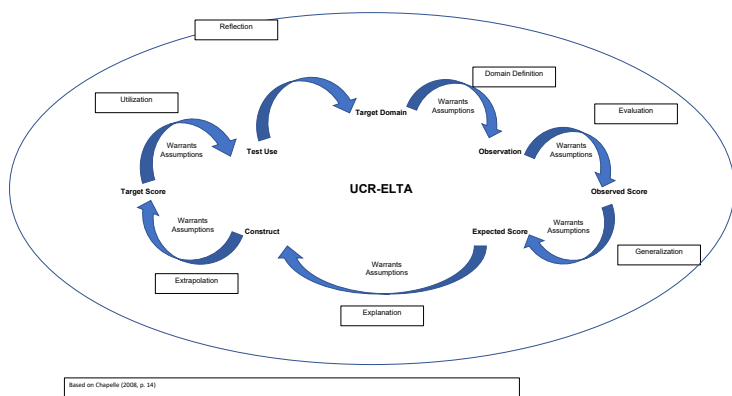
Standardized language high stakes testing for pre-serving teachers is a great challenge for any educational system around the world. Therefore, on the one hand, negative views on these types of testing are not surprising as explained previously and in other sources (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019; Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Green, 2021), and, on the other hand, this also results in more traditional approaches to assess students during

their practicums; these are quite relevant, but they do not provide standardized information with a quantitatively sound interpretation. In this sense, Bolitho (2013) highlighted that the practicum in pre-service training and developmental observation for serving teachers are acknowledged as crucial planks in maintaining and improving standards of teaching, and yet the trainer's or educator's role as an observer, supervisor or assessor remains largely underexplored, susceptible to subjectivity in its practices and cloaked in silence and handed-down traditions rather than opened up in public debate. (p. 12)

Even though these micro-assessing tasks (individual practicums) provide the practitioners and other actors with relevant information, the fact is that, at the macro-level (country-wise) such information is usually undervalued or ignored when making policies and decisions. However, the fact is that systematizing the qualitative information of practicums from various institutions, multiple individuals and scenarios is not practical. In addition, according to Chapelle (2008), the warrant is the observations of test performance that reveal relevant information on knowledge, abilities, and skills within a specific target domain, and the assumptions are those inferences expected when the test takers scores are interpreted as indicative of performance and scores that they would receive in the target setting. For this reason, standardized testing is a more reliable means for collecting data that provides evidence on language proficiency of new and experienced practitioners, allowing a closer approximation to the tested individuals' realities, a more practical administration of the test, and greater opportunities for building a sound validity argument. As a result, the test warrants and assumptions must be responsive to its purpose, population, uses, and impacts.

Slomp (2005) recommended the involvement of different actors when designing a test, for example, the test takers, the test users, and the test designers, among others. This translates into the need for communicating with the target test takers to better understand who they are, what they do with the language, and what kinds of tasks they carry out using English, a process that corresponds with a particular evidence-designed approach focused on the examining and task models by providing relevant data and linguistic performance on the professional domain (Tschirner, 2018). This will add more detailed information that will help build a stronger assessment cycle as shown in Figure 1. In other words, the test designers can fortify the validity of the interpretations if the different actors' voices are taken into consideration when defining the test domain, the constructs, the evaluation process, the test generalizations, the explanations, the extrapolations, and the utilizations of the results.

Figure 1 *Chain of Analysis, Design, Auditing, and Reflection of the UCR-ELTA*



Note. Based on Chapelle (2008) and ALTE (2011)

Chapelle (2008) also recommended that the specific warrants and assumptions of each specific test associated with each of the inferences need to be identified. This, for sure, can only be accomplished through teamwork. Precisely, as Romero (2007) pointed out, from a critical perspective, assessment is a reflexive process in which all of the involved actors are encouraged to participate and whose purpose is to contribute with the growth and development of the test taker. This, of course, means that every single stage of the design of a standardized test has to be addressed and described clearly. For this reason, in the following section the authors describe and discuss the starting and grounding phases for the design of UCR- ELTA.

THE UCR-ELTA TEST

Considering the benefits that a standardized test has and the needs to be assessed in the Costa Rican English teaching scenario, many actors involved in the process must be included when making decisions to build a healthy assessment cycle. For example, the coordinator of Costa Rican Alliance for Bilingualism acknowledges that “English teachers’ effective mastery of a second language, in the coming years, will assure academic success of students in academic and work domains” (M. Rojas, personal communication, June 8, 2022). He also adds that it is necessary to develop actions that allow improving the quality of the teaching staff; in other words, it is necessary to evaluate language teachers periodically and systematically. The Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education currently has a majority of qualified and certified English teachers in terms of language proficiency.

The Director of the School of Modern Languages of University of Costa Rica mentions that teacher quality is linked with the success of students’ learning. Another important aspect mentioned is the need for accountability of data to improve the

educational system. This means that it is expected that evaluation enhances teachers' practices and improves their effectiveness in the classroom (A. Quesada, personal communication, June 22, 2022).

English language coordinators also support the project of evaluating English teachers. For instance, a head of an English department from a private institution mentions that

undoubtedly, assessing an English teacher's language proficiency is a constant need, at least in our school. One of the reasons behind it is that we are expecting our students to achieve a high command of the different language skills, so we must verify and guarantee that our English teachers have the language mastery and competency that is required for their position. We are aware that the result of a standardized test might be influenced by different variables. However, we recognize that the results have a good level of reliability and are a good resource for decision-making when hiring or offering a promotion. The second reason is related to professional development which is also a key element for us. I consider that one of the biggest challenges all teachers in general have is to develop the capacity to reflect on their own experience and abilities, so assessing teachers' language proficiency could be a starting point. This allows teachers and English coordinators to recognize not only the points where improvement is possible, but also the teacher's strengths. (S. Viquez, personal communication, June 15, 2022)

In the public sector, there are a variety of opinions involving different attitudes regarding standardized tests in general or the TOEIC (which is the test administered to teachers so far). When asked about the relevance of assessing teachers' proficiency, a

head of an English department and English teacher at a public secondary institution expressed the following:

I believe evaluating language teachers is of great importance in order to get a position and to be able to continue with their tenure. I think a standardized test such as the TOEIC should not only be administered, but there should also be one where methodologies are assessed. It is well-known that a good language teacher must not only be language proficient but also have teaching skills. (C. Retana, personal communication, September 2, 2022)

Evidently, individual views on standardized tests administered to teachers should not be generalized to the entire related populations; however, they do reflect the need for better understanding the perceptions of the different groups of stakeholders and users of the results. These micro views help guide the process of warrant and assumption determination and allow to be able to tackle specific questions and arguments in favor and against particular decisions made based on the test interpretations and possible impacts.

Overall Profile of the UCR-ELT Test Takers and K (Knowledge), A (Abilities), S (Skills), and Tasks: English Language Teachers in Costa Rica

The UCR-ELTA test is targeting English teachers from pre, primary, and secondary schools in Costa Rica (approximately 6000 professionals). However, to do so, piloting the test first is fundamental. At the piloting stage, a sample of 300 participants will be tested. The sample population should have very similar characteristics to the target test takers; for this reason, the piloting test takers will be English Teaching students about to graduate from university and in-service teachers from the public and private sectors. The piloting process will be carried out through an online platform with a digital test at UCR all over Costa Rica.

As with any other EFL population, Costa Rican English Teachers must be able to handle the language in many different ways and in relation to several diverse topics, especially because of the various kinds of populations and learners they usually work with. In this sense, typifying KAS, tasks, roles and contents related to English poses an evidently complex issue. Firstly, understanding what these concepts imply is a must. In this sense, Green (2021) provides a more manageable insight into what KAS are, and what their connection with language tasks entails:

Knowledge about language may include recognizing a word written in a foreign language and knowing a translation equivalent..., or knowing a grammatical rule..., or knowing pragmatic conventions... A distinction is often made in language education following Hymes (1972) between knowledge of the rules governing language as a system and the ability to use language in unrehearsed interaction... Language skills involve drawing on language knowledge and language abilities in order to read, listen, write, speak, to interact with others, or to mediate between them. The evidence we have of a person using a language may be very limited – a few telephone conversations and a handful of emails, perhaps – but based on what we observe in these few instances, we often make inferences about their more general knowledge of a language, their ability to use the language and their skill in carrying out language-related tasks. (p. 4)

The relationship between knowledge, abilities, skills, and tasks is characterized by a seemingly symbiotic reflection of one another although it is quite clear that observing one's performance in a task will never be enough to understand the wholeness of one's language capabilities. In addition, there are other complexities that must be considered when determining

and categorizing English teachers' KAS. On the one hand, these professionals are themselves English Language learners in the sense that their learning process will very likely continue throughout their lives, and, on the other hand, they are, at the same time, English facilitators and language consultants. The former implies that language improvement will always be part of the needs of any English teacher, and the latter that they must consistently be able to help others (their students) develop their language potential as well; this, of course, cannot be "measured" or assessed solely on the bases of the English teachers' language abilities because teaching (and learning) a language cannot be reduced to "being able to speak, write, listen, or read" only. However, the responsibilities of an English teacher include being able to deal with the target language in a way that their use of it works as a "good" example for the learners. For this reason, collecting as much information as possible regarding the teachers' language abilities and proficiency level can aid in the process of identifying linguistic aspects to improve and strengths, which might positively guide other related decision-making processes. These aspects also frame how relevant it is for a test of this nature to be well designed and to be aware of the consequences it has.

Despite the difficulties and complexities that describing KAS might pose, the attempt must be made, especially because decisions the test users will make need as much support as possible. This need for gathering meaningful information and evidence from the teachers' language ability also frames the design and creation of tasks (and items). As a result, test takers should be involved in the assessment cycle.

In June 2022, a preliminary survey designed as part of the process to create the test, involving test takers more in the assessment process (Tschirner, 2018), was administered to 380 English teachers. As shown in Table 1, the survey takers reported

a significant use of English in the classroom, especially with other English teachers (50.8%—*almost always* or *always*), and their students (91.9%—*almost always* or *always*). This sheds light on the kinds of interactions these professionals may be having through English and sets a certain standard for contextualizing items, scenarios, and tasks for the test.

TABLE 1 *Frequency Percentage on the Use of English with other interlocutors as Reported by the Participants*

Interlocutors I... use English with...	Frequency Scale					
	Never	1	2	3	4	Always
Other English teachers		16.3	32.9	35.8	15	
The institution's principal		81.1	15	3.7	0.3	
Regional Advisors		28.4	19.7	29.5	22.4	
National Advisors		53.2	10.8	17.4	18.7	
Students' Parents		85.8	11.6	1.6	1.1	
Students		0.5	7.6	45.8	46.1	

Note. N=380. Taken from the preliminary results of the survey “Usos específicos del Idioma Inglés por parte de los Docentes de Enseñanza del Inglés en Costa Rica” (PELEx, 2022b).

In addition, the participants of the survey provided information on the variety of English-based tasks they carry out very frequently or frequently. As noticeable in Table 2, English *is* relevant for these professionals mostly in connection with those aspects revolving around designing and teaching a class and carrying out assessment processes. In this sense, the tasks presented also provided guidance into how certain testing scenarios and input should be chosen and designed (i.e., layout) for them to be more naturally presented to this population, strengthening the support for making decisions regarding the operationalization of the CEFR statements as well.

In this sense, in the development stage, feasibility plays a key role in the process for task design. For instance, requesting test takers to write a lesson plan (one of the most frequent tasks) as part of an extended writing task for the UCR-ELTA is indeed relevant for them in their professional setting, but it will not allow test developers and judges to obtain grounded information on their writing performance.

TABLE 2 *Percentage of Very Frequent or Frequent Tasks Carried Out in English as Reported by the Participants*

	Task	Percentage
1	Development of mediation processes (the class itself)	92.4
2	Writing lesson plans	92.4
3	Design of written assessment instruments (tests)	88.9
4	Administration of oral exams	85.8
5	Reading lesson plans	70.5
6	Reading narrative texts	49.5
7	Listening to podcasts related to education	46.1
8	Participation in meetings of the English department	44.7
9	Creation of observations to register the students' performance	40
10	Participation in training workshops	39.7
11	Reading emails	30
12	Reading administrative documents (e.g., from MEP)	32.9
13	Reading students' reports	26.1
14	Writing progress reports addressed to the students' parents/guardians	25.3
15	Writing emails	23.9
16	Reading scientific articles	23.4

17	Writing reports of curricular accommodations	22.6
18	Completion of relevant administrative documents (e.g., score records)	20
19	Organization of institutional events (e.g., graduation ceremonies)	18.2
20	Organization of school assemblies	13.7
21	Organization of school trips	4.7

Note. N=380. Taken from the preliminary results from the survey “Usos específicos del Idioma Inglés por parte de los Docentes de Enseñanza del Inglés en Costa Rica” (PELEx, 2022b).

As mentioned before, the tasks and input to be incorporated in the test must be clearly connected to the test takers’ realities to draw inferences from the results based on three main assumptions: assessment instruments will allow data collection on the targeted test takers’ language abilities; the assessments tasks will be more responsive towards the test takers’ cultural context in relation to their language abilities; and future and more robust statistical analyses will shed light on the tasks, procedures, items, forms, and task judges and designers (in accordance with Chapelle, 2008). For example, choosing appropriate texts or themes for reading and listening tasks is of extreme importance as well. Table 3, in this regard, displays a selection of key curricular and teaching themes that teachers must be able to handle in the Costa Rican context in a variety of student populations as reported in the survey. As observed, most of the relevant topics revolve around cultural, technological, and personal contexts, which should inform the parameters for the test. Practicality and cultural relevance will also guide the decision-process related to the creation of the UCR-ELTA. The themes/topics below, even though they are informed by potential test takers, will have to be selected and some of them might not be suitable for item design, for instance.

TABLE 3 *Percentage of Very Important or Important Curricular and Teaching Themes for the Costa Rican English Teachers and their Current Populations*

Curricular and Teaching Themes/Topics		Percentage
1	Technological Advances	76.6
2	Personal Identity	65.5
3	Intercultural Communication	63.4
4	Self-care (physical, emotional, among others)	62.9
5	Teaching Practice	56.1
6	Costa Rican Cultural Diversity	53.7
7	National Affairs	50
8	National Identity	46.3
9	National biodiversity reality	42.6
10	Family diversity in Costa Rica	41.6
11	Citizen ethics	37.4
12	International affairs	33.9

Note. N=380. Taken from the preliminary results from the survey “Usos específicos del Idioma Inglés por parte de los Docentes de Enseñanza del Inglés en Costa Rica” (PELEx, 2022b).

As a result, English teachers’ KAS are indeed connected mostly to the interactions they have among themselves and with their students, reinforcing the idea of choosing topics, themes, and tasks that relate to this reality as much as possible within the professional domain.

Test construct and target language use analysis

As in any other test of this nature, the construct to be assessed must be clarified. For the UCR-ELTA, the assessment construct has been built up considering the following general aspects according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) by the Council of Europe (2020):

Oral production. Proficiency in oral production is understood as the ability to maintain a two-way oral exchange with an interlocutor, using the English language to speak about both formal and informal contexts on regional and global issues, at the professional domain based on Council of Europe (2020). Some of the skills to be tested range from “giving clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on complex subjects, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion” (Council of Europe, 2020).

Oral comprehension. This skill is defined as comprehension in live, face-to-face communication and its remote and/or recorded equivalent. It thus includes visual-gestural and audio-vocal modalities. The aspects of oral comprehension included here under reception are different kinds of one-way comprehension. The user can understand enough to follow extended discourse on abstract and complex topics beyond their own field, though they may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the variety is unfamiliar. The language user can also recognize a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts and can follow extended discourse even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly at the professional level of CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020).

Reading Comprehension. Proficiency in reading comprehension is defined as the ability to understand different texts and images of general English in a professional teaching context at regional and global levels both formal and informal, at the professional domain of CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020). This comprises the users’ ability to understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not these relate to their own area of specialty. They can also understand a wide variety of texts including literary writings, newspaper or magazine articles, and specialized academic or professional publications (Council of Europe, 2020).

Written production. Proficiency in written production is understood as the ability to write academic essays written in non-technical English, in formal contexts at the regional and global levels, in the professional domain as developed by the Council of Europe. Some of the skills to be tested are “can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured text, showing controlled use of organizational patterns” and “can employ the structure and conventions of a variety of genres, varying the tone, style and register according to addressee, text type and theme” (Council of Europe, 2020).

Considering that tasks are the basic units of assessment for the UCR-ELTA, they must also correspond to the sub-specifications that describe them. In this sense, Table 4, presents the main aspects considered for each of the skills being assessed for the B2 and C1 bands considering the topics, themes, and common exchanges presented above:

TABLE 4 *Particular Subskill Specifications for the UCR-ELTA*

Reading comprehension
Reading for the main idea, reading for major points, reading for specific details, reading for the gist, inferencing, distinguishing fact from opinion, and identifying author's purpose or tone.
Listening comprehension
Listening for the main idea, listening for points, listening for specific details, listening for the gist, inferencing, distinguishing fact from opinion, and determining speaker's intent or tone.
Speaking Production
Grammar, vocabulary, segmental pronunciation (vowels and consonants), suprasegmental pronunciation (for example, stress, rhythm, intonation, prominence, connected speech phenomena), content, organization, cohesion, task performance, and appropriate use of language functions, sociolinguistic appropriacy.
Written production
Grammar, vocabulary, content, rhetorical, cohesion, task performance, use of appropriate rhetorical mode, and register.

Note. Extracted from Council of Europe (2020).

The UCR-ELTA test provides stakeholders with access to evidence that shows valid and reliable information about language proficiency with respect to CEFR bands, including communicative activities, strategies, and language competences. Based on this information, different decision makers can report prospects' language performance to make relevant decisions.

UCR-ELTA's Item Design and Creation

Considering (a) that test-takers will be carrying out a series of tasks which will be a reflection of the nature of language-connected scenarios they experience in their teaching life and (b) that those tasks will help collect evidence of teachers being highly independent (B2) or proficient users of the language (C1), the need for creating meaningful, construct-responsive, and high-quality items is fundamental. For this reason, items must be designed according to set parameters that will, hopefully, shed light on test takers' KAS. This explains why the process of item creation has to be thoroughly observed and developed and why item writers must be carefully selected, because they are the ones that concretize the minimum units of assessment: the tasks (Bachman and Palmer, 2010, p. 306). In this light, Table 5 displays the distribution and general specifications of the UCR-ELTA's tasks:

TABLE 5 *Distribution and number of items and tasks for the UCR-ELTA*

<i>Reading comprehension: 50 items</i>	
Type	Number of items
B2 descriptors according to CEFR	30
C1 descriptors according to CEFR	20
<i>Listening comprehension: 50 items</i>	
Type	Number of items

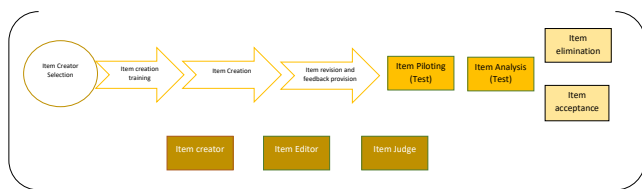
B2 (descriptors according to CEFR)	30
C1 (descriptors according to CEFR)	20
<i>Written Production: 2 tasks</i>	
Type	Number of tasks
B2 (descriptors according to CEFR)	1
C1 (descriptors according to CEFR)	1
<i>Oral Production: 1 task</i>	
Type	Number of tasks
One-on-one, adaptive interview (interviewer moves up/down the CEFR proficiency scale as the interview progresses based on testees' answers.	1

Note. Taken from PELEx (2022a), UCR-ELTA, Table of Specifications.

The reason for choosing the 20 (C1)-30 (B2) distribution of items responds to the need to ensure that test takers' responses have the opportunity to adjust to the items (from the easiest one to the most difficult ones) and guarantee plenty of opportunities to expose themselves to relevant items that will provide significant information on the test takers' language abilities for listening and reading. In the case of speaking and writing, the number of tasks has been chosen based on the available resources, practicality, and task (input) authenticity.

Reading and listening items. Systematically and as illustrated in Figure 2, the cycle for item construction is carried out through a series of steps that seek to ensure the application of various quality filters to accept, improve, or discard items. Firstly, the designers are chosen based on their teaching, research, or testing experience; their qualifications are taken into consideration as well. This allows the recruitment of professionals that have the necessary expertise for carrying out a responsible and conscientious process of design and creation of items, a fundamental feature of any process of this nature.

Figure 2 *Process of item construction for the UCR-ELTA's Listening and Reading Sections*



Note. Created by the authors

Secondly, once they have accepted to be part of the task design stage, item designers need to attend an informative session/workshop where the requirements their tasks must comply with are stated and exemplified. In addition, a set of instructions accompanying the training session and other documents for item design (e.g., assigned CEFR can do statements; number of items to create) are shared with the designers as well. Furthermore, this training session has the overall purpose of informing the creators of the minimum quality standards and the steps to follow when fulfilling their responsibilities, and it also provides further guidance for creating the best items possible since the beginning.

Thirdly, the item creators start the designing stage. In this one, they must apply the necessary recommendations and follow the guidelines provided during the training sessions. To give more support and allow for doubt clarification, the item creators can reach out to the examination coordinator at any time. The designing stage takes around one month, and they will have to come up with a set of 20-50 different items for either reading or listening.

Finally, the item revision, feedback, and improvement processes begin when the designers send their first drafts to the

test coordinator. This process provides opportunities for both parties to discuss the changes the items need and for filtering those ones that do not comply with the minimum and primary requirements of the quality standards. Either newer versions of the items can be requested and created, or the items are discarded completely once piloted. In addition, the process of item creation is complemented by a process of item judgment and editing in which they are improved as much as necessary to guarantee their sound construction. For the most part, the items that comply with the requirements of the construct, the parameters of internal consistency (e.g., Cronbach alpha analysis), and the indicators of difficulty and discrimination are the ones to be used.

Speaking and writing tasks. The task specifications for the writing tasks are handed in to the task designers. Based on them, the designers will create the tasks which will be then revised by an experienced team as many times as necessary until they are approved. The prompts and contexts presented to the students reflect the scenarios and themes teachers face frequently in their professional lives.

The adaptive oral interview method has been chosen as it is practical enough in terms of administration and resources available. The questions asked to the test takers will reflect a B2 or C1 nature and will be administered by experienced interviewers. The interviews can either be carried out in person or via virtual platforms (e.g., Zoom).

Test organization and administration

The UCR-ELTA is digital using three different modalities: online through the University of Costa Rica portal called *PELEx*, a hybrid application, through which the test is installed on a computer and the results are sent in real time to the servers of the University of Costa Rica. This procedure requires a minimal

connection to the Internet. The third modality does not require Internet connection at all: the test can be installed on the takers' computers and then the results have to be imported to storage devices to later be incorporated into UCR servers.

The guidelines for applying and taking the test are prepared as well. The former involved the test invigilators (if applied in person) and contain the administration and technical steps to follow. The latter contain the general instructions test takers must follow. The responsibility of foreseeing the entire process and ensuring the appropriate conditions for the delivery of the test are both the responsibility of UCR (primarily) and of the institutions where the individuals will be taking the test. The workflows, storage, and transport processes are corroborated, surveilled, guaranteed, and reflected upon by UCR as well before, during, and after the application of the test.

Due to the fact that the UCR-ELTA is sectioned according to the skills being assessed (e.g., oral production, written production, listening, and reading), some aspects connected to its administration must be clarified.

Section of reading and listening. Once the design and filtering of the test has been finalized and as soon as its best version has been approved, the test administration is carried out. For this purpose, the written and listening sections of the examination are tested on an online platform designed and supported by IT experts, when the format of the test is either hybrid or online.

If the test is administered in a face-to-face environment, then a set of steps are followed: (a) trained personnel work as invigilator coordinators or invigilators themselves, (b) a group of other invigilators are recruited (these are usually other professors from the School of Modern Languages) to be able to supervise each of the assessed groups. The higher the number of test takers, the

more invigilators are needed, so more people are recruited. All of the invigilators must attend a session where the purpose of the test, the security and safeguarding measures, and other logistics protocols are presented, explained and clarified; the steps to follow before, during, and after the test application are also presented to guarantee standardization and questions are attended to. UCR is in charge of guaranteeing the administration procedures are followed and, when unexpected situations happen before, during, or after the administration of the test, the invigilators must contact their coordinator to attend to any issue.

All of the documents and materials for the face-to-face test administration are kept under UCR's supervision before and immediately after the application. In addition, the invigilators only have access to them a few minutes before the administration, and every single document and materials (e.g. test booklets, answer sheets, attendance lists, among others) must be accounted for once the test ends.

Auditing processes are usually carried out after the application of the test with the purpose of identifying strengths and aspects to improve in future applications. Members of PELEx who were involved in the administration analyze the entire flow of the administration of the test and pinpoint the areas for improvement.

Sections of speaking and writing. The oral production skill is assessed virtually via Zoom or face-to-face. This section consists of a 10 to 20-minute interview in which a multilevel set of questions are asked to the test takers. The oral interviewers are either certified or trained to carry out this task. The questions and rubrics reflect the nature of the CEFR. The auditing processes here are related to making sure that the interviewing protocols are as standard as possible as well. However, this might be difficult to do since this auditing process requires a considerable amount of time to analyze the interview protocols, the inter-rater reliability,

the interview-protocol application, the reception process, among others. This is, indeed, a work in-progress.

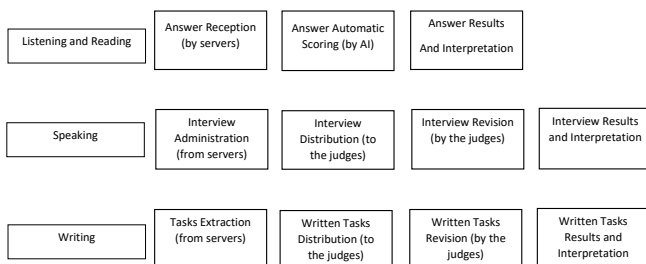
In the case of the writing section, three different tasks are provided to the test takers. The tasks are connected to each of the CEFR bands under assessment and contain context that reflects the scenarios and topics teachers handle on a daily basis. The test takers have around 35 minutes to complete the tasks and provide their answers and complete this section on the same date they complete the listening and reading sections.

Test scoring

The following are the overall procedures for scoring the different items in the test.

Reading and listening tasks. The general item scoring process for reading and listening also consists of a series of steps illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 *General Process of Scoring of the UCR-ELTA Test Tasks and Items*



Note. Created by the authors

More specifically, in the case of the reading and listening sections, the test takers' responses are automatically scored using AI, and the results are extracted from the server in charge of storing the data. After this, the results are sent to the administration and

coordination of the test. As noticed, the process requires access to technological tools, servers, and scoring software and programming that must ensure the responses of the students are actually saved and secured appropriately. The later process of result interpretation can then initiate once the answers have been obtained.

Considering the relevance of this test and the standards set for the minimum language use requirements for English teachers, the summative parameters for categorizing the test takers' performance is shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6 *Quantitative Parameters for CEFR Band Categorization*

Total Items	100
Minimum parameters to be placed in the band	C1-80% of correct answers B2-55% of correct answers

Note. Taken from PELEx (2022a), UCR-ELTA's Table of Specifications.

The number of minimum correct responses has been decided based on the fact that the test is a high-stakes one and high-quality performance is expected considering the possible uses it will have (for hiring and retraining).

Speaking and writing tasks. The oral interviews and written tasks are scored manually. In the case of the written tasks, experienced language professors are recruited to assign a score to an anonymous set of tasks. The scorers must have significant experience in teaching English composition and rhetoric. This guarantees that the nature of the skill under assessment is more profoundly understood. However, this does pose a difficulty: the raters must be trained to assess the written tasks considering the criteria stated (e.g. Can Do statements) and not as writing teachers with particular views on writing and classroom writing needs. To attend to this need, the scorers do attend a meeting/

workshop in which a series of written tasks samples are used as examples and context to calibrate the understanding of the scoring criteria.

The scorers take around 6 weeks to check the assigned tasks using a rubric prepared for that purpose. After that, they must send the tasks and scores to the “referee” -a person in charge of organizing the information and carrying out the inter-rater agreement process. There are two scorers per band, per task, so, when there is a disagreement in the scores and, after double-checking the task, the “referee” is in charge of making the final decision as to which score must be assigned to a test taker.

In the case of the oral section, the scoring process is quite similar. Nonetheless, all of the interviews are assessed by two judges trained to assess these kinds of tasks. The calibration processes are carried out as well, and the role of the “referee” is the same one as played for the written section.

Test Interpretation, Validation, and Awareness of its Impact

As stated previously, this proficiency test revolves around the need to explicitly present a set of parameters for linguistic skills and abilities within the B2 and C1 levels of proficiency, which can serve as a base for employment and retraining opportunities. For this reason, validators of the results of the test will be analyzing the systems developed for designing and administering the test and interpreting the results. Hopefully, these analyses on the coherence, cohesiveness, and accuracy of the test will provide useful information and feedback to incorporate later and better these processes.

Indeed, it is of extreme importance to refer more in-depth to the kinds of decisions that the results of UCR-ELTA can be used as support for. In the first place, there is a clear acknowledgement

to the fact that this test is a language proficiency one; this evidently means that no assumptions regarding the teaching abilities of the test takers can be made through this test. In order words, the UCR-ELTA just shows certain evidence of what the test takers can do with the target language under very specific conditions, but this cannot be extrapolated to conclusions regarding their actual language teaching competency in a classroom setting. Of course, it can be noted that, as language consultants and exemplary users of English, teachers should have vast knowledge of the target language to handle it in various scenarios relevant to what the students need to do; therefore, expectations regarding the levels of English they must have are evident: the more proficient users they are, the better. This test can shed light on this point.

CONCLUSION

The UCR-ELTA test has the potential to offer different benefits. The process of developing, administering, and interpreting the results of such a test can provide valuable insights into the abilities and skills of the test takers. These insights can be used to make informed decisions in various domains, especially employment, professional development, and education.

The development of this test involves a meticulous process that ensures the test is comprehensive, fair, and reliable. It is designed to measure the specific skills and knowledge that are relevant to the test takers. Furthermore, the administration of the test has to be carefully planned and executed to ensure that all test takers are given an equal opportunity to demonstrate their abilities; in other words, fairness should be guaranteed.

Through the appropriate interpretation of results, valuable information about the test takers' language performance in English can be collected. Moreover, it can highlight their strengths and

areas for improvement, providing them with valuable feedback that can further guide their language learning and professional development. Furthermore, the results can be used to identify trends and patterns, providing insights that can inform policy and practice.

However, the use of the UCR-ELTA test results extends beyond the individual test takers. There is a growing interest among test users, particularly employers, to utilize results as parameters for hiring, which might have a meaningful impact: a high score on the test can open up opportunities for employment and professional advancement, while a low score can limit these opportunities.

This potential impact on the professional lives of the test takers is not to be taken lightly; as a consequence, test designers must ensure that the test is developed and validated responsibly, transparently, and consciously through the continuous improvement and systematization of the chain of analysis, design, auditing, and reflection of the test. Transparency, in this sense, further supports (a) the process of evidence collection that ensures the test is reliable and consistent, and (b) the provision of support and resources to help test takers prepare for the test and interpret its results as intended.

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Lengua e identidad: debates sobre la ortografía del español en la Colombia decimonónica*

Language and Identity: Debates on the Spanish Orthography in 19th-Century Colombia

Julián Esteban Escobar González¹

Bogotá, Colombia

* Artículo de reflexión

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¹ Licenciado en Filología e idiomas: inglés

E-mail: jescobargo@unal.edu.co – ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5303-703X>

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RESUMEN

Este artículo examina las relaciones entre lengua e identidad en el contexto de los debates sobre la reforma ortográfica del español en la Colombia decimonónica. Durante ese siglo, los círculos académicos latinoamericanos debatieron en repetidas ocasiones sobre la aceptación u oposición al reformismo ortográfico gestado por varios intelectuales del continente. De estos círculos académicos, los colombianos también participaron notablemente, así pues, este trabajo tiene como objetivo divulgar las opiniones de los intelectuales colombianos decimonónicos que contribuyeron destacablemente en estas discusiones y explorar cómo sus argumentos se entrelazan en un debate más profundo sobre el papel de la herencia hispánica en la formación de la identidad nacional colombiana.

Palabras clave: *Herencia hispánica, identidad nacional, intelectuales colombianos decimonónicos, reforma ortográfica.*

ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationships between language and identity in the context of debates on the orthographic reform of Spanish in 19th-century Colombia. Throughout that century, Latin American academic circles engaged in repeated discussions regarding the acceptance or opposition to orthographic reform advocated by various intellectuals across the continent. Colombian academic circles, notably, were actively involved in these debates. Therefore, this work aims to disseminate the opinions of 19th-century Colombian intellectuals who significantly contributed to these discussions and explore how their arguments intertwine in a deeper debate on the role of Hispanic heritage in shaping the national identity of Colombia.

Keywords: 19th-century Colombian intellectuals, Hispanic heritage, national identity, orthographic reform.

Hay, pues, entre nosotros dos parcialidades: la de los que seguimos en todo los preceptos de la Academia, y la de los que se apartan de ellos.

Obras escogidas en prosa y en verso ..., 1875

DURANTE EL SIGLO XIX, LA ortografía del español fue objeto de innovaciones y reformas por parte de la Real Academia Española. No obstante, académicos, principalmente hispanoamericanos ajenos a esta institución, presentaron proyectos de reforma. Estos estaban fundados tanto en ideas didácticas de simplificación del alfabeto, como en actitudes impregnadas de nacionalismo. Aquellas propuestas de reforma, al ser motivo de polémica y resistencia, formaron parte de discusiones políticas y lingüísticas de las entonces recién independizadas naciones hispanoamericanas, ya que este movimiento de reformismo ortográfico coincidió con el inicio de sus procesos de construcción de identidad nacional. Entre las propuestas más conocidas están las que planteó el gramático venezolano Andrés Bello en colaboración con el colombiano Juan García del Río y la propuesta del argentino Domingo Sarmiento (Frago, 2012). A pesar de que ninguna de estas tuvo éxito, para el año 1844 se oficializó, parcialmente, la propuesta de Bello como la nueva ortografía de la República chilena, la cual se aplicó después en algunos países hispanoamericanos, donde no fue oficial y su uso fue irregular.

Es de interés comentar dos cosas: primero, los círculos académicos colombianos también participaron en los debates en torno al reformismo y, segundo, sus posiciones al respecto no son muy conocidas. Si bien algunos trabajos, Deas (1993), Jaksic (1999), Castiblanco (2014) y Jiménez (2018), han abordado el papel de la lengua en la construcción de nación y la importancia que le otorgaron los círculos intelectuales y políticos del siglo XIX, el reformismo ortográfico y las propuestas de los ortógrafos reformistas decimonónicos en Hispanoamérica y su uso en Colombia fueron secundarios en el desarrollo de sus investigaciones. Por lo que, el presente artículo, tiene como objetivo reconocer los principales argumentos expresados por los intelectuales colombianos

decimonónicos en el marco de estas discusiones, analizar cómo las ideologías lingüísticas de cada uno de los grupos enfrentados se lexicalizan en sus manifestaciones discursivas (Van Dijk, 1999) y, finalmente, cómo estas se entretajan en una discusión mucho más profunda: el debate sobre papel de la herencia hispánica en la formación de la identidad de la nueva nación colombiana. En ese sentido, el artículo está organizado de la siguiente manera: en la primera parte se presenta la relación entre las ideologías lingüísticas y la ortografía del español, en la segunda parte se habla de la lengua en los círculos académicos colombianos del siglo XIX, para finalmente, hacer un análisis de las opiniones de los intelectuales gramáticos.

IDEOLOGÍAS LINGÜÍSTICAS Y LA ORTOGRAFÍA ESPAÑOLA

Los procesos emancipatorios de los entonces virreinos del Imperio Español empezaron a consolidarse recién comenzaba el siglo XIX y con estos la necesidad de crear y promover una identidad nacional. Las cuestiones que surgían en torno a esto estaban estrechamente relacionadas con el papel que tenía la lengua en estas configuraciones nacionales y de identidad. Hasta el punto de que, como dicen Lois y Arnoux (1998):

toda la actividad política y cultural del siglo XIX hispanoamericano está relacionada con el proyecto de construcción de las naciones, y el planteamiento de la cuestión de la lengua (dimensión simbólica de su uso, normas orales o escritas, representación gráfica, etc.) es inseparable de la problemática de la identidad nacional. (p. 1)

Así, estas autoras reconocen que, incluso, las preocupaciones de una sociedad con respecto a las representaciones de su identidad se reflejan en los debates sobre la representación gráfica de

su lengua y sus normas de uso. A lo anterior se pueden agregar los señalamientos de Woolard (1998/2012) al respecto, pues comenta que «en países donde la identidad y la nacionalidad están negociándose cada aspecto de la lengua, incluyendo su descripción fonológica y sus formas de representaciones gráficas pueden ser impugnadas» (p. 48). Esta autora, además, añade que «los sistemas ortográficos no pueden ser conceptualizados como una reducción simple del habla a la escritura, sino que son más bien símbolos que acarrear consigo significados históricos, culturales y políticos» (p. 48).

En este orden de ideas, los debates en torno al reformismo ortográfico son batallas¹ donde se esgrimen argumentos cargados de variadas ideologías lingüísticas, entiéndanse estas como un conjunto de «beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states» [creencias, sentimientos y concepciones sobre la estructura de la lengua y su uso, que a menudo responden a los intereses políticos y económicos de los hablantes, los grupos étnicos y otros grupos de interés, y los Estados nación] (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 192). Igualmente, estas, como comenta Woolard (1998/2012), «no tratan únicamente sobre la lengua. Más bien imaginan y ponen en juego los vínculos de la lengua con la identidad [...]» (p. 19).

En nuestro caso, estas discusiones enmarcadas en los planos lingüístico, político e identitario moldearon el desarrollo de la lengua escrita durante los procesos emancipatorios y primeras etapas republicanas en Hispanoamérica, ya que justo después de la ruptura de los lazos políticos y económicos con España y en medio de los problemas de identidad de estas nuevas repúblicas,

1 La batalla del idioma, como lo escribe Carlos Rama (1982).

los líderes políticos e intelectuales, según Jaksic (1999), tuvieron que enfrentarse a dos problemas de esta índole: la permanencia del lazo cultural entre la Metrópoli y sus otrora colonias y la alfabetización que iniciarían los nuevos gobiernos.

La permanencia del lazo cultural se manifestó principalmente en la lengua,² es por esto por lo que, en medio de las exaltaciones nacionalistas, surgieron ciertas ideas de separatismo lingüístico,³ pues, como comenta Muñoz (2017), «algunos creyeron que era imprescindible conquistar la independencia cultural y, especialmente, lingüística» (p. 581). Lo anterior no tuvo éxito, sino que por el contrario terminó en el restablecimiento de las relaciones con España, a través de la RAE (Jaksic, 1999), institución que se encargó de fortalecer los vínculos culturales, mediante la difusión de ideologías en sus obras normativas y la creación de academias correspondientes.

Lázaro Carreter (1996/2014) afirma que «la Real Academia era la primera institución española en alentar la conciencia de comunidad hispana» (p. 45) y aunque en sus estatutos esta institución sostenía «que la Academia nada monopoliza» y que la asociación era “completamente ajena a todo objeto político y, en consecuencia, independiente en todos conceptos de la acción y relaciones de los respectivos gobiernos”», tenía un claro objetivo político y de dominación: la unidad de la lengua española en ambos lados del Atlántico, beneficiándose de la idea que la lengua desempeña un papel clave en la homogenización de la población. Por otro lado, Lázaro Carreter nuevamente

2 Padilla (2008), citando a Vergara y Vergara, también incluye la religión y las tradiciones españolas.

3 Jaksic (1999) resalta que, en 1825, en el periódico *La Miscelánea* el artículo «“Sobre el idioma” llamaba en primer lugar a no abandonar el castellano nombre de un “frenesí patriótico” que hiciese condenar todo cuanto viniese de España» (p. 508).

citando los estatutos de la Academia comenta que también tenía como objetivo:

repartir su autoridad en organismos que desempeñen funciones similares a las suya [...] en los diversos países transatlánticos: solo así, y volverá a notarse el ímpetu del documento, se podrá, dice “oponer un dique, más poderoso que las bayonetas mismas, al espíritu invasor de la raza anglosajona en el mundo por Colon descubierto”. (1996/2014, p. 45)

El segundo problema que plantea Jaksic (1999) fue la labor alfabetizadora que emprendieron los gobiernos⁴ con las masas iletradas, puesto que «las nuevas realidades de la independencia [...] exigían la conformación de los Estados a través de un sistema de leyes. La ley era escrita y para su conocimiento pleno se exigía la alfabetización» (p. 509). De esta manera, la lengua empieza a tener un papel protagónico tanto en la vida política como educativa y académica de las nacientes repúblicas hispanoamericanas. Igualmente, comenta que la importancia que se le otorgó a la lengua sería el mecanismo más apropiado para «transformar colonias en naciones, e individuos en ciudadanos» (Jaksic, 1999, p. 509).

En el plano ortográfico estos dos problemas se inscriben en la labor de sistematización de la ortografía española y el rol de autoridad⁵ que desde sus inicios se propone la RAE (Martínez, 2010) y en el proyecto reformista que sugieren Bello y García del Río, cuyo fin era facilitar dicha alfabetización. Con respecto

4 En Colombia, fue a través de la Ley del 18 de mayo de 1826, impulsada por Santander (Jiménez, 2018, p. 59).

5 En la advertencia del *Prontuario de ortografía* se demuestra dicha autoridad al afirmar que el «ministro de la Gobernación comunicó de Real orden á la Academia Española la circular de 25 de abril de 1844, prohibiendo que en las escuelas públicas del reino se enseñe otra Ortografía que la adoptada por el mismo cuerpo» (RAE, 1844, p. 9).

a la RAE, la primera obra que esta institución emprendió fue la elaboración del *Diccionario de Autoridades*, publicado entre 1726 y 1739. Esta empresa, aparte de suponer un reto lexicográfico, fue un desafío ortográfico, ya que aún no existía un consenso en esta materia, es decir, no se habían establecido los criterios para la fijación de reglas. De hecho, el prólogo del *Diccionario* (1726) lo manifiesta y da la razón por la cual la Academia decidió fijar su propia ortografía:

Es mui grande el descuido, ò ignorância que se padéce en la Orthographía, aunque en ninguna Léngua habrá mas tratados de esta essencial parte de explicar por escrito el Idioma, porque passan de treinta Autóres los que han escrito sobre la Orthographía Castellana. La Académia no se ha introducido à impugnar, ni calificar à ninguno, y para su próprio uso ha establecido, y fijado su Orthographía. (pp. IV-V)

Lázaro Carreter (1972), en su discurso de recepción pública en la RAE *Crónica del Diccionario de Autoridades (1713-1740)*, afirma que «*Autoridades* constituyó, pues, un momento importante en la historia de la ortografía española; por lo pronto logró una audiencia mucho mayor que la de los reformadores anteriores, creando así el supuesto necesario para fijar nuestra, hasta entonces, caótica escritura» (p. 51). Dos años después de finalizar el *Diccionario*, la Academia dedicó una de sus publicaciones exclusivamente a difundir sus propuestas ortográficas: *Orthographia española* (1741), obra en la cual justifica la necesidad de tener un tratado único para la materia ortográfica. Además, en los años siguientes la RAE hizo reformas parciales⁶ y progresivas para la adecuación del sistema ortográfico español.

6 Existen dos tipos de reformas: las reformas parciales y las reformas profundas. Mientras las primeras se dedican a resolver problemas específicos dentro del sistema, normalmente añadiendo o suprimiendo grafías, ya sea por el

Desde la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII e inicios del siglo XIX, en diferentes ediciones de la *Ortografía*, la RAE se dedicó a hacer pequeñas intervenciones en el sistema ortográfico, todas inclinadas hacia la reducción de este. Entre las intervenciones que se hicieron están la eliminación de los dígrafos arcaizantes de origen griego como ph /f/, ch /k/, th /t/ ya que los sonidos que estos representaban también lo hacían los grafemas simples, f, c y t, respectivamente. Igualmente, se eliminó el uso del ss, se reguló el uso de la q, el de la x se limitó a la representación de sonido /ks/ y se prescindió de su uso para la representación del fonema gutural árabe /x/ (RAE, 2010).

En cuanto a la propuesta de Bello y García del Río en «Indicaciones sobre la conveniencia de simplificar y uniformar la ortografía en América», publicada en la revista *El Repertorio Americano* en 1826,⁷ esta tenía un fin principalmente didáctico que buscaba una simplificación del alfabeto para facilitar la enseñanza de la lectoescritura, ya que «pocos habrá más importantes que el simplificar su ortografía como que de ella depende la adquisición más o menos fácil de los dos artes primeros [...]: leer y escribir». (Bello y García del Río, 1945/1826, p. 254). Además, estaba alejada de ideas nacionalistas y de separatismo lingüístico, de hecho, los autores no estuvieron en contra de la Academia Española, antes bien, exaltaron aquella actitud reformista que esta tuvo en las publicaciones previas a las propuestas de estos dos académicos (Alcoba, 2007, p. 156).

Con el argumento de que el objeto de la ortografía «no es corregir la pronunciación común, sino representarla fielmente» (1945/1826, p. 267), Bello y García del Río, además destacan que,

surgimiento o por la desaparición de un fonema, las segundas buscan un cambio general en el sistema y pretenden llevarlo al ideal de correspondencia ortográfico, es decir, una relación biunívoca entre sonido y grafía (RAE, 2010).

7 La primera publicación fue en la revista londinense Biblioteca Americana en 1823.

para la fijación de normas, el criterio de la pronunciación es «el único esencial y legítimo» (1945/1826, p. 259), dejando a un lado la etimología y el uso constante, es decir, el uso mayoritario el cual en ocasiones es fonológico o etimológico (RAE, 2010), sobre estos dos dicen que su empleo genera confusión «que sólo la necesidad puede disculpar» (1945/1826, p. 259). La propuesta de Bello consistió en los siguientes puntos:

Época primera.

1. Sustituir la j a la x y a la g en todos los casos en que estas últimas tengan el sonido gutural árabe.
2. Sustituir la I a la y en todos los casos en que ésta haga las veces de simple vocal.
3. Suprimir la h
4. Escribir con rr todas las sílabas en que haya el sonido fuerte que corresponde a estas letras.
5. Sustituir la z a la c suave.
6. Desterrar la u muda que acompaña a la q.

Época segunda

7. Sustituir la q a la c fuerte.
8. Suprimir la u muda que en algunas dicciones acompaña a la g (1826, pp. 266-267).

De la propuesta se aceptaron los dos primeros puntos. A estas se les sumó el uso de la grafía *s* en vez de la *x* cuando está antes de una consonante, difundida por Francisco Puente, español residenciado en Chile, en 1835 en su opúsculo *De la proposición, sus complementos i ortografía* (Martínez, 2010). Estos cambios se normalizaron después del debate sobre la propuesta del argentino Sarmiento en la Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades de la Universidad de Chile en 1844 (Frago, 2012). «Estos tres rasgos conforman lo que se dio en llamar ortografía chilena» (RAE, 2010, p. 33) u ortografía de Bello, la cual se usó después en algunos

países del continente en donde no fue oficial ni se generalizó, lo cual hizo que en estas repúblicas no durara lo mismo que en Chile, dado que, en Chile duró hasta 1927,⁸ mientras que el resto de los países hispanoamericanos restituyeron paulatinamente el uso de la ortografía de la RAE durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX (RAE, 2010, p. 33).

Dadas las circunstancias, es comprensible que en Colombia también hubiera habido períodos de uso irregular de la ortografía reformada. Asimismo, es importante reconocer que sus intelectuales, dedicados al estudio de la lengua, también participaron en los debates acerca del reformismo.

LA LENGUA EN LOS CÍRCULOS ACADÉMICOS COLOMBIANOS DEL SIGLO XIX

Ocampo (1986) comenta que «el panorama intelectual de Colombia en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX presenta una tendencia hacia el estudio profundo de los estudios filológicos y en especial de la lengua española» (p. 20). Son estos mismos intelectuales los que discuten sobre la reforma ortográfica. Su oficialización en Chile coincidió con un tiempo de agitación política y guerras civiles en Colombia, causadas por las diferencias entre los partidos políticos. Después de la llegada al poder del liberal José Hilario López en 1849 se consolidaron sucesivos gobiernos liberales y tras la Guerra de las Soberanías (1860-1862), guerra que tuvo como consecuencia el establecimiento de los Estados Unidos de Colombia (1863-1886), inició el Olimpo Radical, periodo conocido por su radicalismo liberal y el sistema federal (Jiménez, 2018, pp. 15-27).

8 El decreto 3876 de 1927 del Ministerio de Instrucción Pública (Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1927, Artículos 1 y 2).

Según Jiménez (2018) este período se caracterizó por las sustanciales reformas que los gobiernos ejecutaron, en lo político, económico, educativo y cultural; un claro ejemplo es la creación de la Universidad Nacional de los Estados Unidos de Colombia (1867). Todos estos cambios y reformas causaron resistencia en los conservadores más radicales quienes las veían como una amenaza, fundamentalmente, por la intromisión del Estado en la educación y en los privilegios con los que contaba la Iglesia. A manera de rechazo al proyecto de nación y a las reformas del partido Liberal, los conservadores tuvieron un contraproyecto evidentemente marcado de ideas de reivindicación de la herencia hispánica y muy apegado a la Iglesia en el que la lengua fue un eje central y vista como una herramienta de construcción de identidad nacional.

La élite académica de tendencia conservadora, entre ella escritores, poetas, gramáticos, latinistas y filólogos, convencida de la importancia de la lengua para su proyecto de oposición creó diferentes espacios para fomentar su estudio y el de su literatura (Jiménez, 2018). Entre estos espacios, Agudelo (2014) menciona el Liceo Granadino y Jiménez (2018) recoge la tertulia El Mosaico y su respectiva publicación periódica (1858-1872) fundados por José María Vergara y Vergara, después de ciertos problemas, José Joaquín Borda en 1871 intenta darle continuidad a esta publicación con *El Mosaico: periódico de la juventud, destinado exclusivamente a la literatura* (1871-1872). Otras fueron: los *Anales de la Universidad de los Estados Unidos de Colombia* (1868), las reuniones de la Academia Colombiana de la Lengua (1871), su *Anuario* (1874) y el *Repertorio Colombiano* (1878). Igualmente, estos intelectuales produjeron diferentes textos normativos sobre el español principalmente diccionarios, manuales de gramática, ortografía y ortología.

Jiménez (2018) catalogó esta producción académica, la prensa, y «otros textos didácticos, al igual que los discursos académicos» (p. 262) como los «canales de difusión de los reparos a las propuestas de reforma en materia ortográfica» (p. 262). Cabe señalar que también estuvieron estrechamente relacionados con la educación, dado que entre ellos hubo profesores universitarios, además, algunos de estos académicos conservadores estuvieron relacionados con la política del país, pues ocuparon varios cargos públicos y varios llegaron a ser presidentes de la República entre finales de siglo XIX y las primeras décadas del siglo XX en lo que se conoce como la Hegemonía Conservadora (Arizmendi, 1989).

Es justo aclarar que, independientemente de las diferencias ideológicas entre los intelectuales durante este periodo, el país tuvo una de sus épocas más brillantes en producción académica en el área de la lengua, pues los conservadores no fueron los únicos en participar de esta. Un claro ejemplo es el liberal Ezequiel Uricoechea, quien fue uno de los filólogos más influyentes de Colombia y uno de los que dio a conocer el trabajo filológico nacional en el exterior (BVFE, 2021).

José Manuel Marroquín reconoce que «literatos de todos los partidos han contribuido á imprimir ese movimiento y han tomado parte en esos trabajos y estudios» (1879, p. 425). Igualmente, veintitrés años antes, José Joaquín Borda ya hablaba del desinteresado patriotismo de aquellas empresas intelectuales, pues en *El Álbum: periódico literario, científico i noticioso*, número 9 del 20 de julio de 1856, al responder a la pregunta que él mismo formula sobre el quehacer del Liceo Granadino indica que:

El Liceo Granadino es una reunión de hombres amantes de la ciencia i de las artes, que abandonando las mezquinas discordias de nuestros partidos políticos, van a cultivar con empeño aquellas materias, unidos por una fraternidad verdaderamente

republicana, i animados por un mismo deseo – ilustrarse a sí mismos e ilustrar a la Patria ¡noble i bella mision! (1856, p. 72)

A pesar de estos esfuerzos por dejar de lado las diferencias de partidos que comentan Marroquín y Borda, las posiciones de los intelectuales con respecto al papel de la lengua en la formación de la identidad colombiana claramente varían bastante teniendo en cuentas sus filiaciones políticas e ideológicas y como ellos mismos valoraban la herencia y tradición hispánica en este proceso. Esto ya se daba a entender en la función que tenía el pasado y la tradición española en los proyectos de nación para los liberales y conservadores como ya se había mencionado párrafos atrás.

En cuanto a la situación ortográfica del país durante el período en cuestión, es interesante hacer una contextualización mencionando las diferentes descripciones que dieron algunos de los intelectuales que la vivieron. Por ejemplo, en una carta a Manuel María Mallarino, Marroquín (1875) dice que para ellos es sabido que la reforma ortográfica «se generalizó poco más o menos desde el decenio comprendido entre 1830 y 1840» (p. 99).

Asimismo, Rafael Núñez (1874) en la justificación que hace del uso de la ortografía reformada en el prefacio su libro *Ensayos de crítica social* dice que esta «es la que se usa — hace un cuarto de siglo más o menos— en las publicaciones oficiales i ha sido también adoptada por gran número de escritores de Colombia» (p. 11). De Rafael Núñez llama la atención que, a pesar de que en este texto escribe con ortografía reformada, un estudio de sus cartas hecho por Nicolás del Castillo (1987) demuestra que «desde 1870 la había abandonado [la ortografía reformada], parcial y transitoriamente en sus cartas» (p. 676), demostrando la irregularidad en el uso.

Otro ejemplo relativo a la irregularidad de su uso se observa en las discusiones de la sesión del 14 de mayo de 1869 en El Liceo

de El Alba, publicada el 20 de mayo en el número 8 (1869a) del periódico quincenal *El Alba: literatura, industria y noticias* de Cali. Al cerrar la columna «Ortografía de nuestro idioma», el secretario Belisario Palacios, además de dejar en claro que ya se había «discutido suficientemente en el Liceo la cuestión [de] reformas a la ortografía de la Academia española» (1869a, p. 58) y encargar a una comisión la toma de la decisión de aceptar o no la ortografía de la RAE, exhorta a:

los hombres doctos de la República i al periodismo literario del país, para que uniformen la ortografía de nuestra lengua, ya sea sometiéndose a las prescripciones de la Academia española, ya a una sociedad de hombres autorizados que en Hispano-América adopten las reformas que se han introducido en Colombia. (1869a, p. 58)

Después de algunos meses, en la sesión del 11 noviembre del mismo año quedó escrito en la columna «Ortografía castellana» del número 21 del 20 de noviembre del periódico *El Alba: literatura, industria y noticias* que El Liceo de El Alba «aprobó la proposición [...] que tiene como objeto la adopción de la ortografía de la Academia Española» (Palacios, 1869b, p. 161).

Con respecto al regreso a la ortografía de la RAE, se puede decir que este proceso se empezó a dar a escala nacional principalmente gracias a los esfuerzos del sector tradicionalista, encarnados en un ilustre literato conservador: José María Vergara y Vergara, quien fue un gran defensor de la herencia hispánica y se mostró siempre como un partidario del fortalecimiento del único lazo que se mantenía entre Madrid y Colombia como lo atestigua en *Cuestión española*. En la carta I de este conjunto

epistolar Vergara y Vergara (1859) le responde a Manuel Murillo⁹ no solo lo importante que es mantener y fortalecer el existente lazo cultural, lingüístico y religioso, sino la necesidad de formar nuevamente lazos económicos con España. Una década después de haber escrito esta defensa a lo hispánico, Vergara y Vergara encabezó un movimiento que buscaba el regreso de los escritores e impresores a la ortografía de la RAE (Marroquín, 1875).

Asimismo, Marroquín Osorio (1915) cita una carta de 1870, dirigida a su padre, en la que el mismo Vergara y Vergara da fe de su viaje a Madrid, donde pidió la aprobación y el reconocimiento de la Academia española para una academia correspondiente en Colombia.¹⁰ Igualmente, en una carta del mismo año que reposa en el Archivo de la Real Academia Española, Vergara y Vergara aceptó la misión de fundar la Academia Colombiana, haciendo constar su disposición a «trabajar en pro de la lengua española» (1870, 14 de diciembre).

Así las cosas, someramente se puede decir que, durante el periodo en cuestión, pese a cierta irregularidad, hubo un uso relativamente constante de la ortografía reformada en Colombia. Ya hubiera sido usada por algún tiempo en los documentos oficiales, en ciertas escuelas, por algunos escritores o editores y cajistas de las imprentas del país. Finalmente, varios intelectuales, encabezados por Vergara y Vergara, iniciaron el regreso a la ortografía de la RAE, claramente influenciados por su respeto y admiración por los valores hispánicos y la importancia que les daban para la formación de la identidad colombiana. Esto

9 Padilla (2017, pp. 56-80) hace un análisis de esta obra epistolar de Vergara y Vergara en el capítulo *Formas de autoconciencia e identidad hacia el medio siglo XIX en Colombia* del libro *Cuestión española y otros escritos de José María Vergara y Vergara* (2017).

10 Véase la carta que Vergara y Vergara le dirige a José Manuel Marroquín en *Don José Manuel Marroquín íntimo* (J. M. Marroquín, presbítero, 1915, p. 208 N.º 1)

es una muestra de cómo el debate ortográfico estaba vinculado a un debate político, ideológico e identitario.

ANÁLISIS DE LAS OPINIONES DE LOS INTELLECTUALES GRAMÁTICOS

Van Dijk (1999) afirma que «si queremos saber qué apariencia tienen las ideologías, cómo funcionan y cómo se crean, cambian y reproducen, necesitamos observar detalladamente sus manifestaciones discursivas» (p. 19), que en nuestro caso, estas son representaciones textuales que los intelectuales colombianos decimonónicos dejaron escritas en textos metalingüísticos normativos, artículos de revista o columnas de periódico, discursos y cartas y cuya finalidad era influir en las prácticas y actitudes lingüísticas de los miembros de su sociedad. La mayoría de las fuentes primarias se tomaron de la recopilación *El texto en la escuela colombiana: unas notas breves y una modesta propuesta* escrita por Melo (2006), los discursos del Anuario de la Academia Colombiana de la Lengua 1874-1910 (1935) y revistas literarias de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX.

El análisis de las opiniones evidencia la existencia de dos tendencias ideológicas predominantes, cada cual con distintas concepciones sobre la lengua y creencias de los intelectuales sobre el papel de esta en la creación de subjetividad de los colombianos decimonónicos. Padilla (2008) menciona estas mismas dos tendencias al hablar sobre el debate de la hispanidad en Colombia en el siglo XIX: la negación y la reivindicación de la hispanidad. En estas interacciones, la forma más obvia en que se puede observar la expresión ideológica en el discurso es la lexicalización, la cual es la selección de palabras para expresar un concepto en determinado contexto (Van Dijk, 1999, p. 337). Igualmente, Van Dijk (1994) señala que «el nivel lexical es el más controlado dentro del esquema del control lingüístico» (p.

20). Así, a través de la selección léxica en las manifestaciones textuales, se podrán observar las orientaciones ideológicas de los intelectuales.

Vale la pena añadir que los círculos académicos en el país no solo estuvieron en Bogotá ni la producción académica respecto a las ciencias del lenguaje se limitó a los intelectuales que pertenecieron a la Academia Colombiana de la Lengua, es decir, que en el debate sobre el reformismo ortográfico también participaron académicos tanto de fuera de la ciudad como también ajenos a la Academia. Esto es importante mencionarlo, ya que las opiniones que se recogen en este trabajo son tanto de miembros de la Academia como de intelectuales ajenos a ella.

Por otro lado, las opiniones de ambos grupos ideológicos se organizaron en 5 ejes temáticos en torno a los cuales se construyen: 1. Sobre el principio de autoridad y el papel de la RAE; 2. La reforma ortográfica como muestra de lógica y progreso; 3. La reforma ortográfica como sinónimo de anarquía; 4. Crítica a las ideas patrióticas y antihispánicas de la reforma ortográfica, y 5. La reforma ortográfica y los partidos políticos.

Sobre el principio de autoridad y el papel de la RAE

En los debates sobre la reforma ortográfica uno de los puntos de mayor disputa es quién debería ser la autoridad para hacer los cambios a nivel ortográfico en el español. Hay quienes tanto de manera explícita e implícita creen y apelan a la necesidad de una única autoridad, encarnada en la RAE como quienes piensan que no se deberían tener en consideración las opiniones de esta institución.

La primera opinión es la que da el intelectual y dueño de colegio, Dionisio Hermenegildo Araujo (1865) en su *Tratado de ortografía española dedicado a la enseñanza*, en el cual reconoce la autoridad de la RAE y además comenta la necesidad de que en Colombia haya una academia correspondiente para velar por el buen uso del español en el país.

Si existiera entre nosotros una Academia nacional, seguiríamos sus doctrinas como las prescripciones del buen uso; pero por desgracia no la tenemos; i el sano juicio nos aconseja que sigamos en tal caso, las decisiones de la Academia de la Península española. La hermosa lengua de Cervántes es felizmente nuestra lengua: tomemos pues de la culta España lo que nos hace tanta falta. (p. III)

En la ya mencionada sesión del 11 de noviembre de 1869 de El Liceo El Alba, en Cali, después de haber puesto en discusión la reforma ortográfica muchos meses atrás, la comisión encargada optó por someterse a las prescripciones en materia ortográfica de la RAE, y al igual que Araujo (1865) deja ver el interés de que haya en Colombia o en Hispanoamérica una institución de este tipo, pues llegan a la conclusión que «mientras que en el Continente americano ó en los Estados U. de Colombia se establece una academia de bellas letras» (1869b, p. 162). El Liceo adoptará la ortografía de la Academia teniendo en cuenta que su autoridad era la única solución a la anarquía que existía en la escritura. En la columna «Ortografía castellana» se lee:

Es, pues, de vital importancia en el modo de ser de nuestras sociedades, hacer lo posible para poner remedio á un mal de tanta trascendencia [anarquía en la escritura]; y ninguno mas eficaz que reconocer la autoridad de la Academia española, ya que en nuestro continente no existe ninguna que por tantos títulos, sea acreedora á nuestra sumision y á nuestros respetos. (1869b, p. 161)

En una carta de 1872 dirigida a Agripina Samper y publicada en la revista *El Mosaico*, Agripina Montes deja muy clara su postura con respecto al papel de la autoridad a la que se deben supeditar la lengua y sus usuarios. Agripina Samper se había

mostrado a favor de la simplificación del sistema ortográfico y a esto Montes (1872) responde que, aunque toda simplificación es muestra de progreso, en el plano ortográfico estas no serían viables y pregunta: «¿pero en quien reside el derecho de hacer innovaciones en un idioma?» a lo que responde: «Indudablemente en los cuerpos sabios encargados de mantener la pureza, la indole, el genio de la lengua» y añade que «el uso de las personas doctas y autorizadas les da una carta de naturaleza a ciertas reformas, como a ciertas palabras» y que estas palabras «no se estiman castizas, hasta tanto que los cuerpos sabios las adopten» (p. 331).

Siguiendo esta línea, la autora apela a una necesidad «común» que tienen los países de habla hispana de mantener la unidad, aunque en realidad la finalidad es conservar en toda su pureza «la majestuosa lengua de Castilla» (p. 331). Igualmente, expresa de manera explícita que la única ortografía que tiene derecho a ser impuesta es la de España (p. 331) y que usar la reformada o como ella se refiere la «del vulgo» es «un disparate, un absurdo» (p. 331).

Asimismo, Alberto Blume y Nepomuceno Serrano en los fragmentos de su obra *Guía para la enseñanza de la lectura* publicados en el periódico de Santander *El Pestalozziano: periódico científico* en el capítulo V concerniente a la ortografía dejan clara su posición con respecto a la autoridad de la RAE. Después de hacer una corta contextualización al uso de ambas ortografías en Colombia, «la española i la americana» (Blume y Serrano, 1875, p. 37), y dar ventajas y desventajas de ambos modelos, concluyen que «estas reformas sustanciales no podrán ser legal ni autorizadamente acometidas sino por la honorable Academia de la lengua. a lo ménos por una comision de literatos nombrada para el efecto por todos los gobiernos hispano-americanos» (Blume y Serrano, 1875, p. 38).

El miembro de la Academia Colombia José Caicedo Rojas en su discurso «Fundación de Bogotá y de la Academia Colombiana» leído ante esta institución deja clara su posición a favor del principio autoridad sobre la lengua:

Figurémonos por un momento lo que sería del mundo si cada cual se propusiese hablar y escribir a su antojo y siguiendo un sistema propio suyo. Esta observación suspende y embaraza aun a los más ciegos partidarios de las reformas en materia de lenguaje, y no hallan pronta solución para ella, con lo cual no hacen sino reconocer y acatar tácitamente la necesidad del principio de autoridad. (Caicedo, 1875, p. 21)

Igualmente, en una de las citas más conocidas de «Ortografía Castellana», Miguel Antonio Caro (1980/1880) habla del orgullo nacional de los americanos y hace una crítica a los que desechan la autoridad de la Academia Española:

Por lo demás, si nosotros, españoles americanos, queremos competir en letras con los españoles peninsulares, lo que importa es ganarles en ciencia, no en orgullo nacional. Despreciar sus institutos y sus libros, es necia altivez. Cuando sepamos tanto como ellos y lo hayamos demostrado al mundo, nuestras opiniones literarias serán consideradas, y tendremos derecho a regir a par de ellos el cetro de la lengua. (p. 378)

También manifestando su muy certero apoyo el principio de autoridad Enrique Álvarez en la quinta edición de su *Tratado de gramática castellana* comenta que:

Las reformas ortográficas propuestas por cualquiera entidad que no sea la Academia Española, deben desecharse. Sin el principio de autoridad, viene la anarquía; y la anarquía es respecto de las lenguas lo que respecto de las sociedades, — elemento de muerte. (Álvarez, 1890, p. 271)

La reforma ortográfica como muestra de lógica y progreso

Ezequiel Uricoechea en el prólogo su obra *Gramática, vocabulario, catecismo i confesionario de la lengua chibcha, según antiguos manuscritos anónimos e inéditos, aumentados i corregidos* afirma que:

Solo el castellano podría sin dificultad completar su alfabeto, pues ya posee las vocales acentuadas, pero España se duerme i Colombia que habia tomado la iniciativa práctica parece volver a antiguos errores abandonando la lógica i el progreso, so pretexto de la unidad que hai que conservar, i lo que más admira es que a la cabeza de ese movimiento retrógado esten algunos escritores amigos nuestros, cuyo saber nos daba derecho para aguardar que con sus luces ayudasen el progreso, i bastante seguro de su ciencia para no temer como los copleros de la legua, que sus obras valgan más o ménos porque la acepte o no la academia de Madrid. (Uricoechea, 1871, pp. 47-48)

Esta cita de Uricoechea es una buena síntesis del debate en torno a la ortografía, pues en ella habla de la unidad y de la autoridad de «la academia de Madrid», punto estrictamente relacionado con el eje anterior. Además, se puede inferir también como él veía en la reforma ortográfica una muestra del progreso y lógica y consideraba el uso de la ortografía de la RAE como un «antiguo error» y califica de retrógrados a quienes han luchado en pro de la ortografía de esta institución.

Asimismo, Rafael Núñez (1874), político de gran importancia para el país, siendo presidente en varias ocasiones, en el prólogo de su libro *Ensayos de crítica social* califica la ortografía reformada o «especial» de la manera que la nombra él como: la más «sensata» y como un ejemplo de «viviente lógica», por otro lado, respecto a la ortografía de la RAE dice que es

«una tradición exánime» y quienes la siguen son «unos pocos piadosos anticuarios» (p. 11).

Miguel Suárez Aldana en el periódico *La Ilustración* responde en una carta a las críticas que hace Vergara y Vergara a la ortografía reformada. Suárez (1872) califica la posición de Vergara y Vergara como «añejas ideas» y que los que opinan como él «alegan para la ortografía derecho de posesión» (p. 208). Finalmente, lo acusa de no permitir el progreso y el desarrollo del pueblo, pues «prefiere el ignorantismo del pueblo» a las reformas que son de «necesidad popular», dejando de lado el poder contribuir con el progreso, concordando con la opinión de Uricoechea (1871) y se estremece «al considerar estas ideas en un hombre de valer republicano i de profundos conocimiento» (p. 208).

Crítica a las ideas patrióticas y antihispánicas de la reforma ortográfica

En «Americanismos en el lenguaje», a diferencia de otros defensores de la ortografía académica, Caro (1928/1878) dice que no se le pueden atribuir a los patriotas los usos contrarios a la Academia:

El patriotismo americano nunca atentó contra la unidad y pureza de la lengua. No cubramos pues con capa de celo americano a los enemigos, si los hay, de nuestra lengua: que en achaque de patriotismo sería loca soberbia querer competir con el instinto seguro y clara visión de los varones ilustres que fundaron la independencia, sellándola con su sangre. (p. 113)

Igualmente, José Manuel Marroquín (1879), en su opúsculo *De la neografía en América, particularmente en Colombia*, arguye directamente en contra de la ortografía reformada y uno de sus argumentos que se puede inscribir en este eje temático es una crítica a las ideas antihispánicas como base para cambiar en la ortografía:

Los del odio eterno á España desearian que Colombia pudiera abandonar del todo la lengua castellana; y viendo que eso de cambiar de lengua no es de las cosas que estan en poder de los hombres, dicen: «ya que no podemos introducir una nueva, echemos á perder siquiera un poco la que tenemos á pesar nuestro. (p. 422)

Finalmente, José Joaquín Borda para entonces redactor de la revista *El Mosaico*, escribió de forma bastante satírica y critica en una columna llamada «La lengua colombiana» en el núm. 31 de septiembre 3 de 1871 burlándose de quienes tienen como principal motivación para la reforma la separación de España como se puede leer a continuación:

Lo más entusiastas enemigos de la ortografía académica, no solo piden la simplificación de la escritura, con sus jj, sus kk y sus ii, sino que hablan ya de nuestra lengua, es decir, la lengua colombiana. Nosotros lo que encontramos en la lengua colombiana distinto de la española es un disparatorio insondable. Bien, pues, supongamos formada ya la lengua colombiana: España está derrotada. Ahora, qué hacemos con esa lengua? Para qué sirve? No lo sabemos: un cúmulo de disparates no podría servir de nada; á no ser para establecer el desorden y la anarquía. Y una aglomeración de errores merece que la sacrifiquemos así la lengua española, una de las más bellas que han hablado los hombres? (Borda, 1871, p. 242)

La reforma ortográfica como sinónimo de anarquía

La mayoría de los intelectuales gramáticos que estuvieron en contra de la ortografía reformada la consideraron como un ejemplo de anarquía. Esto ya lo menciona Marroquín: «Admitida una sola innovacion queda abierta una puerta para que los

reformadores, por mejor decir, los perezosos, se salgan al campo anchuroso de la anarquía» (Marroquín, 1875, p. 97). Esto era principalmente como comenta Caro porque: «El camino de las reformas es interminable, los reformistas se multiplican, y cada uno quiere que el público siga las suyas» (Caro, 1980 [1880], p. 152).

Incluso Caicedo en su ya mencionado discurso insta a los «americanos del Sur [...] a salvar nuestra lengua, poniéndola a cubierto de la invasión del espíritu de reformas inconsideradas y de la doctrina de la absoluta libertad, ella perecerá, víctima de la anarquía» (Caicedo, 1875, p. 21). Por ese mismo camino estaban dirigidos los comentarios del secretario de El Liceo El Alba:

Así, el antojo ó ignorancia de cada uno, para escribir la lengua de Castilla como le pareciere, nos ha conducido á la anarquía y al desórden en materia ortográfica; de modo, que, continuando por este camino, dentro de algunos años, no nos entenderemos en nuestras mutuas relaciones. (Palacios, 1869, p. 161)

Finalmente, Rafael Pombo en 1882, como secretario de la Academia Colombiana defiende en cierta manera a los reformistas:

La anarquía y las mil ridiculeces con que se afea a los reformistas, proceden de que a sus pies hay una gran verdad, una urgente necesidad que hace erupción espontánea en todas épocas y por varias partes, pero desordenada por falta de acuerdo; un instinto que surge, y se hunde al peso de la autoridad, y reaparece, y torna a hundirse, pero nunca muere; no es rebelión, ni siempre es capricho, ni flujo por singularizarse, ni amor a la ignorancia, sino pura y simplemente lucha del sentido común en busca de asiento. (Pombo, 1882, p. 551)

La reforma ortográfica y los partidos políticos

Este debate en torno a la reforma ortográfica fue claramente político, sin embargo, la veracidad de esta característica también hizo parte de las discusiones, pues en ellas tanto se negó y se afirmó que la ortografía se hubiera vuelto cuestión de partido.

En la «Reseña de dos años de la Academia colombiana» (1877) se lee que los liberales, entonces en el poder, se negaron a dar un espacio para esta institución e incluso relacionaron a sus miembros con la Iglesia y la Corona española, pues un orador en la Cámara de Representantes los consideró «soldados póstumos de Felipe II» y los acusó del cargo de rezar «el rosario en [sus] juntas, y el de usar la ortografía de la y griega que, según el orador, era característica de aquel fatídico monarca» (p. 232).

Un punto interesante con respecto a la relación con Iglesia es que también se usó para defender la ortografía de la RAE, pues llegaron a comparar la anarquía en la escritura y la falta de seguir la única autoridad de esta institución con la anarquía causada por Reforma Protestante: «Así como en las sectas separadas de la Iglesia Católica, el libre exámen ha socabando la autoridad de esta en la interpretación de las santas Escrituras, é introducido en aquellos el caos» (Palacios, 1869b, p. 161).

Entre Agripina Samper y Vergara y Vergara hubo acaloradas discusiones sobre literatura, en las cuales salieron a relucir sus posturas con respecto a la ortografía reformada. En el *Diario de Cundinamarca* y *El Mosaico* reposan los argumentos de estos debates. Agripina acusa al gobierno de tener:

un congreso empeñado en dejar de ser legislador para volverse académico, imponiendo textos de enseñanza i decretando qué ortografía ha de usarse en lo oficial, a reserva de estenderla a lo particular también, por cuanto la libertad de escribir tiene por límite la ortografía de los otros, quiero decir, la de la Academia española. (Samper de Ancizar, 1871, p. 648)

Por otro lado, Vergara y Vergara (1871) niega que la cuestión ortográfica se haya vuelto un problema de partido y afirma que la ortografía no figura en los programas políticos. Sin embargo, sí señala que en algún momento creyó que la ortografía se había vuelto un problema de partido, pero no señala al partido conservador sino al liberal, pues afirma que fueron los liberales quienes cambiaron la ortografía española a la reformada en el Directorio liberal (p. 130).

Los conservadores miembros de la Academia insistieron en negar el carácter político de esta. Marroquín (1879) manifiesta que «nada tiene que ver esta ni ninguna otra cuestión literaria con las políticas religiosas y morales que real y notoriamente dividen á los colombianos» (p. 423). Además, dice que «durante más de treinta años, conservadores y liberales estuvieron usando igualmente de la ortografía reformada» (p. 425).

Asimismo, en una carta de José Manuel Marroquín a José María Izaguirre del 1 de agosto de 1884 que está recogida en la Junta inaugural del 6 de agosto de 1884 de la Academia Colombiana (Anuario, tomo I, 2, 1938) le cometa que: «el Gobierno de esta República adoptó en otro tiempo como ortografía oficial la llamada americana. Aquí se había incurrido en la extravagancia de considerar dicha ortografía como inseparable de los cánones del partido liberal» (p. 52). En esta cita se mantiene la misma posición de negar el carácter político del uso de la ortografía reformada y además para hacer más verídica su posición argumenta que a pesar de que el Partido Liberal llegó «al poder en 1861, y en él se mantiene, lo que parece hubiera debido ofrecer al mismo sistema ortográfico su apoyo más eficaz» (p. 52) no lo fue, pues «el Gobierno ha cedido al empuje de la opinión y al ejemplo de la mayoría de la gente educada, y emplea hace ya algunos años, por resolución expresa del Cuerpo legislativo, la ortografía pura e íntegra de la Academia Española» (p. 52).

Así como postula Van Dijk (2009), a lo largo de este debate se puede observar cómo se polarizaron las discusiones entre dos grupos: «Nosotros» y «Ellos». Esa polarización «caracteriza las representaciones sociales compartidas y sus ideologías subyacentes» (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 161) en diferentes niveles de la estructura textual, sin embargo, como ya se mencionó el enfoque es meramente en el nivel léxico. Es en ese momento de oposición cuando se eligen palabras para referirse al otro colectivo de tal manera que transmitan una opinión sobre ellos, es decir, se lexicalizan y se reproducen sus ideologías a través del discurso. Con el fin de establecer una diferencia, cada uno de los grupos describe con palabras sus cualidades y virtudes con respecto al otro, que es visto de manera negativa.

Específicamente en este trabajo se observa que, por un lado, las caracterizaciones que hacen de sí los partidarios de la reforma ortográfica —«Nosotros»— tienen palabras tales como: lógica y progreso, mientras que los defensores de la Academia —«Ellos»— son: retrógrados y anticuarios, cuyo pensamiento es añejo y exánime. Por otro lado, en la manera en que se describen los defensores de la Academia y a su vez describen a la Academia —«Nosotros»— hay adjetivos como: honorable, sabios, doctos, castizas y cultos, en tanto que retratan a los partidarios de la reforma ortográfica —«Ellos»— como: necios, altivos, ciegos, perezosos y enemigos y sus argumentos y propuestas son: disparates, desorden y anarquía.

CONCLUSIONES

La historia de la ortografía del español es el recorrido por la codificación y unificación de su sistema. Durante la oficialización de las últimas innovaciones y reformas hechas por la Real Academia Española hubo propuestas de reforma ortográfica no académicas, las cuales causaron numerosos debates y resistencias.

Estos proyectos se basaron tanto en ideas didácticas como patrióticas. A pesar de que ninguna de estas fue ampliamente aceptada, durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX muchas repúblicas, entre ellas Colombia, usaron irregularmente una versión simplificada.

Buena parte del trabajo lingüístico y filológico de la época se enfocó en producir tratados ortográficos en los que los académicos compartieron sus posturas y utilizaron diferentes argumentos para defender sus opiniones. En el caso colombiano, esta fue una de sus mejores épocas en producción académica sobre el tema. Además, los autores de estas obras también hicieron parte de los debates académicos en torno a las propuestas reformistas, participando tanto a favor como en contra, sin importar su pertenencia o no a la Academia o la filiación política. Aunque fueron en su mayoría académicos conservadores, los que escribieron y trabajaron el tema, no se debe hacer a un lado la participación de los liberales.

Estas disputas se dieron en torno a un debate político e ideológico más grande sobre la herencia hispánica, especialmente, el de la lengua como herramienta para la creación de identidad nacional en la recién formada república. Las dos principales vertientes ideológicas, tanto la que le daba más importancia al lazo cultural con España y el papel que esta tenía en el uso de la lengua en sus otrora colonias, como las que rechazaban el involucramiento español en la lengua y cultura en Hispanoamérica discutieron entorno a cinco ejes: 1. De la autoridad o el papel de la RAE; 2. La reforma ortográfica como muestra de lógica y progreso; 3. Crítica a ideas patrióticas y antihispánicas; 4. La reforma ortográfica como sinónimo de anarquía, y 5. La reforma ortográfica y los partidos políticos. En esas confrontaciones se emitieron juicios de valor haciendo uso de la lexicalización como estrategia discursiva. Otro punto importante del debate

es el estrecho paralelismo que hacen entre la decadencia o el progreso del país y la lengua de acuerdo con cada perspectiva.

Si bien en todos los argumentos expuestos en este trabajo se ve la relación entre la lingüística y la política y entre la ortografía y la ideología, el último eje de discusión es una muestra notoria del profundo vínculo entre la lengua y la identidad. Aunque varios de los participantes de este debate la hubieran pretendido negar, la conexión es indiscutible. En otras palabras, estos debates son un claro indicio de cómo en los argumentos dados en las confrontaciones se pueden rastrear ideologías lingüísticas subyacentes, que a su vez permiten ver los problemas de la formación de identidad nacional, que en este trabajo, proporciona un atisbo a la crisis identitaria de la convulsa Colombia decimonónica.

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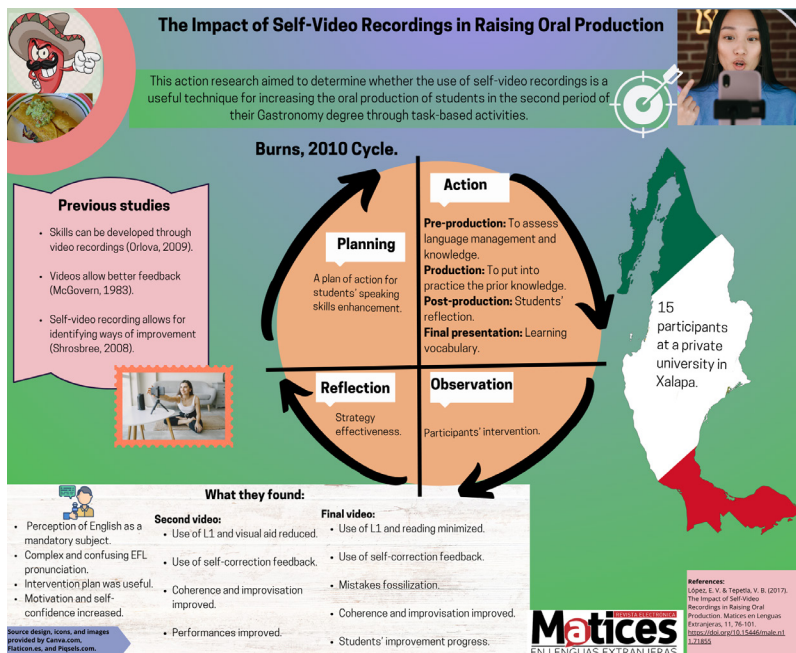
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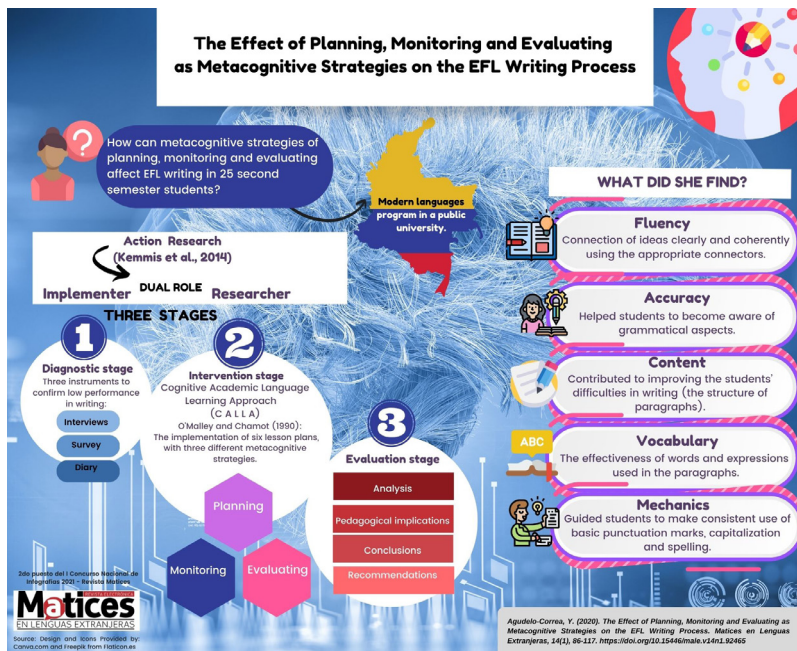
- ▶ This research is focused on the implementation of self-video recording as a strategy to enhance oral production skills in students from a Gastronomy degree learning a Foreign Language.
- ▶ Esta investigación se enfoca en la implementación de videos autograbados como una estrategia para mejorar la habilidad de producción oral en estudiantes de un programa de Gastronomía en un idioma extranjero.



Cristhian Javier Aguilar Cabanzo
 Estudiante
 Universidad de Pamplona, Pamplona, Colombia
cabanzojavier31@gmail.com
 ORCID: [0000-0002-2731-534X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2731-534X)



- Study focused on the implementation of metacognitive strategies and their effect on the writing performance of students of English as a foreign language.
- Estudio enfocado en la implementación de estrategias metacognitivas y su efecto en la escritura de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.



Jennifer Zabaleta Rico

Estudiante

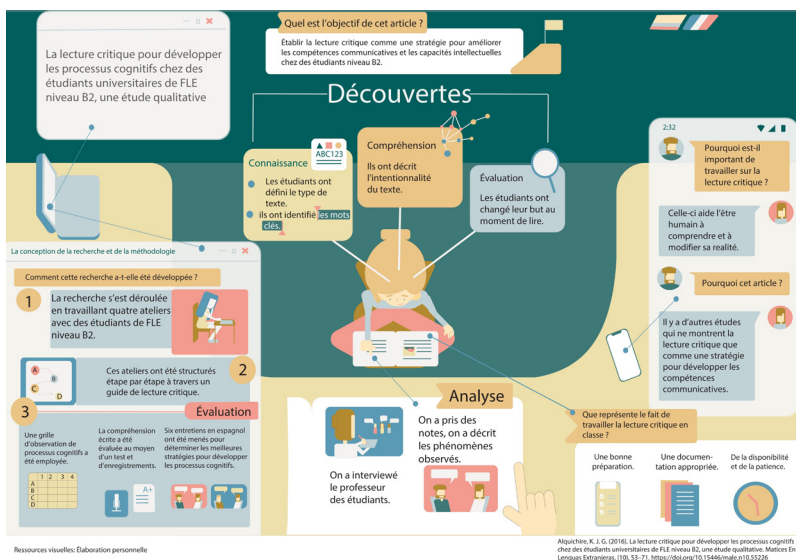
Universidad de Pamplona, Pamplona, Colombia

jennxze6@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9874-7353>



- ▶ Cette infographie s'adresse à toutes les personnes de la communauté académique qui s'intéressent à la recherche sur la linguistique du français, à son enseignement et à la façon dont elle peut être utilisée pour améliorer les compétences communicatives.
- ▶ Esta infografía va dirigida a todas aquellas personas de la comunidad académica que estén interesadas en la investigación sobre la lingüística del francés, en su enseñanza, y en cómo a través de esta se pueden mejorar las competencias blandas.
- ▶ This infographic is addressed to all those in the academic community who are interested in research on the linguistics of French, its teaching, and the way in which it can be used to work the development of soft skills in language learners.



Cristian Alejandro Chavarro Gordillo

Estudiante

Corporación universitaria Minuto de Dios, Bogotá. Colombia

cristian.chavarro-g@uniminuto.edu.co

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1847-0866>



