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Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras, Grupo de Investigación PROFILE
Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
Ciudad Universitaria.
Carrera 30 No. 45-03, Bogotá, Colombia

Website: **www.profile.unal.edu.co**
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Email: rprofile_fchbog@unal.edu.co

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Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations

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Contenido

Temas basados en reflexiones e innovaciones

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Editorial

In this issue, we are very pleased to share with you 15 articles. Ten correspond to the section *Issues from Teacher Researchers*, two to the section *Issues from Novice Teacher-Researchers*, and three to the section *Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations*. The contributions come from six countries: Colombia with seven articles, Iran with three articles, Argentina with two articles, and Mexico, Spain, and Canada with one article each.

The topics discussed by researchers in the current issue concern English language teaching and learning, foreign language teacher education and teacher professional development, the beliefs of preservice teachers, and the perceptions and identities of students of English. The featured articles touch on language education research in different fields: English as a foreign language (EFL), teacher education and the research process itself, the assessment of language competences and the training needs to do so, materials development, English as a medium of instruction, and culture as an important issue in communication. These topics occur across the different educational levels (elementary, secondary, and tertiary) with undergraduate preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and EFL learners as the main actors.

Colombian authors Abel Andrés Periñán-Morales (Institución Educativa Juan Bautista la Salle), John Jairo Viáfara-González (Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia), and José Alexander Arcila-Valencia (Institución Educativa Sagrados Corazones) open the *Issues from Teacher Researchers* section with a case study that seeks to examine the role that specific factors exert on the evolution of beliefs within preservice English teachers during their final teaching practicum. The findings suggest that three groups of factors affect belief evolution during the practicum: participant subjectivity, contextual circumstances, and university support community.

This article is followed by the first contribution from Iran in the current issue. Mohammad Hadi Mahmoodi, Shiva Hosseiniyar, and Negin Samoudi (Bu-Ali Sina University) report a correlational study that examined the relationship among some English teachers' characteristics and their students' foreign language learning. The study certainly revealed the correlation concerning teachers' characteristics for their learners' L2 learning. The second Iranian contribution comes from Chabahar Maritime University via the voice of researchers Mansoor Ganji and Farzane Safarzade Samani, who studied the influence of demographic features, such as teaching experience, gender, and educational degree of English language teachers in their classroom performance.

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The second contribution from Colombia is a joint effort of two Colombian universities: Universidad de Córdoba in Montería and Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia in Bucaramanga. The former university is represented by Liliana Valle and Danilsa Lorduy-Arellano and the latter by Nohora Porras-González. These three researchers carried out a qualitative research study into elementary school teachers' beliefs and the potential contribution of reverse mentoring to improve English language teaching to children. The results indicated that reverse mentoring plays an important role in the transformation of in-service teachers' beliefs about teaching English to children.

The third article from Iran comes from the hands of Ali Sayyadi (University of Tehran). Professor Sayyadi's mixed-methods study carries out an examination of assessment in the areas of training experiences, classroom-based practices, and training needs. The study revealed that assessment has not been properly articulated in practice as the topic has mainly been discussed from a theoretical perspective. The study suggests implications for university English instructors, teacher educators, and university administrators. The third contribution from Colombia comes from Universidad de Antioquia in Medellín via the researcher Isabel Cristina Cadavid-Múnera. Her article is an example of a qualitative interpretive research study that explored the social representations children have about the teaching and learning of EFL in elementary schools in Medellín. The children's perceptions revealed that English is seen as a tool with which to "survive" or to "live and interact with others."

Gabriela N. Tavella and S. Carina Fernández (Universidad Nacional del Comahue) present the first Argentinian contribution to the current issue. The case study, carried out in a specific Argentinian context with a specific branch of English teaching—English for specific purposes—examined teaching practices and intercultural exchanges. The identities of learners from native communities emerged as an expression of cultural enrichment in the English classroom as a result of an intercultural dialogue. The next article is a contribution from Paula Wood-Borque (Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain). This researcher presents how learners' communicative competence can be enhanced through audio-visual materials such as films and TV series because they offer real-life language in context.

Mexican authors María de los Milagros Cruz-Ramos (Escuela Normal "Juan Enriquez") and Luz Edith Herrera-Díaz (Universidad Veracruzana) contribute to the current issue with an article dealing with the improvement of students' oral communicative competence via changes in the instructional design of an online English course. The quantitative quasi-experimental design resulted in making possible online assessment and in an oral improvement of students' competence. This article is followed by the second Argentinian contribution to this issue. Melina Porto, Anahí Pesci, and Mariela Riva (Universidad Nacional de La Plata and CONICET) submitted a paper that delves into the research process from different perspectives. The researchers assumed three different roles—informant, research assistant, and supervisor—in two research projects. The study unveils a linear developmental trajectory that illustrates the participants' fluid, critical, complex, and personally relevant pathways.

Section two, *Issues From Novice Teacher-Researchers*, includes two articles. The first article is a contribution from Colombian authors Alber Josué Forero-Mondragón and Álvaro Hernán Quintero-Polo (Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas). These authors discuss how the discourse of standard English exercises disciplinary power in five international scholarships programs. The study asserts that school is a breeding ground whose disciplinary techniques (e.g., test training) objectivize people to satisfy multinational corporations' hiring processes. The second article is authored by Kelli Johana Ariza-Quiñones, Lizzeth Dayana Hernández-Polo, Kelly Julie Lesmes-Lesmes, and Elcy Lorena Molina-Ramírez (Universidad Surcolombiana). These novice researchers wanted to make sense of their teaching experiences in their first teaching practicum using collaborative autoethnography as a research method. The research experience acquired different meanings for the participants immersed in the process in previous and current times of the pandemic that has affected the world.

Our issue closes with the section *Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations* with the inclusion of three articles. Wilder Yesid Escobar-Alméciga (Universidad El Bosque, Colombia) presents a literature review that systematically situates English-as-a-medium-of-instruction literature related to higher education within the Iberian-American school contexts where Spanish was the students' first language. The author claims that there is a pressing need for framing English-as-a-medium-of-instruction at different levels in students' learning process, communication, classroom culture, social values, and classroom climate. The second article is a literature review by Claudio Jaramillo-Yanquepe (University of Toronto). The author summarizes available research on EFL education in Chilean high-school settings. The review accounts for research that addresses curricular aspects devoid of socio-political and historical contexts, emphasizing primarily teachers' teaching tensions and challenges. In the last article, Julia Posada-Ortiz (Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Colombia) aimed at identifying the identities present in the communities to which four EFL preservice teachers belong. The findings indicate that the preservice teachers' identity construction is mutable and not essentialized.

As you can see, the topics in this issue are manifold and varied, which, we hope, will spark the interest of a wide readership. The insights from the authors featured in this issue will certainly prove relevant for many teachers who are immersed in educational contexts similar to the ones described in the selected articles. As always, our aim is to offer our readers information that may enrich their professional practice. Enjoy reading this issue!

Melba Libia Cárdenas
Journal Editor

María Claudia Nieto-Cruz
Journal Director

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Issues from Teacher Researchers

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Triggering Factors that Reinforce or Change EFL Preservice Teachers' Beliefs During the Practicum

Factores que refuerzan o cambian creencias en futuros maestros practicantes de inglés

Abel Andrés Periñán-Morales
Institución Educativa Juan Bautista la Salle, Florencia, Colombia

John Jairo Viáfara-González
Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, Tunja, Colombia

José Alexander Arcila-Valencia
Institución Educativa Sagrados Corazones, Florencia, Colombia

This exploratory case study seeks to examine the role that specific factors exert on the evolution of beliefs in preservice English teachers during their final teaching practicum. Data were collected through reflections, interviews, focus groups, and observations. The findings revealed that three groups of factors affect belief evolution during the practicum: participant subjectivity, contextual circumstances, and university support community. Subjectivities encompassed preservice teachers' fears, reactions to real-life teaching challenges, and enthusiasm to become teachers. Contextual circumstances incorporated classroom circumstances and cooperating teachers. The university support community concerned their peers and the university tutor. Implications discuss the relevance of curricular and reflective agendas that enrich the education of future teachers through beliefs exploration.

Keywords: English teaching, preservice teachers, teachers' beliefs, teaching practicum

Este estudio exploratorio examina el papel de factores específicos en la evolución de las creencias de futuros maestros de inglés sobre su práctica pedagógica. Los datos se recolectaron mediante observaciones, entrevistas, grupos focales y reflexiones. Los hallazgos develaron tres grupos de factores que afectaron la evolución de las creencias: la subjetividad involucró el temor de los estudiantes para desarrollar su práctica, reacciones a los retos y entusiasmo por convertirse en profesores. Los aspectos contextuales implicaron las circunstancias en las aulas y relaciones con profesores titulares. La comunidad de apoyo en la universidad incluyó a compañeros y tutor. Las implicaciones discuten la relevancia de agendas curriculares, reflexivas y colaborativas que enriquezcan la educación de futuros maestros a partir de la exploración de sus creencias en la práctica pedagógica.

Palabras clave: creencias de maestros, docentes en formación, enseñanza de inglés, práctica docente

Abel Andrés Periñán-Morales https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9434-9849 · Email: aperinan@juaanblasalle.edu.co
John Jairo Viáfara-González https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8409-6016 · Email: john.viafara@uptc.edu.co
José Alexander Arcila-Valencia https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8473-599X · Email: jarcila@udla.edu.co

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Introduction

This study examined what factors, if any, tended to shape the beliefs five English preservice teachers (hereafter PST) exhibited while engaging in their final teaching practicum (hereafter TP) and how those factors influenced those conceptions. The study took place during the participants' second TP at public schools in southern Colombia.

There is disagreement in English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) and other education areas regarding the effect of TP experiences on PSTs' beliefs, with contending findings being yielded. Various studies have determined that practicum experiences cause little or no transformation in prospective teachers'[1] beliefs (e.g., Çapan, 2014; Mattheoudakis, 2007). However, the results of other research in the area indicates that TP does, in fact, influence PSTs' pedagogical conceptions (Barahona, 2014; Debreli, 2016a; Durán-Narváez et al., 2017; Özmen, 2012; Sheridan, 2016; Suárez-Flórez & Basto-Basto, 2017). Indeed, the amount of research with findings that indicate TP experiences have an impact upon PSTs' beliefs is progressively increasing. Some of these studies have also indicated that the nature of teacher education programs (hereafter TEP) may affect the initial beliefs and resultant evolution of PSTs' beliefs during the practical phase of their education (Debreli, 2016b; Mattheoudakis, 2007). As a result, it is perhaps unsurprising that TEPs are giving increasing importance to the consideration of teacher candidates' pedagogical beliefs. Thus, whilst there may be competing results in the literature, there is a forming consensus that the TP is an ideal scenario within which prospective teachers' beliefs may be explored. This would allow for a substantial amount of information to be collected which can contribute to the improvement of pedagogical dynamics in TEPs.

There is recognition among scholars about the need for further studies in the field that are focused on PSTs' beliefs in a variety of different contexts, cultures, and countries (Biesta et al., 2015; Özmen, 2012). The multiple contextual variables that affect the evolution of teachers' beliefs may mean that TEPs' curricular plans, which are based upon the findings from local research. could be more effective. As such, it is noteworthy that despite the history of continuous governmental foreign language education reforms in Colombia in the last few decades, coupled with the diversity of the regions and the sociocultural particularities of individuals, there are just a handful of published studies that have tackled the issue of changes in the pedagogical conceptions of PSTs (Durán-Narváez et al., 2013, 2017; Gutiérrez, 2015; Suárez-Flórez & Basto-Basto, 2017).

Similar to international studies, where local studies have been carried out, national scholars have concentrated on identifying the beliefs that participants hold before and after their practicum experience (Aguirre-Sánchez, 2014; Suárez-Flórez & Basto-Basto, 2017), describing specific belief transformation (Durán-Narváez et al., 2013; Suárez-Flórez & Basto-Basto, 2017), delving into the connection between pedagogical approaches or reflective strategies and their pedagogical convictions (Castellanos-Jaimes, 2013; Gutiérrez, 2015), and understanding how stated beliefs were not coherent with pedagogical actions (Fajardo, 2013). Given this, we believe that there is a gap in the literature concerning the factors that drive the transformation of beliefs in PSTs and consider the issue to be worthy of further examination. Due to the complexity and breadth of circumstances and elements that shape PSTs' beliefs, studies often fail to explore the nuanced nature of these factors, which, in addition, are context-bound.

Literature Review

The Nature and Power of Beliefs in Preservice Teachers' Pedagogical Practice

Teacher cognition incorporates the body of research related to what teachers know, think, and

1 The terms prospective teachers, preservice teachers, and future teachers will be used interchangeably in this article.

believe and how these are related to what they do in practice (S. Borg, 2003). Within this field and under the umbrella term of "teacher cognition," we have seen an extensive body of literature emerge in the area of teachers' beliefs. Beliefs are intrinsically woven with other cognitive dimensions such as knowledge, perceptions, and decisions; thus, it can be hard to distinguish between these dimensions. Pajares's (1992) long list of terms associated with beliefs: "attitudes, values, judgments . . . opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions . . . personal theories" (p. 309) connotes how tricky it can be to identify the difference between beliefs and these other mental categories. M. Borg's (2001) definition of beliefs seems to capture the essence of the concept and may aid us with the challenge of differentiating beliefs from other cognitive dimensions: "Proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, that is evaluative because it is accepted as true by the individual, it has emotive commitment, it guides thought and behavior" (p. 186). As a working definition for this study, this concept embraces a holistic view of beliefs as it intersects epistemological, cognitive, and affective perspectives of teachers' thinking as they become involved in the sociocultural aspects of their jobs.

The powerful influence of beliefs on teachers' thinking and actions makes them resistant to change and persistent in the minds of teachers, despite the efforts of TEPs to change them (Richardson, 2003). Scholars have described various elements that explain the tenacity of beliefs. Kumaravadivelu (2012) and Pajares (1992) argue that these convictions are strong because oftentimes they form early in teachers' careers and their composition can integrate the ideological, cultural, and societal conceptions that educators have embraced throughout their lives. In addition, beliefs usually group together into systems or clusters which engage a vast array of episodic material and maintain internal coherence by supporting each other (Abelson, 1979; Green, 1971). Finally, Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018) claim that the emotional and affective atmosphere that envelopes the teaching exercise can reinforce educators' beliefs, which explains why these convictions might be more useful than theory for teachers when they face challenges at work (Nespor, 1987).

Research on Factors Influencing Prospective Teachers' Belief Change

The practicum experience may serve as an opportunity for PSTs to begin to understand the complexity of teaching and it may also challenge both their preconceptions and the beliefs they have developed in their TEP. Zeichner (1996) posits that "many of the ideas that student teachers bring to the practicum . . . are problematic (Calderhead & Robson, 1991), and unless re-examined, will interfere with teachers learning things during the practicum that will contribute to the accomplishment of the central purposes of schooling" (p. 124). Thus, the practicum experience may reveal valuable information for both PSTs and TEPs as they gauge the success of their pedagogical objectives. In addition, the practicum experience affords TEPs the opportunity to evaluate not only PSTs' performance and the role of TEPs in teacher education processes, but also future teachers' beliefs (Özmen, 2012; Zheng, 2009).

The evolution of PSTs' beliefs during their practicum has been examined in the literature on both a national and international level. Few articles have concluded that the practical experience in TEPs results in little to no change in PSTs' beliefs (Çapan, 2014; Gutiérrez, 2015; Mattheoudakis, 2007). The first two researchers suggest that the key factors for this lack of evolution in PSTs' beliefs can be related to the rigid mandatory curricula in teaching practicum institutions. This lack of flexibility may have discouraged participants from exploring a variety of different options and generating new ideas. Moreover, Çapan

(2014) conjectures that the alignment between PSTs' well-rooted belief systems and their tutors' beliefs may also explain the inflexibility of PSTs' personal pedagogical conceptions. Mattheoudakis (2007) also concluded that "stability in [participants'] beliefs might not indicate lack of change but a teachers' attempts to balance beliefs and reality" (p. 1282).

In contrast to these studies, additional research has established that teaching experiences do indeed influence PSTs' beliefs (Barahona, 2014; Debreli, 2016a; Durán-Narváez et al., 2017; Özmen, 2012; Sheridan, 2016; Suárez-Flórez, & Basto-Basto, 2017). As a result, the achievements and failures of prospective teachers during their TP lead them to adapt, reinforce, and transform their beliefs (Debreli, 2016a; Sheridan, 2016).

Yet more research has investigated the underlying factors that may trigger changes in PSTs' beliefs. Firstly, the evolution of PSTs' beliefs may be triggered by the challenges of real teaching circumstances (Barahona, 2014; Debreli, 2016a; Durán-Narváez et al., 2017; Sheridan, 2016), especially when the beliefs that PSTs hold upon starting their practicum are based on theory (Cota-Grijalva & Ruiz-Esparza-Barajas, 2013; Debreli, 2016a; Durán-Narváez et al., 2017). Secondly, the lack of teaching experience that PSTs possess may cause the specific viewpoints they adopt as a result of their university education to have an increased impact on their beliefs (Gutiérrez, 2015). Thirdly, the learning process and attitudes of their students can influence the beliefs of PSTs when their students exhibit learning limitations or misbehavior (Debreli, 2016a) and when students react positively to innovative teaching (Gutiérrez, 2015). Fourthly, the type of TEP is identified as a factor in the evolution of PSTs' beliefs, particularly in cases where reflective approaches are employed (Debreli, 2016b; Durán-Narváez et al., 2017; Gutiérrez, 2015). Reflection helps PSTs to "make sense of their teaching experience and build up their own style of teaching a foreign language" (Özmen, 2012, p. 10) and to gain awareness of their own conceptions (Cota-Grijalva & Ruiz-Esparza-Barajas, 2013). Finally, the interaction that PSTs have with their learning support network may also affect the evolution of their beliefs. Durán-Narváez et al. (2017) determined that the teaching style, strategies, and character of PSTs' cooperating teachers (CTs) may influence their beliefs. Moreover, Özmen (2012) highlights the importance of teacher educators' humanism, encouragement, and the nature of their feedback as influences in how PSTs' beliefs are shaped.

Research Design

This qualitative study was conceived as an exploratory case study (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative studies make use of natural environments to understand the way people make sense of their actions (Hatch, 2002). This case study explored the experiences lived by five PSTs during their second practicum course and intended to discover how those experiences impacted their beliefs about teaching.

Participants and Setting

The participants were four women and one man, all in their twenties and in their 8th semester of the program where this study took place. They were taking a secondary education practicum course, after having already participated in the first elementary education practicum course. They were placed in four different mixed-sex, urban, public educational institutions, located in Florencia (southern Colombia). These institutions had an average of 800 secondary school teenage students from diverse religions, ethnic groups, and social classes, predominantly from low-income families. Purposive sampling (Kumar, 2011) was employed to select participants who also signed a consent form to be part of the study. Details regarding participants' profiles and their school contexts can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Personal Information

Participant	Age	Grade teaching	# of students in classroom	School population
#1	22	9th	32	Approx. 1,450 primary and secondary school students from low- and middle-income families
#2	25	9th	33	Same as Participant 1
#3	22	7th	38	Approx. 1,530 primary and secondary school students from low- and middle-income families
#4	24	8th	35	Approx. 1,400 primary and secondary school students from low-income families
#5	22	9th	34	Approx. 1,200 primary and secondary school students from low-income families

Data Collection Instruments

Two personal, semi-structured, one-hour interviews were conducted at the beginning and middle of the practicum with each participant. Open-ended questions were employed to identify PSTs' teaching beliefs and their evolution in the TP. Upon completion of the TP, four PSTs participated in a one-hour focus group in order to explore their beliefs, belief changes, and the reason behind leading to belief evolution. Travel issues prevented the participation of the final participant in the focus group. All interviews and the focus group were conducted by two researchers and were both audio and video recorded for reliability purposes and to allow for body language analysis and transcription.

Classroom observations were conducted to identify whether the actions that participants took in practice were in accordance with the beliefs they expressed. They consisted of two one-hour lessons per participant, one at the beginning and one at the end of the TP. Participants were directly observed and video recorded by a researcher, who also took field notes.

Class reflections and teaching reports were utilized as a fourth data source, with PSTs reflecting upon each lesson and completing a final question-guided reflection report. This report explored the particularities of their teaching contexts, the stakeholders involved, the challenges their teaching experience brought, and how their preparation and counselling contributed towards facing those challenges and developing professionally as teachers. These documents allowed us to triangulate our data and contrast, confirm, and analyze the observation and interview data. This helped to shed light onto participants' beliefs and their evolution during the TP.

Data Analysis and Findings

Our data analysis used a grounded theory approach (Creswell, 2012). Data were analyzed through the codification of relevant information aided by the software Atlas Ti. Extensive examination and refining of codes allowed categories and subcategories to emerge from the data. These categories facilitated our comprehension of the factors that contributed towards the ratification and evolution of PSTs' beliefs during their TP.

The validity of our findings was ensured through investigator triangulation (Merriam, 2009) to support the veracity of our claims and methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2012) to corroborate evidence through different types of data. As a result, the codification of commonalities among different participants' statements found in the data helped establish the three categories we shall discuss below. Findings will be illustrated with excerpts from observation, interviews, and focus groups.

Participants' Embodied Subjectivities Acting Upon Their Beliefs

The first factor that was identified as an influence on PSTs' beliefs was participants' subjectivities. The subjectivity of a person regards the unique personal characteristics that allow an individual to make sense of reality in their own particular way, informing their judgements and decision making. Thus, the same event can be experienced in different ways as the individual attitudes, dispositions, and other psychological traits influence each individual's interaction with reality. Teachers experience this subjectivity as a result of their "family patterns, educational histories, personal character traits, national and regional affiliations, social class background, and a lifetime of social encounters" (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 36). Consequently, PSTs begin their TP with subjectivities that have been constructed throughout their life, mediated by feelings, emotions, memories, and desires that are immersed in social interactions (Kramsch, 2012). These experiences include high school and college education (Lortie, 1975) and life events such as motherhood, as is the case for one of the participants.

The first subjectivity trait that emerged from the data was participants' desire to become a teacher. Despite all participating in a TEP, by the onset of the TP, two of the participants expressed their intention not to work as a teacher upon graduation.

> I used to tell my mother: "I will graduate, and I will join the police," because I've always liked what has to do with the army and all that. But my aunt Mary told me, "María, you cannot do that. You already have a child and you will not be accepted. You have to focus on your degree" ...and I said, "No! I do not like that." (P1, Int. 1, August 2018)[2]

The second subjectivity trait to emerge concerned fear of the TP itself. One of the participants manifested a negative perception regarding the experience of teaching that had stemmed from interactions with previous student-teachers.

> There are many myths about the practicum: that it is very hard, that the university teaching advisor will not help you with anything, that you cannot use the whiteboard, that teachers will leave you on your own...I used to say one of my most terrible fears was how I could put together a lesson, I mean, the rules to put together my lesson, the topics I have to cover, the subjects I have to teach, to contextualize. Preparing a lesson was a terrible fear for me. (P2, Int. 1, August 2018)

Finally, participants' attitudes towards the challenges of their specific teaching contexts and the collaborative work with their university teacher advisors (UTA) and CTs emerged as a subjectivity trait.

> I consider myself to be well prepared. Obviously, there are going to be hard days, and there are going to be students that, honestly, make you wonder what's wrong with them, but that is not difficult, and you have to read because more students and large courses will come, and sometimes you might crash. (P2, Int. 1, August 2018)

Each of the participating PSTs arrived with their own particular set of subjectivities that would collide with the teaching reality they faced in their specific school. We acknowledge that other factors may have affected them, however, we postulate that their subjectivity had a significant influence on the development of certain beliefs. To exemplify this, we shall consider the case of P5. Prior to the TP, P5 expressed the belief that classroom management is more difficult for short teachers. She worried that students in public schools were hard to deal with and that being short was a weakness.

> Those are bad schools, where there are children who know more about life than you, who know about vices, like marijuana, who know about everything. I knew that

2 Excerpts from the participants' interviews and documents presented in this paper were translated into English by the researchers, trying to keep the most accurate representation of the participants' meanings. Participants will be identified as P1, P2, and so on, as they appear in their personal information chart.

Int. = Interview, Obn. = Observation notes, FG = focus group.

> there was going to be a time when I would have a large class, and it would be hard for me because I am very short and those children are very tall. (P5, Int. 1, August 2018)

Macías and Sánchez (2015) indicate that classroom management is a constant challenge for PSTs in their initial lessons, whilst PST classroom management beliefs focus on student behavior (Wolff et al., 2015, as cited in Kwok, 2020). Through the practical experience the TP provided, we evidenced a change in P5's classroom management beliefs.

> I can be very short but they cannot mess with my class, or, well, unless you let them do it...you change your mind. There are thugs, in all schools there are thugs; You always have to be good with them, but also put on your big girl pants and be strong. (P5, Int. 2, October 2018)

Later in the interview, when asked about her drive to change, she made reference to herself. She reasoned:

> One becomes fearful due to previous PSTs. Being short, I ask myself, and "what if they don't have the respect I want?" But you face that and everything [previous PSTs] say is a lie. You just have to face that and know the context in which they are and that's it, adapt to that context. (P5, Int. 2, October 2018)

The second observation allowed us to observe the evolution of P5's beliefs in practice as her classroom management resulted in the emergence of a stricter and demanding teaching behavior. One of the field notes reads:

> During the class, the students show misbehavior. Therefore, the teacher raises her voice and tries to get the attention of a group of students who are in the back of the room. The teacher says again, "pay attention." She raises her voice and students seem to calm down...The teacher is constantly monitoring the students. Finally, the teacher gets angry and tells them that if they don't keep quiet, she will register their names in the misbehavior book. After this warning, the room remains silent, working on the activity. (Obn., October 2018)

P5's initial fear about how to handle student misbehavior was a strong influence on her beliefs, however, after several months of practical experience in the TP, she seemed to embrace new beliefs and actions, allowing her personal self-determination to guide her classroom management.

The results shown in this section align with those in Kalaja et al. (2015). The findings discussed above are closely related to these authors' discussion about how the individual processes of interaction between novice teachers and the context, as well as the challenges of their first teaching experiences, facilitate the modification or continuance of their beliefs surrounding what constitutes good and innovative teaching. Similarly, these findings connect with Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lyhty's (2018) as the connection between emotions, affect, and beliefs have a strong influence on how these relate to PSTs' cognition and can be subject to change or not. Therefore, the influence exerted by PSTs' subjectivity can become a determinant factor in the development of certain beliefs.

The Potential of the Practicum Context to Affect Beliefs

The second factor to come out of the data that demonstrate that the TP exerts an effect on PSTs' beliefs relates to the multiple intertwined features of the teaching context. Two types of contextual factors arose: physical and human. Physical contextual factors concerned the facilities, resources, commodities, and environmental conditions. Human contextual factors referred to the relationships PSTs established with people within the context of the practicum, for instance, CTs and students.

Classroom observation provided us with the primary data necessary to appreciate the context that each PST faced in their TP, along with its nuances. One such observation note reads:

> The room has three fans, but it's small and hot. There are some posters on the wall. There is a video projector and speakers . . . students work in a photocopy activity among the noise of students speaking, misbehavior,

> bullying, and heat. . . . The PST ignores some of the noise and students' behaviors in the classroom. Some students' lack of attention persists, and some throw objects at classmates. (Obn., October 2018)

The physical features of a classroom merge with the heterogeneous nature of its students in every lesson and create a scenario which demands teacher action. In this study, classroom events caused PSTs to confront and, indeed, challenge their own teaching perceptions. This was the case with lesson planning. Within their TEP, participants received methodology courses and a teaching seminar prior to the initiation of the TP, which resulted in some PSTs' fixed conceptions about how a lesson should be planned and developed.

> Even before I knew there were teaching practices, I already knew how to design a lesson plan, which should have a start, a middle, and an end...In the previous courses we studied the pre, while, and post...It was when the teacher [his UTA] said, "next week you have to send me your first lesson plan. Plan the pre, the while, and the post." (P4, Int. 1, August 2018)

The number of variables that may affect a lesson means that the lived reality of teaching EFL in Colombian public schools is complex in nature. As Sánchez-Solarte and Obando-Guerrero (2008) describe, the number of students, language instruction time, and mix of students' ages and language proficiency result in a challenging EFL teaching environment. Moreover, John (2006) affirms that lesson planning models do not consider the contingencies of teaching, nor the uncertainties of the lesson such as "time-pressures, organization issues, attitudes, moods, emotions and serendipity" (p. 487). P4 experienced a variety of the natural circumstances that can arise inside the classroom during the development of his TP. These circumstances caused him to challenge his beliefs concerning lesson plans and created conflict in his practice as these evolving beliefs clashed with the requirements of his UTA to plan each class and fully develop this plan.

> I think the lesson plan is important because it helps you better structure the class and everything, but it should not become like a regime that you have to reach the "post" in all classes, because the class varies a lot, the pace of the class and the students, and many times you only have time to get to the "while"... one has to carry out a plan B and change many ideas, and turn the class around because the boat is sinking. I cannot let myself sink for the sake of the lesson plan. (P4, FG, February 2019)

The above excerpt demonstrates how the participant's lesson planning beliefs evolved as a result of classroom particularities. This developing comprehension of lesson planning concurs with John's (2006) argument that lesson planning is affected by endogenous and exogenous forces, where both contextual and personal teaching factors, such as spontaneity and improvisation, converge in the course of the development of the lesson.

Having explored some of the physical factors that affect beliefs, our discussion shall now turn to the human factors. The beliefs of PSTs were affected by the relationship they had with their CTs, which was also closely linked to the teaching context and resulted in significant experiences. CTs, as PSTs and students, possess their own individual qualities and beliefs, which underlie their decisions and actions. Thus, the various aspects of teaching, and indeed education itself, can be perceived by CTs in different ways. Their level of participation in the PSTs' preparation process can vary depending on their conception of cooperation (Clarke et al., 2014) and this generates an "uneven quality of practicum supervision or mentoring" (Zeichner, 1996, p. 132). As a result, CTs provided differing levels of support to PSTs, with some CTs controlling all aspects of the teaching process, such as evaluation and grading, whilst others would delegate control of these elements to PSTs.

Along with CT beliefs and actions, the relationships PSTs established with their CTs were varied. Some of these relationships were based on respect and cooperation, whilst others reflected distrust and miscommunication.

P2 experienced difficulties regarding contradiction and underestimation from her CT. One observation note read:

> The PST set a time to complete the activity. The students were working well, but the PST noted time was running out, so she began rushing the students to finish the activity to start concluding the lesson. At that moment, the cooperating teacher interrupted the PST and said out loud, "can you wait for the students to finish that activity first?" (P2, Obn. 2, October 2018)

When questioned about the event during an interview, P2 stated:

> The attitude of the CT can benefit or affect both the development of the practices and the disposition of the students before the PST. In my particular case, my CT initially saw me as an assistant and not as the teacher in charge. On many occasions she disavowed me in front of my students and underestimated my methods. (P2, Int. 2, October 2018)

This negative experience is balanced by the case of P3, who experienced a more positive learning environment, looking up to her CT:

> The teacher has a lot of experience, a lot, in everything about teaching; and I probably adapted to her. She already had many forms of teaching that were more advanced... She gave me suggestions, and she lent me a book. She taught me how to do it and we worked together...we both planned. (Int. 2, October 2018)

The CT's perception of her, coupled with the cooperative relationship they established was a significant factor in the construction and reinforcement of her beliefs. In this case, this manifested itself regarding the use of worksheets. In her first and second interview she revealed that she believed worksheets to be useful teaching materials. First, she said, "I always search the Internet...you find a lot of material, worksheets, but you adapt them…I work my own adapted worksheets" (P3, Int. 1, August 2018). Later, when describing one of her lessons, she added, "I had a worksheet and in it there were many places they had to look for. After, we reviewed their answers; some were wrong, others were not" (P3, Int. 2, October 2018). The admiration and respect that P3 had for her CT meant that the validation of her work by this mentor seemed to strengthen the collaborative relationship between the two of them and help to reinforce her belief in the use of worksheets. In the final group interview she commented:

> The material that I prepared helped me a lot, because she [referring to her CT] implemented it with almost all the sixth grades. . . . I sent her everything I did. If I made slides, if I played a song, a video, she implemented all that with Sixth A and Sixth C. This means that during the whole practicum she worked with almost all my worksheets for the sixth grades. (P3, FG, February 2019)

The positive regard in which P3 held her CT, coupled with the implicit validation of her work that stemmed from its continued usage by the CT, resulted in a positive reinforcement in P3's belief about the use of worksheets as classroom material. Therefore, a positive or a negative relationship between PSTs and CTs can affect the PSTs' teaching conceptions.

We have thus established the influence of contextual particularities on PSTs' beliefs, predominately in relation to lesson planning and development, and the use of teaching material. These findings align with those of Barahona (2014), Debreli, (2016a) and Durán-Narváez et al. (2017) in regard to the transformative potential that the real circumstances of teaching have on prospective teachers' beliefs. They also align with the notion that PSTs' beliefs can evolve as a result of the interactions with people who support their learning (Sheridan, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2014).

Advisor's and Peers' Encouragement Influence PSTs' Beliefs

Though the prior section discussed the role of the CT as part of the practicum school context, the following lines delve into the impact the UTA and participants'

peers exerted, as a university learning community, on the PSTs' beliefs. The UTA provided mentoring which afforded the PSTs the emotional support they needed to transform their beliefs reflecting uncertainty and doubt about teaching into empowering personal pedagogical conceptions. As well as contributing towards participants' consolidation of their knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the UTA also cultivated an enriching bond with the PSTs.

Based on a reflective standpoint (Farrell, 2017; Yalcin-Arslan, 2019), the UTA continually guided the PSTs through the teaching planning and implementation process. Weekly encounters on the university campus provided spaces where encouragement and group reflection could take place and raise awareness of the methodological decisions made before, during, and after the classes oriented by PSTs. The UTA served as the initial guiding voice in group discussions, providing tips and recommendations and fostering a family-like environment, allowing the PSTs to feel secure and motivated. Learning was scaffolded through the employment of a variety of reflective activities that potentiated participation and analytical skills as PSTs assessed their own and their peers' claims.

> He [the UTA] made an overall reflection about everybody's performance, and sometimes María [another PST] would intervene to talk, and she would share her experiences. Then, he was always like, "Come one guys! Let's continue, you can do it! You are good!" I mean, things that encourage us to carry on. Then, another partner talked. There was always a reflection at the end. (P5, Int. 2, October 2018)

The UTA's approach to guiding the PSTs' education had a profound impact on producing a change in P1's initial beliefs concerning her previously expressed disregard for the teaching profession, allowing her to believe in her ability to become a teacher.

> Teachers are more than guides, they become mentors... Therefore, seeing that a teacher can achieve that, I realized "well, I can do it too." Having that teacher who is there giving you feedback, who really cares and takes time for you to be a good teacher is very important. So, listening to the UTA, and his interest and willingness to look for activities motivated me to continue researching to do a good job. (P1, FG, February 2019)

Thus, the work of the university advisor guided the transformation of the beliefs of the teacher candidate. P1 emphasized the role of her UTA as a provider of socioemotional support, resources, and assistance. This finding concurs with conclusions in other studies that highlight the impact UTAs can have on PSTs' personal beliefs when employing reflective approaches (Debreli, 2016b; Gutiérrez, 2015; Durán-Narváez et al., 2017). In general, the quality of TEPs, the humanistic and encouraging approaches of mentors, and the nature of feedback may be influential factors on the evolution of PSTs' beliefs (Özmen, 2012; Sheridan, 2016).

Peers also provided a valuable source of support for PSTs in their weekly encounters. Cooperation and collaboration within the group fostered a comfortable and trustworthy environment. This, in turn, encouraged the development of new attitudes and behaviors towards the TP in general by participants. Several PSTs' beliefs about the challenges of classroom management and lesson planning appeared to be favorably modified through interaction with their peers.

> It helped a lot in my case, for example, I was very scared because I was going to face a large class…and some children were already adults...So, when I had to face that challenge, I listened to what happened to my peers in their reflections, and took some ideas from the group. It was very helpful since their experiences enriched me…I think the meetings and your guidance [referring to her UTA] were great and contributed to our TP...we got the strength to continue…especially because I did not want to be a teacher. (P5, Int. 2, October 2018)

This can be further exemplified by the case of P2, who stated in her first interview: "One of my most terrible fears was my not being able to put together a plan, how

to put together a class, I mean, what laws or procedures are there for me to put together my class?" (P2, Int. 1, August 2018). The evolution of her lesson planning beliefs as a result of peer discussion and UTA mentoring was then evidenced in her final interview, as she affirmed:

> For me, the academic meetings were very good…even if I had time in my house, I waited for them to be held, to sit down with my partners and listen to our advisor's suggestions to put together my lesson plan. Obviously, I brought my draft, but in the end I thought, "I prefer to put it together there because I know it will look good, because it will be something concise where my peers or the UTA can contribute with their ideas or I can contribute with my ideas to another peer's plan." Therefore, I think the idea I had regarding how to teach changed a lot. (P2, FG, February 2019)

Therefore, we postulate that participants' pedagogical conceptions can be favorably altered through peer collaboration during weekly encounters. The participants were able to enhance their professional preparation as interaction with their peers contributed towards the confrontation and transformation of unfounded beliefs. In addition, they became more accountable and committed to both their own and their peers' education, echoing Anderson et al. (2005) and Vacilotto and Cummings (2007). Thus, PSTs evidenced feelings of increased relaxation, comfort, and confidence when they shared their emotional dimension, becoming more aware of the transforming value that seeking peer support entailed.

Conclusions and Implications

The aim of this study was to examine what factors, if any, tended to shape the beliefs that English PSTs exhibited while engaging in their final TP and how those factors exerted an influence on those conceptions. This section summarizes the evidence-based interpretation of findings previously discussed and foregrounds recommendations for practice and further research. The first of three groups of factors we detected related to PSTs' subjectivity. This encompassed their personal characteristics, which are rooted in the sociocultural traits and personal history they have experienced in their lives, causing each to have unique reactions to different situations. These subjectivities were most evident as participants' beliefs evolved according to their varying aspirations to become teachers, their peer-instigated fear of the TP, and how they responded to the teaching challenges they encountered. This finding agrees with Barcelos and Ruohotie-Lyhty's (2018) considerations that connect emotions and beliefs.

The second group of factors that shape PSTs' beliefs are the interrelated contextual circumstances found in the schools of the TP. This finding coincides with studies conducted by Barahona (2014), Debreli (2016a), and Durán-Narváez et al. (2017) and suggests that these contextual circumstances may favor the alteration or reinforcement of beliefs. These factors incorporated both physical resources and conditions as well as the interactions participants had with members of the school communities. Specifically, our findings uncovered how real classroom circumstances may challenge beliefs developed in university; furthermore, CTs' assessment of PSTs' pedagogical work could shape participants' conceptions.

The third group of factors concerns the mediation and interactions of UTAs and fellow PSTs. A collaborative environment grounded in reflective dialogue seemed to be the precursor of participants' transition from uncertainty to confidence in their understandings, having consolidated or confronted their beliefs. PSTs developed this confidence in areas encompassing classroom management, lesson planning, significance, and motivation to become teachers. The role of reflection and practicum advisors was also highlighted in studies conducted by Debreli (2016b), Durán-Narváez et al. (2017), Gutiérrez (2015), and Özmen (2012).

As scholars have insisted for many years, our findings demonstrate the need to strengthen the initial curricular structure and pedagogical plans of TEPs. Prospective teachers require specialized guidance to help them

inquire into their beliefs during the practicum (Yuan & Lee, 2014; Zheng, 2015). A focus on PSTs' beliefs may allow TEPs to foster awareness; facilitating PSTs' realization of the benefits and inconveniences their personal notions may have in their teaching practices, and allowing unfavorable beliefs to begin to be transformed.

Reflective approaches consistently emerge from this study and others (Debreli, 2016b; Prilop et al., 2019; Shooshtari et al., 2017), along with critical perspectives to teacher education, as suitable options with which to approach the subjective and deeply rooted nature of beliefs. The decontextualized information studied in university is often integrated as a fundamental component of PSTs' beliefs. Orienting prospective teachers with regard to their understanding of how and why their personal conceptions are the product of university instruction, and thus may be lacking context-sensitivity, may mitigate any potential dismay PSTs' face when reality forces them to confront such beliefs. This may also empower them to shape their personal teaching beliefs according to the relevance and needs of their particular teaching contexts.

A limitation of this inquiry is the small number of PSTs in just one TP. Although a reduced number of participants does facilitate a deeper exploration of their teaching beliefs, a wider sample size, including more range and diversity of both participants and universities, could provide valuable data. Similarly, as this study focused on a single academic term, further longitudinal studies are needed in order to monitor belief evolution over a more prolonged period. Further research could explore the evolution of participants' beliefs in both university's stipulated practicums: elementary and secondary.

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About the Authors

Abel Andrés Periñán-Morales holds a BEd in English language teaching, a specialization in pedagogy from Universidad de la Amazonia (Colombia) and an MA in English didactics from Universidad Surcolombiana (Colombia). Currently, he is an English teacher in the public sector.

John Jairo Viáfara-González holds a PhD in second language acquisition and teaching (University of Arizona, USA), an MA in applied linguistics (Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Colombia) and a BEd in English (Universidad Nacional de Colombia). He is an associate professor at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia and a co-researcher in the group RETELE.

José Alexander Arcila-Valencia holds a BA in English language teaching from Universidad de la Amazonia (Colombia) and an MA in English didactics from Universidad Surcolombiana (Colombia). He is a high-school EFL teacher.

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EFL Teachers' Classroom Management Orientation, Self-Efficacy, Burnout, and Students' L2 Achievement

Orientación de gestión del aula, autoeficacia y agotamiento de los profesores de inglés y rendimiento de sus alumnos en L2

Mohammad Hadi Mahmoodi
Shiva Hosseiniyar
Negin Samoudi
Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran

This correlational study examined the relationship among some English teachers' characteristics and their students' foreign language learning. Eighty-two Iranian high school teachers who taught English completed a battery of questionnaires. The scores of the teachers' students on their final exam were collected as indicators of their English achievement. The results revealed that there was a positive relationship between the teachers' self-efficacy, classroom management orientations, personal accomplishments (a subscale of burnout), and students' L2 performance. However, the correlations between emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (two subcomponents of burnout) and students' English learning were negative. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the teachers' self-efficacy was the strongest predictor of learners' English learning. These findings highlight the importance of such teachers' characteristics for their learners' L2 learning.

Keywords: burnout, classroom management strategy, L2 teachers, self-efficacy, students' L2 performance

Este estudio correlacional examina la relación entre algunas características de profesores de inglés y el rendimiento de sus alumnos en L2. Con este fin, 82 profesores iraníes de lengua inglesa de secundaria completaron una batería de cuestionarios. Las puntuaciones de los alumnos en su examen final se recopilaron como indicador de su rendimiento en L2. Hubo una relación positiva entre la autoeficacia, las orientaciones de gestión del aula y el logro personal (una subescala de agotamiento) de los profesores y el desempeño de los alumnos en L2, pero una relación negativa entre los subcomponentes del agotamiento y el rendimiento de los alumnos. Además, la autoeficacia de los profesores fue el vaticinador más fuerte del rendimiento de L2 de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: agotamiento, estrategia de gestión del aula, autoeficacia, profesor de L2, rendimiento de los estudiantes en L2

Mohammad Hadi Mahmoodi https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2155-2387 · Email: mhmahmoodi@basu.ac.ir
Shiva Hosseiniyar https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3202-5275 · Email: shivahosseini321@gmail.com
Negin Samoudi https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7868-7020 · Email: n.samoudi@urmia.ac.ir

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Introduction

Learners' achievement and performance is influenced by the critical role of teachers (Lasley et al., 2006). Teachers are the ones who set the standards and create the conditions for students. Teachers deliver a plethora of information to enhance learners' achievements. However, as Akbari et al. (2008) point out, less attention has been directed to teachers than learners in English language teaching (ELT) research. Whereas, in order for any educational system to be successful, teachers should be given adequate attention (Scheopner, 2010).

One of the most central psychological mechanisms that affects action, in general, and teaching in particular, is one's self-perceptions of one's capabilities, which is termed "self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1997). In other words, a teacher's level of self-efficacy is the extent to which he or she believes that he or she can enhance students' outcome. In recent years, it has been proven that teachers' self-efficacy could have a deep influence even on the daily lives of teachers and students (Klassen et al., 2009). In the same vein, previous studies have provided empirical evidence supporting the effective dimensions of the teachers' sense of self-efficacy in educational contexts (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001).

Teachers' sense of burnout is another factor which has proven to have a critical role on teachers' action. Researchers such as Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) believe that burnout is created through long-term occupational stress, particularly among those who have jobs providing services to other people. Although most of the teachers deal successfully with such senses of stress, the sense of burnout is often the endpoint and the last step of dealing unsuccessfully with stress (Jennett et al., 2003).

Another commonly voiced issue which may contribute to successful teaching and learning is classroom management ability (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Classroom management refers to the exercises that aim to compose and guide classes so as to accomplish particular objectives. Barton et al. (1998) also indicated that in order to make the atmosphere conducive to learning some degree of classroom discipline is needed. Otherwise, the process of learning and teaching and the effectiveness of even the most carefully planned lessons will be ruined by students' misbehavior.

Although the literature attests to the contribution of teachers' self-efficacy, burnout, and classroom management strategies to English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' L2 achievement, scant attention has been paid to the relationship between them in the Iranian context. Therefore, this study aimed at capturing a more contextualized picture of such L2 teachers' characteristics and learners' achievements and sought to determine a probable correlation between the aforementioned variables.

Literature Review

Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Over the last decades, self-efficacy has remained a deep-seated and important construct of social cognitive theory (Barros et al., 2010). As stated by Schunk and Pajares (2005), self-efficacy is the staple of all human behaviors influenced by individuals' vicarious experiences, mastery of experiences, and social persuasion. According to Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy can predict human motivation precisely. Based on this theory, an individual's working is correlated with his or her cognitive, behavioral, personal, and environmental factors. In research, in relation to teachers, the role of self-efficacy in instruction has been investigated with respect to the extent to which teachers are sure that they have the ability to develop learning and engagement of their students (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

In addition, Bandura (1994) indicated that a teacher's self-efficacy is related to instructional strategies, classroom organization, levels of task persistence, degree of risk-taking, innovation, techniques of questioning, teacher feedback to students, and also management of learners' on-task time. Usher and Pajares (2006) also believe that teachers' self-efficacy may be effective on students' sense of self-efficacy, their efforts in facing

difficulties, and, as a result, fostering their involvement in classroom activities (Ross, 1998).

Akbari et al. (2008) studied the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and students' achievement. In the study, 30 Iranian EFL teachers teaching in high schools participated in the research and answered the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001). As the dependent variable, students' final-exam scores were collected. The results revealed a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their students' L2 achievement.

Another study done by Mojavezi and Poodineh-Tamiz (2012) investigated the impact of teachers' self-efficacy on students' motivation and achievement. To do so, 80 senior high school teachers and 150 senior high school students were asked to answer two different questionnaires of Teacher's Self-Efficacy and Students' Motivation. The findings of the study indicated that teachers' self-efficacy has a positive association with students' motivation and achievement.

Hassan (2019) also carried out a quantitative ex post facto study to probe the effect of teachers' self-efficacy on learners' achievement scores. In this study, multilingual instructions were used for students' success on a randomly selected sample of 300 secondary school teachers and 800 students. The obtained data from teachers were collected by conducting the complete form of the Teachers' Self-Efficacy Scale, and learners' achievement scores were obtained from the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Lahore, Pakistan. Findings depicted that overall, teachers' self-efficacy accounted for 65% of students' achievement scores.

Classroom Management Strategy

Classroom management is the heart of teaching and learning in any educational setting (Saghir et al., 2017). Teachers have reported that classroom management is the most formidable responsibility to cope with and master for new and, sometimes, even for experienced teachers (Wolfgang, 2005). In fact, classroom management is a broad umbrella term that describes a teacher's attempts to oversee classroom activities such as students' behavior, learning, and social interaction (Martin et al., 1998). Evertson and Weinstein (2006, as cited in Mahmoodi et al., 2015) define class management as the actions that teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates emotional, social, and academic learning. In all fields, teachers have always reported classroom management as one of their common and enduring challenges in the classroom (Manning & Bucher, 2003).

According to Wolfgang (2005), classroom management models are classified into three levels. First, the *interventionist* model according to which students' appropriate behaviors will improve as they receive feedback in the form of rewards or punishment from their teachers. Second, the *non-interventionist model* which contends that there is an inner drive within students that needs to find its expression in the classroom. In fact, non-interventionists believe that students should be allowed to exert significant influence in the classroom. Third, the *interactionalist model*, according to which students' interaction with the outside world of proper people and objects enhances their appropriate behaviors. In addition, Evertson and Weinstein (2006, as cited in Mahmoodi et al., 2015) have proposed a frequently used framework in studies of classroom management which has introduced six distinct approaches of classroom management strategies: internal control of behavior, external control, classroom ecology, curriculum, discourse, and interpersonal relationships.

Rahimi and Hosseini-Karkami (2015) investigated the role of EFL teachers' management strategies on their teaching effectiveness and their learners' motivation and L2 achievement. Data were collected from a total of 1,408 junior high-school students who were asked to express their perceptions of the strategies their teachers had employed; also, the students evaluated the teaching effectiveness of their teachers by responding to some questionnaires. Then, based on the students' scores on their final exam, their L2 achievement in English was

determined. The results showed that motivation, teaching effectiveness, and L2 achievement were all associated with discipline strategies.

In another study, Mahmoodi et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between EFL teachers' classroom management orientations and students' L2 achievement. To this end, 105 high school EFL teachers were asked to fill out the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control Inventory (Martin et al., 1998). Then, their third-year high school students' (n = 2,673) scores on the English final exam were collected. The results revealed that there was a significant correlation between the teachers' classroom management strategies and students' L2 achievement. Their findings also indicated no significant differences between the two genders regarding teacher's classroom management orientations.

In another study, Talebi et al. (2015) examined the impact of classroom management strategies and academic achievement among English language students. To do so, 410 students in Payamenoor University were selected, and as evaluating tools, the students' final exam scores and the classroom management questionnaire of Javaher et al. (2014) were used. It was concluded that there was a significant relationship between classroom management and academic achievement of the EFL learners.

In the research done by Saghir et al. (2017) on the relationship of classroom management strategies and students' academic performance at the college level, a sample of 370 teachers were selected from public colleges of Lahore. The findings of the study showed that there was a positive correlation between teachers' classroom management orientations and the performance of the students. Estaji and Vafaemehr (2018) also had a study on the effects of EFL teachers' reflection on their sense of classroom administration; the findings of which attested that more reflective teachers applied various types of management strategies to cope with their students' social, emotional, and behavioral problems in comparison with their low reflective counterparts. However, in the study conducted by Zamanian and Soleimani-Pouya (2017), which examined the relationship among novice and experienced teachers' classroom management strategies and different styles of teaching, an overall relationship among the teaching styles of each group of the teachers and their classroom management strategies were not evidenced.

Teachers' Burnout

The American psychiatrist of German birth, Freudenberger (1974), first coined the term "burnout" to describe the depletion of emotions, losing motivation, as well as reduction in commitment that was experienced by human service workers after prolonged stressful conditions. Several researchers as Freudenberger (1974), Maslach (1976), and Maslach and Jackson (1981) construed burnout as a psychological syndrome that involves three subscales: (a) emotional exhaustion which refers to the sense of being emotionally drained by some serious contact with other people; (b) depersonalization, referring to the negative attitudes towards people; and (c) reduction in personal accomplishment, which refers to a reduction in the people's sense of competence and successful achievement in working with others (Maslach et al., 2001). As elaborated by some researchers (e.g., Maslach, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001), the importance of the burnout issue is due to the impact it can have on the individual's physical and mental health, behavior, and attitudes because it is an index of individuals' weak performance in the workplace.

According to various research studies (e.g., Abel & Sewell, 1999; van Dick & Wagner, 2001), teacher burnout can be triggered by different sorts of characteristics such as working conditions, lack of social support, professional recognition or prestige expenditure, number of students, lack of resources, level of specialization, poverty, student disruptive behavior, and relationship with colleagues. Besides, Pyhältö et al. (2020) claim that previous studies on teacher burnout have declared workload and years of teaching experience as main antecedents of teachers' burnout.

In the study done by Rostami et al. (2015), the external factors that affect second language learning motivation were investigated. In their study, 120 EFL teachers along with 1,270 of their students participated and Dornyei's L2 Motivation Self-System Scale for students and the educator version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-ES) were used for data collection purposes. The results showed that teachers' burnout significantly influenced learners' motivation and attitudes towards learning English in a negative way.

Moreover, there is another study conducted by Shamsafrouz and Haghverdi (2015) on the effect of burnout and, more specifically, its three subcomponents on the teaching performance of EFL teachers teaching in private language institutes in Iran. The participants of this study consisted of 30 English teachers and their L2 learners ($n = 150$). The data were collected via the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Questionnaire developed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009). The results showed that burnout did not influence the teachers' performance significantly and there were no significant differences between male and female teachers regarding their level of burnout.

In a mixed-methods study conducted by Roohani and Dayeri (2019) on the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' burnout and motivation, however, it was found that a majority of the 115 participants, in general, did not report a high level of burnout. Also, the qualitative analysis indicated that both organizational and personal factors had contributed to the observed minor burnout experience among the EFL teachers. The main factors included conflict, lack of support in administration, lack of job security, demotivation, lack of autonomy, and students' impropriety in the classroom.

There is another research done by Shirazizadeh et al. (2019) who examined the relationship as regards perfectionism, reflection, and burnout among 156 Iranian EFL teachers. The findings showed that teachers' reflection had a significant negative correlation with burnout, but there was no significant relationship between the aspects of teachers' perfectionism and burnout; their further analysis of two path models which considered their primary findings, revealed that components of perfectionism affected reflection positively, which, in turn, affected teachers' burnout negatively.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

In the light of current understanding of the crucial role of the abovementioned teachers' characteristics in the academic success of students, this research was done. Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed:

1. Is there any statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' use of classroom management strategies and their students' L2 achievement?
2. Is there any statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their students' L2 achievement?
3. Is there any statistically significant relationship between different components of teachers' burnout (emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, depersonalization) and their students' L2 achievement?
4. Among Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management strategies, self-efficacy, and burnout components, which one is the stronger predictor of their students' L2 achievement?

Method

Participants

The participants included 82 Iranian EFL teachers (39 men and 43 women) from Hamadan and their students (1,932). Teachers' age ranged from 20 to 45. All of the teachers had a BA or an MA degree either in English translation or in the teaching of English as a foreign language. They were all third-year high school teachers of public and private schools and were

recruited from the government's in-service teacher training programs. Moreover, students' scores on the English final exam were used as indicators of their L2 achievement. The sampling strategy for selection was convenience sampling because of the accessibility of the participants to the researchers. The gender was not considered as a moderator variable in this study.

Materials and Instruments

The following instruments were used in this study:

Maslach Burnout Inventory: Educator's Survey (MBI-ES)

This instrument was developed by Maslach et al. (1996) as a Likert scale questionnaire with 22 self-reported items. This instrument includes three components, of emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA) and is used to measure teachers' burnout. Higher scores on the EE and DP subcomponents and low scores on the PA subscale indicate burnout in the participants. Iwanicki and Schwab (1981) estimated Cornbach's alpha for each subscale of the questionnaire. The reported reliabilities are: $\alpha = .76$, for EE; $\alpha = .76$, for DP; and $\alpha = .76$, for PA. Also, this questionnaire has been used and validated in different studies in the context of Iran (e. g., Mahmoodi & Ghaslani, 2014; Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012). In this study, its reliability was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha consistency estimation ($\alpha = .74$).

Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control Inventory (ABCC Inventory)

The Likert scale ABCC Inventory was developed and validated by Martin et al. (1998) to measure teachers' classroom management strategies. It has 26 items divided into three broad dimensions addressing components of classroom management. That is, 14 items for instructional management, eight items for people management, and four items of behavior management. Also, the questionnaire's validity was estimated by Mahmoodi et al. (2015). In the present study, its reliability ($\alpha = .714$) was established via Cronbach's Alpha consistency estimation.

Teacher's Self-Efficacy Scale

This scale was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) and contains 24 nine-point Likert type items. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire have been examined in the study by Soodmand-Afshar et al. (2015), who found the Cronbach's internal consistency of the questionnaire to be: $\alpha = .94$. To estimate its reliability in this study, the Cronbach's Alpha consistency estimation was deployed ($\alpha = .823$).

English Test

The final English exam in the third year of high schools in Iran is a nationwide achievement test. It is prepared by the professional test developers in the Assessment and Control Center of the Ministry of Education in Iran. The test measures overall English achievement of the students and has both multiple-choice and essay-type items. The same version of the test is administered to all high school third year students and is scored anonymously by two teachers (in case of significant difference between the scores assigned by the two raters, a senior rater scores the exam once more). The content validity of the exam is ensured via review by some experienced third year teachers and its reliability is estimated via inter-rater method.

Procedure

First, the purpose of the study was explained to the participating teachers. Then, the questionnaires were administered to them in three consecutive sessions. Finally, the scores obtained by the students ($N = 1{,}932$) of the participating teachers in their English course were collected from the registrars' offices of the high schools as the measure of their L2 achievement. It is helpful to note that the third-year high school teachers were chosen as the participants for this study because the English exam for the Iranian students at this level is a nation-wide test. Therefore, the items and the scoring procedure are the same for all the students across the country.

Data Analysis

To answer research questions 1, 2, and 3, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. In order not to violate "the paired observations assumption" for computing correlation, the mean score of the students' L2 achievement in each class was computed and matched with the teachers' scores on the questionnaires (82 mean scores for 82 teachers). To answer the fourth research question, multiple regression was used.

Design of the study

This is an exploratory pure research project which deploys the non-experimental quantitative design of correlational studies. Teachers' classroom management orientation, self-efficacy, and burnout (its subcomponents) are the predictor variables and students' English achievement is arbitrarily the criterion variable.

Results

First, the descriptive statistics of participants' scores on the abovementioned variables were calculated (see Table 1). It is vital to mention that the scores for the subscales of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization) must be considered separately and a single score cannot be calculated for burnout (Maslach et al., 1996).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables (*N* = 82)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Emotional exhaustion	14	37	23.10	5.20	27.12
Personal accomplishment	12	45	26.70	8.96	80.41
Depersonalization	6	24	12.07	4.19	17.57
Classroom management	32	97	76.52	11.93	142.45
Teacher self-efficacy	111	208	184.27	19.52	381.33
Students' L2 achievement	12.28	18.01	16.12	1.12	1.26

Table 2. Correlation Coefficients Between Teacher Characteristics and Students L2 Achievement (*N* = 82)

		Students L2 Achievement
Emotional exhaustion	Pearson correlation	-.19
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.07
Personal accomplishment	Pearson correlation	.07
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.50
Depersonalization	Pearson correlation	-.06
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.5
Classroom management	Pearson correlation	.23*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.03
Teacher self-efficacy	Pearson correlation	.37**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to answer the first three research questions, Pearson Product Moment correlations were used, the results of which are summarized in Table 2.

As Table 2 indicates, the correlation between teachers' classroom management and students' L2 achievement (r = .23) is significant at the .05 level (p = .03 < .05, N = 82). Thus, there is a strong, positive, and significant correlation between these two variables. Moreover, there is a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and students' L2 achievement (r = .37, p = .00 < .05, N = 82). Therefore, these two variables are also significantly correlated with each other.

Regarding burnout components, as can be seen in Table 2, the correlation between teachers' emotional exhaustion and students' L2 achievement (r = -.19) is weak and negative (p =.07 > .05, N = 82), suggesting that in our sample, teachers' emotional exhaustion and their students' L2 achievement are negatively correlated with each other. However, the correlation between teachers' personal accomplishment and students' L2 achievement is weak and positive (r = .07, p = .50 > .05). The correlation between teachers' depersonalization, as another component of burnout, and students' L2 achievement (r = -.06), is also weak and negative (p = .53 > .05, N = 82). Therefore, the correlations between the components of teachers' burnout and students' L2 achievement were not statistically significant.

To determine which one of the teachers' variables is the best predictor of students' L2 achievement (Question 4), a sequential (hierarchical) multiple regression analysis was run. The results are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

The multiple correlation coefficient, the adjusted and unadjusted r square of teachers' self-efficacy, classroom management strategy, and components of burnout, which were entered as predictors of the students' L2 achievement via five models, are presented in Table 3.

As can be seen in Table 3, R square for teacher self-efficacy (Model 1) is .144, which means that this variable can account for 14.4 percent of the variation of the dependent variable (the students' L2 scores). We can see the effect of adding the other predictors in the other models. R square for Model 5, which examines the predictive power of all independent variables, is .18. Therefore, it attests that 18.9 percent of the variance of participants' L2 achievement can be predicted from the combination of teachers' classroom management strategy, self-efficacy, and burnout components.

Table 3. Model Summary

Model	*R*	*R* square	Adjusted *R* square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.37 [a]	.144	.13	1.04
2	.40 [b]	.16	.13	1.04
3	.41 [c]	.16	.13	1.04
4	.42 [d]	.18	.14	1.04
5	.43 [e]	.18	.13	1.04

Note. Dependent variable: Students' L2 achievement.

[a] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy. [b] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy, classroom management. [c] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy, classroom management, emotional exhaustion. [d] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy, classroom management, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment. [e] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy, classroom management, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, depersonalization

In order to examine whether the combination of the predictors, that is, teachers' characteristics (i.e., classroom management strategy, self-efficacy, and burnout components) significantly predicted their students' L2 achievement, an ANOVA was run, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Examining the F value and significance level for the models in Table 4 shows that self-efficacy can significantly predict the students' L2 scores, F (1, 80) = 13.43, p =.00 < .05. The combination of teachers' variables can also predict students' L2 achievement, F (1, 80) = 3.53, p =.00 < .05.

Table 4. ANOVA for Sequential Regression for the Variables

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	*F*	Sig.	
1	Regression	14.72	1	14.72	13.43	.00 [a]
	Residual	87.64	80	1.09		
	Total	102.36	81			
2	Regression	16.38	2	8.19	7.52	.00 [b]
	Residual	85.97	79	1.08		
	Total	102.36	81			
3	Regression	17.18	3	5.72	5.24	.00 [c]
	Residual	85.18	78	1.09		
	Total	102.36	81			
4	Regression	18.75	4	4.68	4.31	.00 [d]
	Residual	83.60	77	1.08		
	Total	102.36	81			
5	Regression	19.33	5	3.86	3.53	.00 [e]
	Residual	83.03	76	1.09		
	Total	102.36	81			

Note. Dependent variable: Students' L2 achievement.

[a] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy. [b] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy, classroom management. [c] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy, classroom management, emotional exhaustion. [d] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy, classroom management, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment. [e] Predictors: (constant), teacher self-efficacy, classroom management, emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, depersonalization.

Table 5. Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	*t*	Sig.	Collinearity statistics
		B	Std. Error	Beta			*VIF*
1	(Constant)	12.10	1.10		10.97	.00	
	Teacher self-efficacy	.022	.006	.37	3.67	.00	1.00
2	(Constant)	11.56	1.18		9.79	.00	
	Teacher self-efficacy	.020	.006	.33	3.13	.00	1.10
	Classroom management	.013	.010	.13	1.24	.22	1.10
3	(Constant)	12.32	1.47		8.34	.00	
	Teacher self-efficacy	.018	.00	.31	2.84	.00	1.16
	Classroom management	.012	.010	.12	1.15	.25	1.10
	Emotional exhaustion	-.020	.023	-.09	-.85	.39	1.08

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	*t*	Sig.	Collinearity statistics
		B	Std. Error	Beta			*VIF*
4	(Constant)	11.65	1.57		7.41	.00	
	Teacher self-efficacy	.018	.00	.32	2.89	.00	1.16
	Classroom management	.014	.01	.14	1.35	.18	1.14
	Emotional exhaustion	-.019	.02	-.08	-.80	.42	1.08
	Personal accomplishment	.016	.01	.12	1.20	.23	1.03
5	(Constant)	11.61	1.58		7.35	.00	
	Teacher self-efficacy	.018	.00	.31	2.82	.00	1.17
	Classroom management	.014	.01	.14	1.35	.18	1.14
	Emotional exhaustion	-.033	.03	-.15	-1.08	.28	1.84
	Personal accomplishment	.020	.01	.15	1.38	.17	1.19
	Depersonalization	.028	.03	.10	.72	.47	1.88

Note. Dependent variable: Students' L2 achievement.

The amount of contribution of each of the independent variables (classroom management strategy, self-efficacy, and burnout components) to the dependent variable (L2 achievement) is presented in Table 5.

Based on the results presented in Table 5, the standardized coefficients Beta (.37) and the *t* value (3.67) indicates that teachers' self-efficacy (sig. = .00) is the strongest predictor of students' L2 achievement. But the other independent variables, that is, classroom management and components of burnout, by themselves, do not significantly contribute to the prediction of the dependent variable (students' L2 achievement).

Discussion

This study contributes to the rather scarce literature on the association between EFL teachers' classroom management orientations, self-efficacy, and burnout components and learners' L2 learning in the context of Iran. Moreover, the extent of the probable contribution of each of the teacher's characteristics to their students' L2 achievement has been examined. Overall, the findings of the statistical analyses indicated that the teacher classroom management strategies and self-efficacy were significantly related to the dependent variable (students' L2 achievement). Nevertheless, all the components of burnout did not have a significant relationship with learners' L2 development.

As the teachers' classroom management orientation is concerned, the findings of this study corroborate with the results of a number of studies which also reported a positive significant relationship between classroom management and students' achievement (e.g., Rahimi & Hosseini-Karkami, 2015; Saghir et al., 2017; Talebi et al., 2015). We found that there was a strong relationship between teachers' management orientations and students' L2 enhancement. It confirms the idea that classroom management builds a situation that facilitates and supports both academic and social emotional learning

(Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, as cited in Mahmoodi et al., 2015). However, this finding is in contrast with those of Mahmoodi et al. (2015), who found a significant negative correlation between third-year EFL teachers' classroom management orientations and their students' L2 achievement. This result also consolidates the idea that classroom management is a setup through which teachers build up and keep up conditions to empower learners in accomplishing educational destinations productively (Barnabas et al., 2010).

Results regarding the second research question showed that teachers' self-efficacy had a significant and positive relationship with learners' L2 achievement. Such a link has been demonstrated through many studies (e.g., Akbari et al., 2008; Good & Brophy, 2003; Hassan, 2019; Mojavezi & Poodineh-Tamiz, 2012). This finding is in line with social cognitive theory that suggests there is a circular relationship between efficacy beliefs and teaching practices (Bandura, 1997). This relationship can be explained by the persistence found in teachers who have high self-efficacy (Good & Brophy, 2003).

As for the results pertinent to the burnout components in this research, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion had a negative correlation with students' final scores while a positive correlation was observed between the other subcomponent of burnout, that is, personal accomplishment, and the dependent variable. However, all of these correlation coefficients were weak and statistically insignificant. These findings are contrary to most of the research findings to date that suggest a significant correlation exists between burnout and second language achievement (e.g., Rostami et al., 2015; Zhang & Sapp, 2008). One reason for this non-significant relationship might be attributed to the influence that burnout can have on teachers' grading practices. As a result of burnout, teachers might become more lenient, careless, and arbitrary to avoid further problems and complaints arising from low grades. It can also be assumed as a form of compensation for their inadequate teaching (Arens & Morin, 2016). Another reason might be that in Iranian high schools, third-year students are mostly motivated enough to study English because most of them aim to do well on their coming university entrance examination. Therefore, in comparison with other educational settings, their teachers' sense of burnout might not have seriously demotivated them so as to reduce their learning efforts. Besides, as Pyhältö et al. (2020) believe, the most important antecedent of teacher burnout is years of experience. Therefore, the other possible reason for this finding may be that the participating teachers in the present study who were in a low range of age (maximum 45), had not yet experienced high levels of burnout to influence students' learning. Likewise, in the research done by Roohani and Dayeri (2019), low levels of burnout were reported for EFL teachers, for the majority of the participants, and a significant effect on students' motivation was not observed.

Another possible explanation for the insignificant relationship between teacher burnout and L2 achievement in this study is that based on the results of the research by Arens and Morin (2016), the reductive effect of burnout on L2 learning was shown to be more pronounced when students' achievement was assessed via standardized achievement tests than when it was measured through school grades. That is, as reported by Madigan and Kim (2021), in a systematic review of the related literature, teachers who suffer from high levels of burnout may not be able to create an appropriate teaching/learning context to help students be successful in standardized achievement tests. Nonetheless, the school grades are assigned based on subjective scoring and mainly depend on teachers' individual preferences for evaluation and grading (McMillan et al., 2002). As it turns out, school grades are generally less influenced by teachers' burnout. In addition, teachers' sense of burnout may cause them to apply stricter assessment practices in order to compensate for their suboptimal teaching and to force learners to rely on more self-initiated learning which does not cause extensive decrease in language

learning. However, the obtained result for the effect of burnout components in the current study supports that of Shamsafrouz and Haghverdi (2015) who similarly did not find a significant relationship between teachers' burnout and their teaching practices.

Though insignificant, the negative effect of teachers' burnout on effective teaching found in this research resonates with previous research (e.g., Ghonsooly & Raeesi, 2012; Pishghadam & Sahebjam 2012). As found by the studies done by Rostami et al. (2015) and Zhang and Saap (2008), one reason for such negative effect of teachers' burnout on their students' L2 achievement may be the reductive impact of it on students' motivation for L2 learning. That is to say, the low immediacy and lack of enthusiasm in teachers who experience burnout can have a negative effect on students' attitudes towards learning.

Moreover, in the current study, it was found that teachers' self-efficacy, in contrast to the other independent variables, was the strongest predictor of learners' L2 success. Based on Ashton and Webb (1986), the reason for this finding can be that teachers with higher self-efficacy tend to show more enthusiasm for their students' growth, are receptive of student initiative, and are responsive to student needs. In the same vein, Gürbüztürk and Şad (2009) assert that self-efficient teachers persist for a longer time than their peers when confronted with challenges, show more enthusiasm for their job, are more resilient when they are faced with setbacks, and generally are perceived by others as more effective teachers. This finding can be supported with reference to the results of some studies (e.g., Good & Brophy, 2003; Midgley et al., 1989) which have reported the greater influence of a teacher's sense of self-efficacy on students' success in contrast to some other teacher characteristics. For example, Listiani et al. (2019) investigated the influence of both teachers' self-efficacy and classroom management on students' final exam results and found that not only self-efficacy had effects on students' better gains, but it also fortified teacher's management strategies. It was observed that the teachers with a higher level of self-efficacy in teaching led to more classroom management for both authoritarian and authoritative teachers. That is why the teachers who have high self-efficacy are reflective and flexible in the classroom, and always try to find a fun method in teaching. Therefore, those teachers are less likely to experience student misbehavior, demotivation, or failure, which are considered important causes for teachers' burnout.

Conclusion and Implications

Taken together, the results of the current study put forward the prospect of developing a deeper understanding of EFL teachers' classroom management orientation, self-efficacy, burnout, and their impact on students' achievement. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the sense of self-efficacy of teachers, as one of the critical teacher variables, should be strengthened so that teachers' beliefs and perceptions of their competencies will increase in order to yield favorable results. That is to say, educational practitioners who worry about students' confidence, educational declining level, deficiencies and learning approaches, need to enhance their self-efficacy to overcome the troublesome issues. Theoretically speaking, in order to improve the standards and competencies that EFL teachers are expected to perform, considerations regarding the construct of teachers' self-efficacy should be further revised.

Moreover, the findings of this study regarding teachers' management orientation have implications for EFL teacher trainers and syllabus designers for teacher training courses to incorporate necessary programs for EFL teachers to effectively improve classroom management methodologies. On the other hand, teachers should be encouraged to act as directors or facilitators to provide an atmosphere in which students have the opportunities to speak, act, and learn effectively.

In the same token, based on our results concerning teachers' burnout components, educators and supervisors should know that the burnout felt by teachers can cause depression, frustration, and demotivation for their teaching practice. Accordingly, it is proposed that educational administrators consider the probable causes of teacher burnout and help teachers become equipped with the necessary coping strategies, such as problem-solving techniques, and provide better professional as well as financial support for teachers. Teachers also need to develop realistic expectations about their job requirements and the teaching-learning process. In sum, it seems reasonable to suggest that teacher education programs, and particularly Iranian policy makers, make preservice and in-service teachers aware of the effective teachers' characteristics and provide them with psychological and social support if the aim is to educate efficient teachers, who, in turn, aim to enhance students' growth.

As with other studies, this research also has some limitations; here the focus was on third-year high school teachers with mostly a bachelor's degree in English translation or teaching. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to teachers in other areas of education or with higher degrees. Besides, this research was conducted using the ELT context of one city in Iran. Hence, care should be taken in generalizing results for other settings.

The current study provides possible directions for further research. Since each of the teacher characteristics investigated in this study is a multifaceted construct that might have varied effects and presentations across different tasks and settings, it would be beneficial to investigate them through further studies that provide a deeper realization of how these teachers' characteristics influence learners' L2 achievement. As another proposal, further mixed-methods research employing a combination of several data collection instruments like observations of teaching performance, questionnaires, and multiple interviews as additive sources of data for exploring teachers' characteristics is suggested. Last but not least, further studies can probe both personal and environmental factors collectively in explaining EFL teachers' traits.

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About the Authors

Mohammad Hadi Mahmoodi is assistant professor of Applied Linguistics at Bu-Ali Sina University in Hamedan, Iran. He received his PhD from Allame Tabatabaii University, Tehran, Iran, in 2010. He is currently interested in psycholinguistics, learning theories, and L2 motivation theories.

Shiva Hosseiniyar has a master's degree in language education from Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran. She teaches English as a foreign language. Her research interests are second language learning theories and teacher education.

Negin Samoudi has a PhD in TESOL from Urmia University. She is a lecturer and researcher in Bu-Ali Sina University, Iran. She has published in both accredited international and local journals. Her main research interests are data-driven learning, dynamic assessment, and corpus-based materials development.

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The Relationship Between Demographic Features and Iranian EFL Teachers' Attachment Style

La relación entre las características demográficas y el estilo de apego de profesores iraníes de inglés como lengua extranjera

Mansoor Ganji
Farzane Safarzade Samani
Chabahar Maritime University, Chabahar, Iran

This study investigated Iranian English as a foreign language teachers' attachment styles and possible influential factors such as age, teaching experience, gender, and educational degree. The participants were 108 female and 79 male Iranian English teachers, chosen through convenience and snowball sampling. Using Google forms, a researcher-made questionnaire was sent to the participants. There was a positive relationship between age and a secure style, and a negative relationship between fearful and preoccupied styles and age. Further, there was a positive correlation between a secure style and teaching experience, and a negative relationship between fearful and preoccupied styles and teaching experience. Male teachers were more secure, and educational degree made no difference in secure and preoccupied styles.

Keywords: attachment style, demographic features, English language teachers

Este estudio investigó los estilos de apego de profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera iraníes y los posibles factores influyentes como edad, experiencia docente, género y nivel educativo. Los participantes fueron 108 mujeres y 79 hombres, seleccionados por el muestreo de conveniencia y en cadena. Se elaboró un cuestionario en línea que se envió a los participantes. Las respuestas revelaron que, en cuanto a la edad, existía una relación positiva con el estilo seguro y una negativa con los estilos temerosos y preocupados. Además, en cuanto a la experiencia docente, hubo una correlación positiva con el estilo seguro y una negativa con los estilos de miedo y preocupación. Los hombres indicaron sentirse más seguros y el nivel educativo no mostró diferencia para los estilos seguro y preocupado.

Palabras clave: características demográficas, estilo de apego, docentes de inglés

Mansoor Ganji https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0352-8404 · Email: ganji@cmu.ac.ir
Farzane Safarzade Samani https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7384-5245 · Email: samani@mail.cmu.ac.ir

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Introduction

The first relationship that children establish is with parents and siblings in their homes. The children's daily interactions with adults and peers propel their future learning and development (Choi & Dobbs-Oates, 2016; Krstić, 2015). After a child begins to dis-attach him or herself from the parents or other siblings, the other adults with whom a child builds meaningful relationships are often the teachers. The positive relationship between teacher and children provides them the emotional security needed for engaging in learning activities and improving their social, behavioral, and self-controlling competencies (Barker, 2015; Granot & Mayseless, 2001). Thus, the attachment styles of teachers and students deserve some attention, and it is a topic worth researching because the quality of early attachments determines the quality of adults' academic, emotional, and social abilities (de Castro & Pereira, 2019).

Attachment style, as a kind of relationship initiated by a person with others, is usually formed during the first years of life, but it goes on throughout that person's life (Bowlby, 1973). It is not synonymous with dependency as it is the anchor from which children begin to explore their world (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). In a family setting, both mother and father are understood as "attachment figures"; and "although considerably more attention in the attachment field has been given to mothers, interest in fathers emerged very early in the development of attachment theory" (Bretherton, 2010, p. 9). However, the main point is that, in school, this attachment figure is usually a teacher. Children failing to bond with their attachment figures in their early life may later develop significant attachments with their teachers (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; de Castro & Pereira, 2019; Polek, 2008).

Several factors are involved in the formation of attachment styles. Hazan and Shaver (1987) maintain that the perceptions about children's relationships with parents, and their parents' relationship with each other, are the best predictors of adult attachment styles. A few studies attribute children's cognitive skills and school achievements to their secure attachment to parents (Cassidy et al., 2013; de Castro & Pereira, 2019; Granot & Mayseless, 2001). Gervai (2009) mentions that environmental and biological factors may exert influence on adulthood's attachment style, and there is also the number of significant relationships, which increase as children mature (Veríssimo et al., 2017). Thus, the attachment style of adults is logically to a large extent a function of the amount of care and emotion they received during childhood (Ackerman, n.d.; Granot & Mayseless, 2001).

On the other hand, attachment styles may exert effects on students' success and behaviors in educational contexts (de Castro & Pereira, 2019). Attachment relationships with parents and teachers can impact both school adjustment and success (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Granot & Mayseless, 2001; Krstić, 2015). Negative teacher–student attachment may cause withdrawing from school (de Castro & Pereira, 2019; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007). Furthermore, teachers usually depend on their students' mental representations, which help them maintain their professional identity (Riley, 2009).

Although there exists a large body of studies which investigate the factors influencing attachment styles of elementary and middle school children (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Cassidy et al., 2013; Choi & Dobbs-Oates, 2016; Granot & Mayseless, 2001; Ogelman & Seven, 2012; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; Stevenson-Hinde & Verschueren, 2002; Verissimo et al., 2017) and adult students (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; de Castro & Pereira, 2019; Simpson & Rholes, 2017; Tagay & Karataş, 2012), there exists little research focusing on teachers' attachment style, English language teachers in particular, and how it may vary according to commonly known factors.

Considering all the above-mentioned factors, this study aims to focus on Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' attachment styles and examine the factors that influence these styles. The factors included in this study are age, teaching experience, gender (women vs. men), and educational degree (e.g., BA, MA, PhD). The

research question is as follows: Is there any relationship between the attachment styles of Iranian EFL teachers and (a) their age, (b) their experience, (c) their gender, and (d) their educational degrees?

Literature Review

Background

The theory of attachment can be viewed from environmental and psychological perspectives. Gervai (2009) believes that Bowlby's attachment theory could be truly environmental because it has explained individual differences by individual variation in relation to caregivers' behavior. Ainsworth et al. (1978) assert that optimal secure behavior could be related to sufficient sensitive responsiveness at home. Gervai also mentions factors such as income and size of the family; age and education of parents; major nerve-wracking events like loss of a parent, birth of a sibling, severe illness, marital relationships; and relationship breakdowns seem to exert an effect on the standard of attachment relationships.

Several studies suggest the existence of a strong link between the adolescents' attachment styles and psychological functioning (Allen & Land, 1999; Gervai, 2009; Simpson & Rholes, 2017). An adolescent's preoccupied style, for instance, has a close relationship with internalizing problems, in particular to the degree of self-reported depression (Allen & Land, 1999). "The attachment system . . . motivates vulnerable individuals to seek close physical and emotional proximity to their primary caregivers" (Simpson & Rholes, 2017, p. 19). Nevertheless, attachment formation, either environmentally or psychologically, is considered a developmental process that goes far beyond infancy and early childhood (Shumaker et al., 2009).

Categorization of Attachment Styles

Ainsworth and Bell (1970) identify three major styles of attachment: secure, ambivalent-insecure, and avoidant-insecure. On the other hand, Moss and St-Laurent (2001) identify four types: secure, insecure/avoidant, insecure/resistant, and insecure/disorganized or controlling. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) divide the attachment styles in adulthood to four categories: secure, fearful, dismissive, and preoccupied. These four attachment styles are defined according to a mixture of a person's positive or negative self-image and the image provided by others (again positive or negative). Since our study uses the four attachment styles developed by Bartholomew and Horowitz, we briefly define them next.

Secure: It is relatively easy for people belonging to this category to develop intimacy with or become emotionally close to others. Relying on others and having others rely on them is also quite usual for them. They do not worry about being alone, do not have problems with needing others' approval or not being accepted by others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Polek, 2008). They also act better to control their emotions and impulses (de Castro & Pereira, 2019). Teachers with a secure attachment style use warm, positive words when talking to their students and do not resort to corporal punishment; they are less controlling and demonstrate more positive moods and enjoyment (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Dismissing: Adults with the dismissing style tend to live comfortably without enjoying a close emotional relationship. Being independent and self-sufficient is extremely important for them, and they have low anxiety but show high avoidance of relationships (Polek, 2008; Toffoli, 2015). Teachers high in avoidance are less inclined to compromise in a conflict situation with students. They may avoid helping the students with difficult tasks (Stevenson-Hinde & Verschueren, 2002), and they may not be available when the children are in emotional turmoil (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Preoccupied: Preoccupied adults very much tend to be quite intimate with others but may think others are reluctant to get to them as much as they would like. These people need others' opinions to feel worthy and feel uncomfortable in their life when having no

close relationships (Polek, 2008; Toffoli, 2015). A preoccupied person may show exaggerated feelings and is difficult to soothe (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Teachers with this attachment style may be demanding and preoccupied with their students (Stevenson-Hinde & Verschueren, 2002). This group of people may also get mad at their students even while trying to please them and may seem dependent on their approval (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Fearful: Individuals with this style are somewhat uncomfortable getting close to others, anxious within relationships, and highly need to be accepted in a relationship (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Segal et al., 2009). These people question their self-worth and expect the other person to abandon them or harm them in some way. They find it very hard when they want to trust or depend on others (Polek, 2008; Simpson & Rholes, 2017; Toffoli, 2015). As teachers, fearful adults are apprehensive, and their stressful behaviors may even be worse when attending their classes. These teachers may try to reduce uncertainty and may seem confident, but still are sensitive and anxious (Stevenson-Hinde & Verschueren, 2002).

Related Studies

The studies investigating the association between attachment styles and education are mostly conducted on children. Bergin and Bergin (2009) show how attachment to parents was connected to school achievements. These authors gave 12 suggestions on how to improve student–teacher relationships and how school bonding could be fostered. These suggestions include:

> Increase sensitivity and warm, positive interactions with students . . . Be well-prepared for class and hold high expectations for students . . . Be responsive to students' agendas by providing choice whenever possible . . . Use induction rather than coercive discipline . . . Help students be kind, helpful, and accepting of one another . . . Implement interventions for specific, difficult relationships. (Bergin & Bergin, 2009, pp. 158–159).

Krstić (2015) focuses on the quality of attachment between students and teachers and teachers' practices. Results showed that attachment to teachers greatly influenced the students' opinions about school and the learning process in both fourth and fifth grades, and it also affected their school marks. The quality of the support provided in teaching influenced students' academic attachment, and teachers' warm relationship with learners impacted their school marks and attitudes towards school and learning.

Riley (2009) worked on adults' attachment perspective, the relationships between student and teacher, and classroom management difficulties. In his study, the attachment styles of 291 preservice and experienced elementary and secondary school teachers were investigated. The results showed that the experienced teachers were more secure than their inexperienced colleagues and the elementary teachers were more secure than their secondary colleagues. Elementary teachers tended to be less anxious and less avoidant of close relationships. As their experience increased, this difference became more pronounced for both men and women; however, male teachers were highly sensitive in this regard.

de Castro and Pereira (2019) worked on the early school dropout rate of Portuguese students and introduced the Alternative Curricular Course (ACC), which enhances the basic learning skills. In their study, they compared students in ACC to students in regular education (RE), examining aspects such as students' internal working models and student–teacher relationships, and the association of these factors with school performance. The results revealed that students of the ACC enjoyed a less secure internal working model than students in RE, and that the quality of the student–teacher relationship was correlated with a better educational attainment.

Although the previous studies mainly focus on children, they show evidence that teachers' attitudes inside the classroom are an important factor in students' academic success. Thus, it is worth knowing and exploring teachers' attachment styles as this may help identify their impact on students' learning achievements.

Method

Design

This study follows descriptive and correlational design. As no experimental or control group or treatment was defined, a quantitative and non-experimental approach was utilized. The researchers collected data by administering the attachment style questionnaire (see Appendix) and entered the numerical data into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The teachers' attachment style was the target variable and teachers' age, gender, teaching experience, and educational degree were studied for their possible correlation with the attachment style. The strength of association between attachment styles and age, and attachment style and experience (two continuous variables) were measured by a correlation test, while the difference between attachment styles of different genders and educational degrees (one continuous and one nominal variable) was determined via comparison.

Participants

Data were obtained from 187 Iranian English teachers working in different cities of Iran and whose teaching experience ranged from 1 to 25 years. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Educational degree	*n*	Men	Women
Diploma holders/BA students	5	2	3
BA holders	56	25	31
MA holders	95	42	53
PhD students	7	4	3
PhD holders	24	6	18
Total	187	79	108

The participants worked as teachers in private language institutes (n = 98) and in state high schools (n = 62) or as lecturers in state universities (n = 19). A small proportion (n = 8) chose not to report their place of work as this was optional. The participants' first language was Persian, and their ages ranged from 20 to 59 years.

Data Collection Instrument

A researcher-made and validated questionnaire was used to find out about the teachers' attachment style. The researchers developed the questionnaire based on two different questionnaires by Van Oudenhoven et al. (2003) and Poole Heller (2014). The researchers added 20 items of Poole Heller and 22 items of Van Oudenhoven et al., and then narrowed them down, deleting some items which were vague, cutting long statements into half to make them simpler and more understandable, and rephrasing three to four items in each category. This was done until the items related well to the goals of the research. The final version of the questionnaire was sent for two experts in the field to check for the validity of the items. This piloting resulted in the rephrasing of several items, and the addition of five items since they were double-barreled in the previous version.

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 45 short statements, out of which nine items related to the secure attachment style, 10 items to the fearful attachment style, 14 items to the preoccupied attachment style, and 12 items to the dismissing attachment style. The statements addressed how the participants felt in emotionally intimate relationships. Moreover, the participants were asked to answer questions about their age, gender, teaching experience, and educational degree. The scale ranged from one (*strongly disagree*) to five (*strongly agree*, see Appendix).

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms, and its link was sent to the participants using WhatsApp, Telegram, and email. The participants were identified through convenience and snowball sampling techniques. The participants answered the questionnaire statements anonymously, so they felt at ease in answering them. As Riley (2009) suggested,

> to increase the chances of valid responses to the instrument, it was determined that participants would be more likely to see the benefit of honest responses to the questionnaire, which contains a number of challenging statements, only after they had gained some knowledge of attachment theory and its connection to their professional lives. (p. 628)

In light of the foregoing, the attachment style was defined, its different types were explained, and the respondents were promised that the results of the research would be sent to them later. Consequently, the researchers provided their emails at the end of the questionnaire so that the respondents could contact them. Some of them, whom the researchers could visit, signed a consent form, but for those who were living in other cities, it was explained at the beginning of the questionnaire.

The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package (version 23). Statements are scaled from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), educational degree from 1 (diploma holders/BA students) to 5 (PhD) as well as gender as 1 (men) and 2 (women). For age and experience, no scales were defined. Then statements under each category of four attachment styles were computed and merged; and new variables (e.g., secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing) were created. The final result was the mean score of each attachment style for each participant. The data, then, were checked for normality assumption. The test showed that, except for preoccupied style, the rest of the scores and means were not normally distributed. However, researchers decided to run a non-parametric test for all variables since there was not any significant difference between the final results. For answering the first and second research questions—the relationship between attachment styles and age and teaching experience—Spearman's rank–order correlation was run. To answer the third research question which compares men's and women's attachment styles, the Mann-Whitney U test was run. Finally, for comparing participants' attachment styles regarding their educational degree, the Kruskal Wallis Test was administered.

Results

The data were initially checked for normality assumption, and Table 2 presents the results from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test. As the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is more appropriate for large sample sizes (< 50 samples), this test was used as a numerical means of assessing normality.

Table 2 shows that the significant values of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for "secure," "fearful," and "dismissing" attachment styles were .000, .014, and .000, respectively. Thus, they deviated from a normal distribution and, non-parametric tests were used. Regarding "preoccupied" style, the significant value of .200, which was greater than 0.05, showed that the data were normally distributed and a parametric test could be used. However, since there existed no difference between parametric and non-parametric results for this variable, the researchers preferred to use a nonparametric test.

Table 2. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov [a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	*df*	Sig.	Statistic	*df*	Sig.
Secure	.094	187	.000	.984	187	.036
Fearful	.074	187	.014	.981	187	.012
Preoccupied	.052	187	.200*	.990	187	.214
Dismissing	.095	187	.000	.973	187	.001

[a] Lilliefors Significance Correction.

*This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Attachment Styles

		F	%	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Secure	103	43.1	55.1	55.1
	Fearful	13	5.4	7.0	62.0
	Preoccupied	28	11.7	15.0	77.0
	Dismissing	43	18.0	23.0	100.0
	Total	187	78.2	100.0	
Missing	System	52	21.8		
Total	239	100.0			

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of four attachment styles. Among 187 participants, 103 chose secure style (43.1%), 13 fearful (5.4%), 28 preoccupied (11.7%), and 43 were of dismissing style (18%).

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of age and experience and four attachment styles. Age groups were divided into eight groups from 20 to 59 years old. Except for the 25–29 and the 45–49 age groups, the percentage of secure style among participants increased as the age increased, whereas the percentage of fearful and preoccupied styles decreased by increasing age. The most fearful (14.8%) and the most preoccupied (22.2%) participants were among the 20–24 age group. Years of experience were divided into five groups ranging from 1–25 years. The results showed that as the teaching experience increased, the percentage of the secure styles increased too. Participants who had 16 to 25 years of experience (77% to 80%) were the most secure. Whereas teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience were among the most fearful (8.7%) and the most preoccupied ones (19.7%), and teachers with 6 to 10 years were the most dismissing (27.5%).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Age and Experience

	Age range															
	20–24		25–29		30–34		35–39		40–44		45–49		50–54		55–59	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Secure	15	55.5	19	35.1	32	58.1	23	71.8	11	84.6	2	50	1	100	0	0
Fearful	4	14.8	4	7.4	2	3.6	2	6.2	1	7.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preoccupied	6	22.2	10	18.5	8	14.5	4	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dismissing	2	7.4	21	38.8	13	23.6	3	9.3	1	7.6	2	50	0	0	1	100
Total	27	100	54	100	55	100	32	100	13	100	4	100	1	100	1	100
	Years of experience															
	1–5		6–10		11–15		16–20		21–25							
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%						
Secure	43	47.2	34	58.6	15	62.5	7	77.7	4	80						
Fearful	8	8.7	3	5.1	2	8.3	0	0	0	0						
Preoccupied	18	19.7	5	8.6	4	16.6	1	11.1	0	0						
Dismissing	22	24.1	16	27.5	3	12.5	1	11.1	1	20						
Total	91	100	58	100	24	100	9	100	5	100						

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Gender and Educational Degrees

	Gender				Educational Degrees									
	Men		Women		Diploma holders/BA students		BA		MA		PhD student		PhD	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Secure	52	65.8	51	47.2	2	40	30	53.5	50	52.6	5	71.4	16	66.6
Fearful	3	3.7	10	9.2	0	0	5	8.9	7	7.3	0	0	1	4.1
Preoccupied	9	11.3	19	17.5	2	40	9	16	14	14.7	1	14.2	2	8.3
Dismissing	15	18.9	28	25.9	1	20	12	21.4	24	25.2	1	14.2	5	20.8
Total	79	100	108	100	5	100	56	100	95	100	7	100	24	100

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistic for gender and degrees with regard to the four attachment styles. Out of a total of 187 participants, 79 were men and 108 were women. Among the men, 52 participants preferred a secure style (65.8%), 15 dismissing, nine preoccupied, and three fearful. Among the women, 51 participants had a secure style (47.2%), 28 dismissing, 19 preoccupied, and 10 fearful. Thus, men showed more security than women. Regarding educational degrees, the more secure participants were among PhD students (71.4%) and PhD holders (66.6%). BA holders showed secure slightly more than MA holders (53.5%). The BA group also showed the most fearful one (8.9%) in comparison to their MA counterparts. The BA group turned out to be more preoccupied than the MA group and PhD group, while the MA group was the most dismissing one.

For finding out the relationship between attachment styles and age, a correlation test was run. The results are presented in Table 6.

A Spearman's rank–order correlation showed that there was a strong negative correlation between fearful style and age ($r_s(8) = -.160, p = .029$); and preoccupied style and age ($r_s(8) = -.172, p = .018$). That is, as age increases, people become less fearful and less preoccupied. There was also a negative relationship between dismissing style and age, which was not statistically significant ($r_s(8) = -.078, p = .286$). The results showed no significant correlation between secure style and age ($r_s(8) = .023, p = .755$).

Table 6. Correlation Between Attachment Styles and Age (*N* = 187)

			Age
Spearman's rho	Secure	Correlation coefficient	.023
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.755
	Fearful	Correlation coefficient	-.160*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.029
	Preoccupied	Correlation coefficient	-.172*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.018
	Dismissing	Correlation coefficient	-.078
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.286

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7. Correlation Between Attachment Styles and Experience (*N* = 187)

			Experience
Spearman's rho	Secure	Correlation coefficient	.074
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.311
	Fearful	Correlation coefficient	-.133
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.069
	Preoccupied	Correlation coefficient	-.107
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.146
	Dismissing	Correlation coefficient	.015
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.842

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A Spearman's rank–order correlation was run to determine the relationship between the four attachment styles and experience (see Table 7).

As the results show, there was a negative correlation between fearful style and experience ($r_s(8) = -.133, p = .069$), and preoccupied style and experience ($r_s(8) = -.107, p = .146$). There was a positive correlation between secure style and experience which was not statistically significant ($r_s(8) = .074, p = .311$). There was not any significant relationship between dismissing style and experience ($r_s(8) = .015, p = .842$).

Then, the differences between men and women were investigated. As the researchers aimed to compare differences between these two groups concerning attachment styles, which were continuous but not normally distributed, they used the Mann-Whitney U test. Table 8 provides the test statistic, *U* statistic, and the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) *p*-value. It can be concluded that men and women were significantly different in secure style ($U = 4201.500, p = .859$) with men showing more secure than women. They possessed the least difference in fearfulness ($U = 3471, p = .029$) with men again showing they are less fearful teachers than women.

Finally, the study looked for the differences between educational degrees (i.e., diploma holders/BA students, BA, MA, PhD student, and PhD) and attachment styles, thus, a non-parametric (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis) test was run. Table 9 shows that these five groups of educational degrees showed significant difference in preoccupation, $\chi^2 (2) = 9.530, p = 0.049$ (diploma holders/BA students were more preoccupied than the others) and not any statistically significant difference in the secure ($\chi^2 (2) = 8.125, p = 0.087$), fearful ($\chi^2 (2) = 5.977, p = 0.201$), and dismissing styles ($\chi^2 (2) = 7.411, p = 0.116$).

Table 8. Mann-Whitney Test Comparing Men and Women Styles

	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Mann-Whitney U	4201.500	3471.000	3722.000	3601.500
Wilcoxon W	7361.500	6631.000	6882.000	6761.500
Z	-.177	-2.178	-1.489	-1.821
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.859	.029	.136	.069

Note. Grouping variable: Gender.

Table 9. Kruskal Wallis Test Comparing Educational Degrees

	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Chi-Square	8.125	5.977	9.530	7.411
df	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.087	.201	.049	.116

Note. Grouping variable: Educational degree.

Discussion

The present study addressed whether attachment styles of Iranian English teachers were associated with their age, gender, teaching experience, and educational degree. In total, among the 187 participants, 103 selected secure style, 13 fearful, 28 preoccupied, and 43 dismissing style. It is worth mentioning that although in this study individuals were conceptualized and placed into one category and a dominant style was considered as their attachment style, Segal et al. (2009) mention that attachment style cannot be viewed as a categorical construct, and thus must be measured dimensionally. The following paragraphs discuss each research question by investigating attachment styles from the dimensional point of view.

Concerning the correlation between the four styles and age, it was revealed that except for the 25–29 and the 45–49 age groups, there was a positive relationship between age and secure style and a strong negative relationship between fearful and preoccupied styles and age. Investigating responses of 27 teachers who were in their early twenties revealed that they had mainly a secure style. After that, preoccupied and fearful styles were dominant. In addition, the results of 55 teachers in their early thirties indicated that the dominant styles were secure (58.1%) and dismissing (23.6%) styles. As feeling independent and self-sufficient, not depending on others, and focusing on their own needs are the salient characteristics of dismissing individuals, the incidence of this style at this age group or older ones is predictable. An individual with the dismissing style is considered to have high self-esteem (Akbağ & İmamoğlu, 2010). This may be another reason why older Turkish teachers showed a dismissing style. Similarly, Segal et al. (2009) also found a lower number of persons with preoccupied and ambivalent (fearful) attachment styles and came up with a higher number of dismissing attachment styles in older adults in comparison to younger adults. They believed that "it is likely the differences found were a consequence of the unique social, cultural, and historical forces that have affected differently the two groups" (p. 128). To be more exact, younger adults are more likely to have higher rates of mental discomfort than older adults, or older adults may be less willing to report uneasy feelings than those in the younger group.

Regarding the relationship between attachment styles and experience, there was a positive correlation between the secure style and the experience of teachers. Riley (2009) reported that teachers with more than five years of experience were significantly more secure than novice teachers. For teachers, Riley (2012) considered experience a more effective predictor of attachment style than age. Furthermore, he believed that "the internal working model (IWM), a largely unconscious attachment mechanism, changes in teachers as a result of their classroom experience" (p. 12). The results of this study also showed that there was a negative relationship between fearful and preoccupied styles on the one hand and teaching experience. These results are in line with de Castro and Pereira's (2019) study, conducted in Portugal. They asserted that insecure attachment is due to the lack of experience in the executive functions such as difficulty in organizing, monitoring, evaluating, and planning actions, as well as being weak in abstract thinking, initiation, and working memory. Experienced teachers show confidence and acceptance to their students which promote positive relationships and learning experiences.

The results also showed a statistically significant difference between men and women in secure style. Men were more secure than women, but women

proved more preoccupied and more dismissive than men. These results were supported by Tagay and Karataş's (2012) study where Turkish women were more fearful and dismissing than men. They concluded that Turkish men were usually in charge of the family and were expected to meet the needs of other family members more than their own needs; therefore, they were expected to experience a higher preoccupied attachment level covering the idea that others are more important. According to Tagay and Karataş, Turkish women are usually afraid of and anxious about their close relationships in their lives, so their generally submissive character and obedient behaviors are supported. In another study conducted in Turkey, women showed to be more affected by their mistakes and more interpersonally sensitive than men, which may make them more fearful and preoccupied (Akbağ & İmamoğlu, 2010). In Riley's (2009) study, young Australian female teachers showed a less secure style compared to young men teachers. He believed that women usually gain more benefits from their work experience than their men counterparts. In general, researchers have proposed that gender differences in an attachment style may be predictable. Studies with Czech and Slovak women showed that they develop anxiety-related attachments, while men show avoidance-related attachments (Rozvadský-Gugová & Heretik, 2011; Scharfe, 2017). However, Del Giudice (2011) named geographic region and effect of age as the variables that may confound these results.

Finally, regarding the differences between individuals in relation to different educational degrees, there was not any statistically significant difference in educational degrees between the secure, fearful, and dismissing styles, but there was a significant difference in the preoccupied style, where diploma holders/BA students showed to be more preoccupied than others. Teachers who were PhD students and teachers holding PhD degrees were more secure than other groups. Teachers holding BA degrees were either the fearful or preoccupied ones, while teachers with MA degrees were the most dismissing teachers. In Choi and Dobbs-Oates's (2016) research, teachers holding a higher-education degree showed lower teacher–student closeness (dismissing style) compared to other teachers. Teachers having higher education reported an equitable level of close relationship with boys and girls, whereas younger teachers whose degree was lower than MA or PhD displayed a higher closeness with girls than with boys. Their findings suggested that more educated teachers may act as a buffer for learners who have the potential to form less close teacher–student relationships based on their gender. Riley (2009) concluded that "pre-service training that emphasizes relationship building may have long-lasting positive effects on teachers" (p. 634). The chances are high that these mostly collegial relationships will be much longer-lasting than teacher–student relationships as they provide the corrective experiences for teachers.

Conclusion

This study set out to determine Iranian EFL teachers' attachment styles and investigate the factors which might have a correlation with or effect on them. Teachers' ages was shown to be one of the factors that were related to teachers' secure bonding with students. As revealed in this study, the more mature teachers were more secure and less fearful and preoccupied. However, teaching experience turned out to be among the most effective factor since it had a more positive correlation with the secure style and a strong negative correlation with the fearful and preoccupied styles. Furthermore, the responses to the questionnaire indicated that men teachers saw themselves very secure and not fearful, while the female teachers self-described as more preoccupied and dismissing. Educational degrees, however, did not make any statistically significant difference between the secure and preoccupied styles, but teachers holding PhD degrees were more secure than other groups.

It can be concluded that attachment styles are not stable over time. Thus, teachers with insecure style problems (e.g., being uncertain, stressful, and anxious) tend to keep a distance from students, usually withdraw from helping their students, and struggle with feelings of low self-esteem. However, these teachers might later reach a secure attachment style as their age and teaching experience grows. Teachers can facilitate ways to cope with insecure styles through practices like cognitive-behavioral therapy, which is a "short-term therapy technique that can help people find new ways to behave by changing their thought patterns [and by focusing] on their present-day challenges, thoughts, and behaviors" (Davis, 2018, paras. 1–4); or mindfulness therapy, which is a technique for relieving and improving symptoms of stress and anxiety, mental health concerns, physical pain, and so on (Hoffman et al., 2010). The fact that higher educated teachers showed a more secure style suggested that, by upgrading their education, teachers can cultivate a secure style. The fact that teachers having a higher-education degree may display a dismissing style cannot be ignored, though. To help student teachers overcome insecure style problems, a tool called the Recovery Assessment Scale is recommended to be included in in-service education programs. This tool, developed by Hancock et al. (2015), incorporates ideas like self-esteem, feeling powerful, receiving support from society, and living standard. Finally, regarding gender differences, and if women can compete with men to be more secure, it may seem unlikely because it largely depends on societal conditions which are beyond the scope of this study and, as noted above, women usually are the ones who exhibit more fearful attitudes, and avoid close relationships in certain cultures (such as the Iranian one), because in their culture it is the men who usually make most of the decisions to start, continue, or end a relationship such as marriage. Therefore, women are often worried about losing relationships and more likely than men to consider the consequences of getting involved in a close relationship (Pourmohseni-Koluri, 2016). Therefore, as long as the attitudes of society are unchanged, women's attachment styles will also remain unchanged.

Like all survey studies, verifying the results depended largely on the accuracy and honesty of the participants' responses. Although the researchers encouraged participants to read and answer the questions carefully and assured them their answers would be strictly confidential, inaccuracy in answering the questions seems inevitable. There were also some limitations in finding teachers over 50 years old as most of them were either retired or not available, or they were university chancellors who refused to fill out the questionnaire. Due to the limited works done in this area in Iran and around the world, there was not much literature at hand for researchers with which to compare the results in the discussion section.

Further research can be done on teachers' attachment styles and students whose English teachers have both secure and insecure styles to see how teachers' attachment styles can affect students' performance in learning different language skills. This line of research needs to be complemented by qualitative data collected through observation and focus group interviews. More research can be carried out regarding the men and women issues mentioned above. In addition, research can be conducted on planning strategies to help teachers overcome their attachment difficulties, and teacher educators who oversee preservice and in-service teacher education might benefit from including these strategies in their curriculums. It must be kept in mind that such studies need to benefit from follow-up data collection cycles in which data are collected at least six months after the training since changing a behavior takes time. The obtained results of the study would be useful for teachers, teacher educators, curriculum designers, and administrators. However, since quantitative data and research might not be able to give a complete picture of the situation, future researchers are encouraged to conduct qualitative and mixed-methods studies while researching the change of behaviors in teachers.

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About the Authors

Mansoor Ganji is an assistant professor in the English department of Chabahar Maritime University, teaching at the BA, MA, and PhD levels since 2007. He has published several papers in international journals, mostly on corrective feedback, teacher education, and English for academic purposes. He has also supervised several MA and PhD theses.

Farzane Safarzade Samani obtained her MA in TEFL at Chabahar Maritime University. Her field of interest is interdisciplinary issues which deal with combining English teaching and learning with different branches such as management, engineering, literature, and psychology. Currently, she is a PhD candidate in TEFL at Chabahar Maritime University.

Appendix: Attachment Style Questionnaire

This questionnaire, which is based on Van Oudenhoven et al. (2003) and Poole Heller (2014), is designed to gather data about attachment styles of Iranian EFL teachers. The questionnaire consists of 45 items in which you have to carefully read each item and check what best describes you. The statements concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships and how you generally experience relationships. Your answers to the questions will be strictly confidential.

A. Please complete personal information.

Age:

Gender:

Years of teaching experience:

Degree:

Place of work:

B. Please respond to each statement by marking a circle to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I feel at ease in emotional relationships.					
2. I would like to be open in my relationships, but I can't trust other people.					
3. I feel uncomfortable when relationships with other people become close.					
4. I find it difficult to fully trust other people in close relationships.					
5. I prefer that others are independent of me.					
6. I am preoccupied with what others think of me.					
7. I usually avoid close relationships with people around.					
8. I feel that I like others better than they like me.					
9. I like it when other people can rely on me.					
10. I am often afraid that other people don't like me.					
11. It is important for me to be independent.					
12. I find it easy to get engaged in close relationships.					
13. I feel at ease in intimate relationships.					
14. I like to be self-sufficient.					
15. I find myself ready to apologize or take responsibility for things I did not do.					
16. I think it is important that people can rely on each other.					
17. I don't worry about being alone.					
18. I am afraid that I will be deceived when I get too close with others.					
19. I usually find other people more interesting than myself.					
20. I trust that my partner will be there for me when I need him/her.					
21. I am afraid to get hurt if I get engaged in a close relationship.					
22. It is important to me to know if others like me.					
23. I act like I don't need reassurance or encouragement.					

24. I am not able to repair and receive repair attempts from others in relationships.
25. I usually trust in others and in the future realistically.
26. I prefer the company of animals instead of people.
27. I need constant reassurance about the reliability of my relationships.
28. I am concerned if other people value me.
29. When love happens or is available, I reject it because it is too good to be true.
30. I feel I actively reject opportunities for connection.
31. I have trouble saying no to people when needed.
32. It is difficult for me to be clear about my feelings.
33. I focus more on work and hobbies than relationships.
34. I have obsessive thoughts about how to keep the relationship going.
35. I minimize the importance of close relationships.
36. I predict catastrophic outcomes and events.
37. I always feel superior and that I don't need others.
38. I have trouble setting boundaries in my relationships.
39. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.
40. I don't worry whether people like me or not.
41. I don't need other people very much.
42. I am afraid of losing my partner.
43. I often wonder whether people like me.
44. I cannot think clearly most of the time.
45. I like that I am independent of others.

Thank you so much for your cooperation.

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Using Reverse Mentoring to Transform In-Service Teachers' Beliefs About How to Teach English

Transformación de las creencias de los profesores en ejercicio acerca de la enseñanza del inglés mediante la mentoría inversa

Liliana Valle
Danilsa Lorduy-Arellano
Universidad de Córdoba, Montería, Colombia

Nohora Porras-González
Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, Bucaramanga, Colombia

This qualitative research study delves into elementary school teachers' beliefs and the potential contribution of reverse mentoring to improve English language teaching for children. The purpose was to explore how elementary in-service teachers' beliefs could be transformed after participating in a reverse mentoring experience. A group of in-service teachers from two public elementary schools and a group of student-teachers from Universidad de Córdoba (Colombia) were the research participants. Data were gathered through a questionnaire, interviews, and classroom observations. Findings showed that reverse mentoring played an important role in transforming in-service teachers' beliefs about teaching English to children regarding the difficulties of language learning, communicative strategies, motivation and expectations, foreign language aptitude, and the nature of language learning.

Keywords: beliefs, in-service teachers, student-teachers, reverse mentoring, teaching English

Este estudio exploratorio indagó cómo las creencias de profesores en ejercicio sobre la enseñanza del inglés a niños eran transformadas después de participar en una experiencia de mentoría inversa. Participaron un grupo de profesores de dos escuelas públicas de primaria y un grupo de practicantes de la Universidad de Córdoba (Colombia). La información se recolectó mediante un cuestionario, entrevistas, notas de diarios de campo y observaciones de clase. Los resultados mostraron que la mentoría inversa jugó un papel importante en la transformación de las creencias de los profesores sobre la enseñanza del inglés, con respecto a dificultades en el aprendizaje, las estrategias comunicativas, la motivación y expectativas, la aptitud hacia la lengua extranjera y la naturaleza del aprendizaje de lenguas.

Palabras clave: creencias, enseñanza del inglés, mentoría inversa, practicantes, profesores en ejercicio

Liliana Valle https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6088-988X · Email: lbvalle@correo.unicordoba.edu.co
Danilsa Lorduy-Arellano https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9700-7422 · Email: dlorduy@correo.unicordoba.edu.co
Nohora Porras-González https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3051-9666 · Email: Nohora.porrasg@campusucc.edu.co

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Introduction

Beliefs are inextricably tied to human nature. They represent the accumulation of social interactions and life experiences from different sources. They are conceptualized as preconceptions people have internalized; for instance, in the education context, teaching beliefs can be the starting point for teaching-learning decision making that also determine certain academic actions and intentions (Ferguson & Bråten, 2018). Following Khader (2012), "teachers' beliefs are a set of ideas rooted in the psychological and mental content of the teacher and play a central role in guiding his/her teaching behavior" (p. 73). Teachers hold different beliefs about teaching which guide their actions in classroom practices. These beliefs may benefit or hinder teachers' performance and ultimately influence the quality of their instruction, thus, to explore the beliefs about teaching English to a group of elementary teachers with little or no knowledge of that language, and who lacked the pedagogical tools to effectively teach it, we outlined a research project to provide them with strategies to help them improve their English teaching practices. Hence, the participants were a group of student-teachers from the foreign language teaching program at Universidad de Córdoba and a group of in-service elementary school teachers from two public schools in the department of Córdoba, Colombia. The school teachers were responsible for teaching all school subjects, including English. McNulty-Ferry and Quinchía-Ortiz (2007) have analyzed the lack of expertise in the English instruction of many teachers in Colombia. Some of their findings conclude that teachers at the elementary school level do not have enough training and preparation to teach English. In recent studies, Chaves and Fernández (2016) describe a similar experience by mentioning that, since they are homeroom teachers, they do not have any specific training for teaching the language. Furthermore, Porras (2007) states that in Colombian elementary schools "there is a shortage of qualified teachers who have been trained as English teachers" (p. 8).

This project is a response to the concerns linked to this lack of training in English language instruction and aims at improving English teaching practices in elementary schools through a reverse mentoring experience. At the beginning of this study, the group of in-service teachers expressed serious concerns in terms of their limitations regarding teaching English to children. At first, a variety of beliefs and assumptions, which had hindered their teaching of English, were identified. Consequently, a process of reverse mentoring was implemented between student-teachers and in-service educators. Once the reverse mentoring stage finished, new data were collected and analyzed to determine how the teachers' beliefs could have been transformed and to provide them with strategies to better cope with English teaching constraints due to their lack of expertise on the subject.

Literature Review

Reverse Mentoring

Traditional mentoring is a relationship between a more experienced individual, generally an experienced/senior (mentor) and a younger one, with little or no experience (mentee). Reverse mentoring is an approach characterized by mutual trust and cooperation whose goal is to facilitate learning and the academic development of senior colleagues (Ziegler, 2009). Additionally, Zauchner-Studnicka (2017) explains that reverse mentoring is a process in which the traditional roles of mentoring—experienced/inexperienced—are reversed. In this case, a less experienced person serves as a mentor to a more experienced learner who plays the role of the mentee. Reverse mentoring was first introduced formally by Jack Welch in 1999, a General Electric former chief executive officer, who asked 500 of his best managers to interact with competent internet workers (Greengard, 2002). This mentoring approach has been primarily used in the business field as one of the "best practice" entrepreneur strategies.

For example, Dell (Harvey & Buckley, 2002), Procter & Gamble (Greengard, 2002), Time Warner (Hewlett et al., 2009), and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (Lennon, 2019) are all examples of corporations which used reverse mentoring as a way of building intergenerational relationships, diversity on initiatives, and innovation. Reverse mentoring has been proven to be one of the most useful tools when it comes to widening perspectives and developing new trends while obtaining cross-generational and technical knowledge. This type of mentorship benefits leadership development as an effective strategy for mutual learning between mentors and mentees, which enhances teamwork and organizational environment.

Studies about reverse mentoring in the field of language teaching and education are scarce. The impact of this kind of mentorship for educational purposes has been researched in relatively few studies around the world. One has been that of Cotugna and Vickery (1998), who carried out a study where college students worked together with senior professionals to teach them internet use and technological skills. In a similar study, Leh (2005) conducted some research in a school of education at a state university which focused on training the university's president in college level initiatives to teach faculty members and graduate students how to use and integrate technology in their classes. Christie et al. (2004) have explored how reverse mentoring helped in the process of collaborative learning between high school students and graduates for the purpose of bringing technology into K–12 classrooms as well as to modify participants' perceptions and attitudes. Goossens et al. (2009) carried out a student-mentor project in the business school at the University of Hertfordshire with students who had some skills in technology, whose purpose was to improve staff skills in technology.

In more recent studies, Augustinienė and Čiučiulkienė (2013) focused on revealing some positive characteristics of reverse mentoring as an effective tool for novice teachers to build up their own self-authorship process in their professional development. Reverse mentoring in education is not only related to the roles of juniors and seniors, but is more a matter of reciprocal learning from/for both parties. Augustinienė and Čiučiulkienė claim that "effective reverse mentoring is based on the duality of roles and is always a two-way flow of learning which may be characterized as a boomerang effect" (p. 76). Likewise, Porras et al. (2018) affirm that the relationship between in-service elementary school teachers and student-teachers in a reverse mentoring experience was strengthened because the attitude of both sides was open and collaborative. This concept is coherent with Murphy's (2012), who points out that mentoring facilitates reciprocal gains for those involved in terms of learning, growth, and development Therefore, these aspects are clearly related to changes in assumptions and participants' preconceived notions of themselves as mentors and mentees. Preconceived ideas can constrain knowledge building since they are rooted in belief systems closely linked to efficiency, productivity, and personal and professional performance. According to Kato (2018), the importance of implementing a skill-based mentoring program for experienced advisors at a Japanese university evidenced professional development and growth for both mentors and mentees. This program relied on reverse mentoring as an effective approach which facilitated learning opportunities for both parties—mentor and mentee.

Conceptualizing "Beliefs"

Beliefs can be understood as something that is assumed as true. In social and academic settings what is usually true is contingent on the establishment of seniority, authorship, and research. In terms of English language teaching, it is sometimes assumed or believed that experienced educators have all the necessary tools to teach effectively. However, the idea or belief that teaching and learning is a one-way process where only experienced mentors are authorized to teach inexperienced mentees can be disrupted since merely having seniority may not

guarantee good teaching practices. Borg (2011) helps us re-assert that beliefs "are propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change" (p. 370). On the other hand, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) conceptualize beliefs as an important part of the process of understanding how educators shape their teaching practices. Consequently, understanding how different teaching practices are shaped by different sets of beliefs can also facilitate the re-conceptualizing of educators' teaching methods and their decisions in the classroom. Additionally, Richards et al. (2001) assert that understanding the beliefs and principles teachers operate on is part of the process of grasping how teachers conceptualize their work and how they approach it.

Here, we may conclude that beliefs are connected to the way(s) in which the individual notions and personal judgement teachers have about themselves have an impact on their teaching practices in the classroom. Barrot (2016) theorizes that teachers' beliefs are also closely connected to cognition, which plays a crucial role in teachers' development and their classroom practices. Borg (2003) conceptualizes teacher cognition as "the unobservable dimension of teaching—what teachers know, believe, and think" (p. 81). Therefore, if beliefs are related to cognition, it can be argued that they are deeply internalized and assumed as general truths or common knowledge that is seemingly undisputable. Crookes (2015) insists that beliefs and cognition can be used interchangeably, which reinforces the notion that what we believe in is what we know and vice versa.

Barcelos (2000) identifies how beliefs can strongly influence teaching methods, behaviors, attitudes, and teaching decision-making processes in the classroom. She also mentions how beliefs are complex notions of what is assumed as true; therefore, it is also a complex process to change them entirely. Furthermore, Johnson (as cited in Cota-Grijalva & Ruiz-Esparza-Barajas, 2013) states that "most teachers guide their actions and decisions by a set of organized personal beliefs and that these often affect their performance, consciously or unconsciously" (p. 82). There is no doubt that teachers' beliefs guide and affect what teachers do in the classroom, so there is a close relationship between beliefs and actions.

Another element connected to beliefs is practical knowledge. Practical knowledge is developed when interacting through experience in the field. According to Ross and Chan (2016), the accumulation of teachers' life experiences such as schooling, upbringing, and so on, is unique and personal and shapes their teaching practices in the classroom as well as the way materials are designed to facilitate learning. Moreover, the classroom constitutes a space where practical knowledge is gained, and beliefs shaped. Consequently, the more practical opportunities teachers can have, the more actions can be taken to re-purpose beliefs and implement professional development programs (Richardson, 1996).

Research on changes in teachers' beliefs suggests that classroom and schooling experiences become strong influences on assumptions and knowledge formation. Not only are beliefs commonly associated with thought processes, but they are also related to the socio-historical contexts where human activity can be the object of study in terms of actions and how those contribute to shaping thought (Burns et al., 2015).

Based on the theoretical framework and the limited research done on the use of reverse mentoring in the educational field, we argue that reverse mentoring is a useful approach throughout the teaching process. Teachers' beliefs are likely to be modified and this can serve as a starting point to eventually provide in-service teachers with strategies to optimize their English teaching which would ultimately lead to the improvement of the teaching of English in elementary schools.

Method

This study utilizes qualitative methods of collecting information such as questionnaires, interviews, and class observations. We carried out an in-depth exploration

of participants' beliefs about teaching English to young learners and how those beliefs were modified after observing student-teachers' English teaching practices. The mentoring between English student-teachers (mentors) and in-service elementary school teachers (mentees) constitutes a reverse mentoring experience.

Participants

This study had two groups of participants: (a) Five elementary school teachers in Montería (Colombia) who were willing to participate in the project and who, despite lacking strong foundations in teaching English, had to teach it, and (b) a group of five eighth-semester undergraduate students from the English language teaching program at Universidad de Córdoba, who carried out their pedagogical practicum in an elementary school. We were the student-teachers' practicum advisors and were responsible for collecting and analyzing the information.

Data Collection

The data collection process was conducted in three stages. First, we identified the school teachers' beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching English to children by using three data collection instruments: questionnaires, interviews, and class observations. The questionnaire was an adapted teacher version from the BALLI—Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory—by Horwitz (1988; some questions from the original version were modified and scale options were yes/no). In-service teachers were interviewed by using a semi-structured format. Also, we observed four lessons to determine the coherence between the teachers' stated beliefs (identified through the questionnaire) and their classroom practices.

During the second stage, or the reverse mentoring implementation, teachers kept journals to reflect on student-teachers' teaching practices. After the observations, there were feedback sessions whereby each student-teacher met the school teacher and the researchers, who acted as moderators, in one-hour sessions, aimed at asking questions regarding the strategies and procedures in the student-teachers' lessons. We recorded and transcribed these conversations.

In the third stage, we observed the teachers six additional times to confirm changes in their classroom practices after the student-teachers had finished their practicum process; a final interview was also applied with the same purpose. Table 1 presents a summary of the stages and different data collection procedures used in this study.

Table 1. Research Stages and Data Collection

Stage	Data collection instruments
Identification of in-service teachers' beliefs about teaching English	• Questionnaire • Interview • Observations
Student-teachers' teaching practicum (reverse mentoring process)	• In-service teachers' journals • Feedback sessions
Identification of possible changes in beliefs and improvement in the teaching practice	• Interview • Observations

Data Analysis

The first (diagnosis) and second (reverse mentoring implementation) stages of the research study played a crucial role in identifying teachers' beliefs and assumptions as well as their English teaching practices through the questionnaire, interviews, and observations. The data obtained were triangulated and analyzed, and the results presented following the categories in Horwitz's (1988) BALLI, to demonstrate how teachers' beliefs were either transformed or remained the same after the implementation of the reverse mentoring process.

Findings

Findings focus on the influence of the reverse mentoring relationship on in-service teachers' beliefs and practice toward teaching English to children.

Beliefs About Foreign Language Proficiency

Before the reverse mentoring process, a strong belief that teachers had was that English could be taught as any other school subject in the curriculum, so anyone could teach it; that is, they were convinced that teaching English did not require specific methodological knowledge. This perception was ratified through the answers collected in both the questionnaire and interviews: "The teacher of primary levels teaches nine areas at the same time, including English"[1] (Interview 1, Teacher 2). And then she added "I use the booklet and follow the pronunciation that appears there." Along the same lines, Teacher 4 mentioned: "I teach my English class as I teach the rest of the subjects" (Interview 1).

During the first stage, the collected information also reflected how this belief was evidenced in the classroom; for example, some teachers wrote decontextualized lists of vocabulary or grammar structures on the board and translated them into Spanish. Fajardo (2013) has reflected on English teaching practices and concluded that being unaware of recent methodologies to teach English is one of the main reasons why in-service teachers end up using their own set of beliefs to teach English to children instead of having a clear methodological approach in mind. It means that even though in-service teachers considered themselves capable of teaching English to children, their practice did not reflect the appropriate procedures to do so.

However, the teachers' beliefs about English language teaching were transformed during the second stage while the teaching practicum was in progress, as their reflections on what was observed from student-teachers were positive. For instance, Teacher 1 wrote in his journal entry:

> The methodology implemented is always very active and interactive; making use of mutual inductive and deductive activities, where the student is the center of the teaching process. The student-teacher always integrates abilities: writing, speaking, listening…she also uses pictures and interactive activities and this is why her classes are always fun and motivating.

Similarly, Teacher 2 showed a positive attitude towards the methodology implemented by student-teachers. As she expressed in her journal: "[The student-teacher] motivates her classes very well since the very beginning of the lesson (warming up, leading in, instruction, and so on), she is able to get students' attention so that they become interested in the topic and activities." This shows that being an English teacher at any school level requires not only a good command of the language, but also the use of a specific methodology. According to Porras et al. (2018), "it is paramount that teachers be sufficiently qualified since they play an important role as facilitators of the teaching and learning process, equally, [they] are a source of input for their students, especially at the elementary level" (p. 170). For this reason, the reverse mentoring stage was beneficial for the in-service teachers since they became aware of the importance of possessing knowledge as regards how to teach English to children.

Consequently, in stage three, when teachers were teaching their English classes, their effort to minimize the translation strategy was observed, especially in the leading-in activity. Instead, they encouraged learners to participate in class by asking questions to activate pupils' previous knowledge, imitating what student-teachers had done during their classes. Particularly, Teacher 2 changed the way she started her classes. The following excerpt of a conversation between Teacher 2 and her students evidences the students' engagement in the English class through the use of their background knowledge:

> Teacher: Miguel, what is your mother's name? (in Spanish)
> Student 1: Keila, teacher!
> Teacher: Good! (with thumbs up)
> The teacher pastes a chart on the board
> Teacher: Okay. What is this? (pointing to the board)

1 All teachers' excerpts have been translated from Spanish.

> Student 3: A chart (in Spanish). A big tree!
> Teacher: A family tree, repeat! . . . And what are there on those tree branches? (in Spanish) [*sic*]
> Student 1: Pictures of people! (in Spanish)
> Student 3: They are mom and dad. (in Spanish)
> Teacher: Bravo! This is the father (pointing to the picture on the board) and this is the mother. Repeat!

After the reverse mentoring took place, the English lesson was delivered differently. Therefore, the class topic (i.e., the family) was approached in a more functional way. In previous observations, Teacher 2's lessons were more focused on grammatical structures and translation, but after the reverse mentoring her classes seem to be more communicative.

The collected data show all the biases teachers had about their own learning of English. During the feedback sessions, they mentioned being concerned about their inability to speak English well since they did not think they had the necessary skills to learn it. Teachers based their opinions on their previous schooling experience and all the barriers they seemed to have experienced when learning English. These perceptions about learning English confirm what Moodie (2016) has expressed about the impact of schooling on the shaping of English teachers' teaching practices and the development of communicative skills in the classroom.

From the gathered data, it can be drawn, for example, that unsuccessful English learning experiences have negatively influenced elementary school teachers' perceptions of their own learning abilities. These perceptions or beliefs have also hindered the way(s) in which English classes are planned and implemented since teachers rely on their limited knowledge to teach English and are unaware of language teaching approaches due to their lack of specific training. However, despite their English language limitations, teachers also showed a great deal of commitment and tried to re-evaluate, re-design, and re-think previous language teaching practices due to the effectiveness in the implementation of reverse mentoring. Teacher 2 corroborates the positive impact reverse mentoring had on their teaching when mentioning that "observing student-teachers teaching English motivated her to start doing something to improve her English level as well as her own teaching" (Journal).

Beliefs About Learning and Communication Strategies

Regarding learning and communication strategies, two important aspects related to beliefs were evidenced. The first was linked to the slight importance given to teaching speaking to children since, as the participating teachers conveyed, their students would never use English in real life; therefore, exposure to the language was not necessary. It is evident that the teachers are not aware that learning a language implies being proficient in all skills, including speaking. Regarding speaking, Brewster et al. (2007) state that although children are not proficient in a foreign language, they always look for occasions to show others what they learn in their classroom. It is very common to find children who want to express themselves using the foreign language inside and outside the classroom since they feel proud of their new learning.

Another belief associated with the previous one has to do with practice and fluency. At the beginning of the process, the teachers believed that a lot of practice to develop fluency was not necessary at early ages. However, practice is fundamental for learning a second language: the more you use the language, the better. Practice helps learners to automatize the new language and, consequently, gain fluency (Jones, 2018). Even though children are beginning the language learning process, they can start their path towards fluency thanks to the different kind of practices teachers expose them to. That is why teachers should provide students with a lot of controlled and guided practices that will help them internalize the new language and prepare them for more demanding tasks.

Both beliefs mentioned above were confirmed in the class observations; however, after the reverse mentoring process, teachers expressed that their students needed to be exposed to the foreign language for its use both inside and outside the classroom. Teacher 3 mentioned that:

> They may use it inside and outside the class…because you can see them trying to use what the teacher has taught. Additionally, they see its use everywhere…in the games, in TV shows, and in announcements. People are always using English; it is an invasion of English words wherever you go. (Feedback session 3)

Even though at the beginning of the process the teachers thought children would not use English, they changed their mind once they observed children trying to use what they had learned in the class with student-teachers. The teachers became aware of the importance of using the language in different contexts, not only inside the classroom, but also outside it. Besides, they realized that the language can be practiced in other scenarios or through other means such as TV, music, and video games, among others Although they were not able to teach the whole class in English, a change in their attitude towards language learning was noticeable, especially in their willingness to do it in a different way, as evidenced in one of our observation entries:

> Teacher 3 began the class greeting students in English, followed by the sign of the cross in English. Then, she wrote on the board the word "star" and asked the students its meaning. Student said "no," and the teacher expressed "they shine at night sky" and immediately students said in Spanish that it was a star. The teacher called a student to go to the board to draw a star. The teacher continued writing other words on the board (sun, moon, cloud, and others). She used gestures and key words to make pupils guess the meaning.

Most teachers' beliefs and attitudes were re-shaped due to their interest to improve their teaching practices and make the language learning process more meaningful for children. Thus, they started implementing strategies and steps used by the student-teachers, such as greeting students and praying in English at the beginning of each lesson. Based on our observations, four of the five teachers used body language and were engaged in urging learners to guess the meaning of the words and associate them with pictures. The use of reverse mentoring as a language teaching approach for experienced teachers to learn from student-teachers encouraged them to re-think and re-purpose their beliefs and teaching practices so that the learning of English resulted in a more meaningful experience for their learners.

Beliefs About the Nature of Language Learning/Teaching

The information gleaned from the questionnaire and interviews during the first phase of the project revealed three aspects related to beliefs or assumptions about the language teaching process. Firstly, there is great concern about pronunciation since it is seen as a relevant element when it comes to the teaching of speaking. As Teacher 4 commented:

> We have the topic…the days of the week…I write Monday in Spanish and in English, then we read the word and we pronounce it in English…do you understand me? Having them pronounce since that is the important thing about English. (Interview 1)

Teacher 4 considers pronunciation to be an important aspect of learning and speaking English as well as having an "excellent" accent. Teachers are aware of the importance of pronunciation when learning another language. According to Levis and Grant (2003), pronunciation plays a vital role in communication. It is essential to recognize the influence pronunciation has on the speaking skill: pronunciation may block or permit oral communication.

The second belief teachers reflected on was related to the idea that a child who has not firmly learned his

mother tongue cannot learn a foreign one. According to Teacher 2, "children that already have strengthened their mother tongue…we say…it becomes easier for them to learn any foreign language" (Interview 1). In fact, there has been a long discussion about the influence of L1 in L2 learning. L1 can serve as a support system in L2 learning since it is the language that children already know. However, it can also have a negative impact as some of the mistakes might be linked to the interference of the students' L1.

A third aspect related to beliefs and/or assumptions discussed by teachers has to do with the importance of teaching English with a different theoretical or methodological approach. Teachers 1 and 2 did not agree that there is the need for a specific approach to teach English to children. Teacher 1 supported this belief by saying, in the initial interview: "I do not see any difficulty in teaching English orally…at least at primary level… because in high school things are more advanced. At primary I do not think it is difficult to learn [English], nor to teach it."

After the reverse mentoring process, Teacher 3 expressed in her journal her overemphasis on pronunciation and the work student-teachers did in her lessons. Although at the beginning of the process teachers believed that English can be taught as any other subject, after observing student-teachers, they recognized the importance of being a professional in this field and acknowledged that student-teachers had a good methodology for teaching English to children. Likewise, they were aware of the need to have a good command of the language since they might have been teaching pronunciation mistakes.

Regarding the use of the mother tongue, teachers agreed that learning and teaching a foreign language was similar to learning and teaching the mother tongue, and they agreed on the need for using it in communication. Teacher 2 wrote:

> When the student-teacher arrived, the children and I were blown away. He entered the classroom speaking in English, kids remained very quiet listening to him… that is what makes us be concerned with their [children] speaking in English. I do not say they do no use Spanish in class, but they use English more frequently now. (Journal)

The exposure children get in the L2 is beneficial for their learning. The more the students are exposed to the new language, the more they will become familiar with it. Along the student-teachers' practicum, children became accustomed to communicating in the English language as they used it most of the class time. This implied the limitation of L1 and the need to communicate in the foreign language, so children started to use it. Likewise, after observing student-teachers, the participating teachers could recognize that this kind of classroom practices are possible and favorable for the children's language learning process. Teacher 3 also commented on the benefits of mentoring: "I think it would be beneficial to have a teacher who could implement new strategies because, maybe, I am making mistakes" (Interview 2).

Furthermore, their belief related to methodology for teaching English was also altered. As Teacher 4 expressed in her journal: "I teach my English class as I teach the rest of the subjects…but now I believe there is a special method for teaching English to children." Furthermore, Teacher 2 mentions: "The student-teacher brings materials and incorporates information and communication technologies, games, and so on. The classes are very dynamic, and I try to put that into practice."

Teaching English to children requires special methodologies and teaching strategies since children have particular features and characteristics. It was rewarding to observe that teachers' beliefs about this category were transformed after observing lessons carried out by the student-teachers. Besides, observations after the practicum finished counted for the teachers' endeavors to improve their practice, as it was registered in their journal. Teacher 1 said: "For me this has not been easy. This has been a challenge for me. I am learning with

the kids. I am trying to learn English with them, too." It was evident that after the reverse mentoring stage, these teachers grasped some new knowledge about how to teach English to children, as well as strategies that they consider might be useful in their teaching practice.

Beliefs About Motivation and Expectations

In terms of desires and opportunities, the teachers had the idea that if they learned to speak English very well, it would help them or other people to get better job opportunities. Along these lines, Teacher 4 mentions: "It is important to learn this language well. Because of jobs opportunities…and, you know, it is the universal language and a lot of information today is written in English." This was also identified in some of the answers that teachers provided in other data collection instruments and remained the same after the reverse mentoring process. Additionally, the teachers' awareness as related to foreign language learning really changed after the reverse mentoring experience since they acknowledged the importance of improving their English level, not only for job opportunities, but also to be able to verbally interact with other people and understand a lot of information they need for their current jobs and daily lives. During one feedback session, one teacher mentioned that one of the main lessons she had learned from student-teachers was the improvement of her speaking skills and the satisfaction of having enhanced her teaching practices as well. Nevertheless, she said that time was not enough to gain more knowledge from student-teachers. These changes in awareness about the teaching process was also evidenced during stage two of the process while Teacher 3 was observing student-teachers. She looked satisfied when her students were interacting with the student-teacher and describing some images. In another feedback session and after having observed one lesson by the student-teacher, Teacher 4 showed his concern towards his language teaching practices and the little interaction he offered his students. He stated: "This is one of my weaknesses, I only concentrate on the topic I'm going to teach [referring to the grammar topic]."

After analyzing the findings, it is important to mention that not only did reverse mentoring transform teachers' beliefs about teaching English to children, but it also encouraged them to improve their teaching practices through the implementation of strategies used by the student-teachers. After the reverse mentoring process ended and teachers began teaching their classes again, we observed that they increased their use of English inside the classroom: They asked their students questions in English, gave instructions in English more frequently, and encouraged students to participate in communicative activities, as evidenced in the following observation excerpt:

> Teacher 3 greets students as usual in English, she decided to start the class with a song about animals in English, through that song the teacher introduced the topic. She wrote on the board "the animals" and asked students which animals were mentioned in the song, and she wrote them in English. While she was writing, she asked children to repeat the words and, at the same time, she asked the student-teacher if pronunciation was good or wrong. Next, the teacher read and pronounced each word and asked the students for repetition. (Observation 5)

Discussion

This study explored the ways reverse mentoring contributes to transforming teachers' beliefs about teaching English to children. The findings revealed that teachers' beliefs about language teaching are closely tied to their self-image and their teaching skills based on their experience as teachers of other subject areas. Therefore, they just used their previous teaching experiences to teach English and assumed that the most important aspects when teaching English was to focus on vocabulary, basic grammar rules, and meaning. That is, the lack of knowledge in English teaching meth-

odologies and strategies allowed for teachers to make overgeneralizations about the things they thought were important, leaving speaking and communication out of their teaching practices since they did not think it was important to emphasize those areas.

The teachers' previous approach to teaching is coherent with the skills segregation view (Harmer, 2015); for instance, lists of words written in English with the corresponding translation in Spanish. The teachers' focus on translation was tied to the background experience they had had as learners; using L1 and translating from Spanish into English and vice versa (Prator & Celce-Murcia, 1979). Teachers also seemed to reproduce the same teaching techniques with which they were once taught (Lortie, 2002). However, they believe that speaking should be taught by a proficient teacher, which is connected to their own anxieties due to their lack of proficiency to do so. To elaborate, the teachers' background knowledge might have played a role in the way(s) they thought about their own English teaching practices. Burns et al. (2015) have discussed how the cognitive view of language teaching combines internal and external cognitive constructs—especially beliefs, assumptions, and previous experience—which is at the center of how teachers make certain teaching decisions and approach various subjects differently depending on their prior knowledge. Similarly, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) have stated that "beliefs are part of the process of understanding how teachers shape their work, which is significant to the comprehending of their teaching methods and their decisions in the classroom" (p. 78).

When it comes to methodology, the teachers believed that English should be taught in the same way they teach in other subject areas, which is also linked to the notion that there is one method to teach all disciplines across curriculum. This idea was significantly challenged when they recognized—through reflection and involvement—the need for a special approach when teaching English. Therefore, getting teachers involved in re-thinking their own teaching practices and reflecting on new approaches to teach English seemed to be a fruitful process. Their classroom practices positively changed, and they became interested in using more up-to-date teaching methods and being lifelong learners as well.

Reverse mentoring contributed to the progress of teachers' knowledge of English while their teaching practices benefited from the observation of the student-teachers' teaching strategies. Teachers were able to reflect on their own teaching practices and improve them, which implies that the reverse mentoring experience urged them to reshape the pre-conceived ways of teaching English to children. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) also mentioned that "teachers' beliefs are affected by training courses, learning experiences, professional development, teaching experiences, and teaching practices" (p. 82), an opinion which supports the notion that reverse mentoring could provide teachers with tools for them to grow and upgrade their own teaching methodologies.

Conclusions

After the implementation of reverse mentoring as a process and approach to improve teaching practices in the English classroom, we can conclude that this process was helpful in that teachers became more aware about the development of their teaching practices, and consequently, the learning of English for their students. Through this professional development experience, the in-service teachers showed a better understanding of the need to use different teaching strategies according to the expected outcomes from their students. Also, teachers were able to challenge themselves and their pre-conceived notions that have been created and reinforced through their own learning experiences. Hopefully, they changed their beliefs in understanding English teaching as an opportunity for developing elementary students' English skills based on their cognitive levels. The improvement of English teaching practices should remain a constant concern so that the teaching of English

starts becoming a meaningful experience for both teachers and students. Although reverse mentoring may become a helpful and effective strategy to reduce the harmful impact of non-proficient English teachers in class, this does not constitute the only way in which English teaching practices can be enhanced.

This study has also contributed to the improvement of English teaching practices via the implementation of a reverse mentoring plan with meaningful steps that can transform teachers' sets of beliefs, which ultimately lead teachers to take action to effectively upgrade their classroom practices. The new teaching practices and knowledge were the result of an apprenticeship of observation and the reflections prompted by the reverse mentoring process. Different scholars prioritize different steps during the teaching-learning process. For Moodie (2016) and Lortie (2002), the apprenticeship of observation is the first step, while Schön (1983) and Fenstermacher (1994) focused on reflection, and Clandinin (1986) on practice. On the other hand, Carter (1990) and Fenstermacher (1994) mentioned that experience in the classroom is also thought to shape beliefs and practical knowledge. Once teachers incorporate new information into their daily practice and knowledge, getting a better and informed understanding of the learning process and teaching methodologies is quintessential.

Limitations and Implications

One of the limitations was that the researchers were responsible for both the implementation of reverse mentoring by student-teachers and observing the progress teachers were making. Although we tried to distance ourselves from our roles as advisors and researchers, it is also likely that participants were biased since they were trying to present a positive view of the program and its results. On the one hand, student-teachers were interested in earning a passing grade. On the other hand, the teachers wanted to show progress and professionalism. A second limitation we experienced was the hours of English instruction per week. Since there are very few hours of English teaching every week, reverse mentoring, observations, and the analysis of results took longer.

An important implication that comes from the implementation of reverse mentoring for the improvement of English teaching practices is that student-teachers are seen by the teachers as a credible source of knowledge and as possessing expertise. In other words, student-teachers became role models for elementary school in-service teachers. Hence, this study opens up the possibilities for further research with a focus on using reverse mentoring to develop different language skills and improve teaching practices. Finally, although reverse mentoring might have contributed to the improvement of the teaching practices of those teachers whose area of expertise is not English teaching, this is neither the only possibility nor the most efficient way to solve English teaching difficulties.

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About the Authors

Liliana Valle is a full time English teacher and current chair of the Foreign Languages Licentiate program at the Universidad de Córdoba (Colombia). She holds a master's degree in Education and is part of the EDUTLAN research group. She has 20 years of teaching experience in higher education.

Danilsa Lorduy-Arellano is a full time English teacher in the Foreign Languages Licentiate program from the Universidad de Córdoba (Colombia) and holds a master's degree in Education with an emphasis in English language teaching from Universidad del Norte (Colombia). She has experience leading teaching practicums.

Nohora Porras-González is a doctoral candidate in Education and holds a master's degree in the same field. She has been a foreign language professor and educator for more than 20 years. Currently, she is the practicum coordinator and the coordinator of the students' research group in the School of Education at Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia in Bucaramanga.

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In-Service University-Level EFL Instructors' Language Assessment Literacy and Training Needs

Requerimientos de capacitación y de literacidad en evaluación de lenguas de docentes de inglés en ejercicio

Ali Sayyadi
University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

The study examined university-level English instructors' assessment training experiences, classroom-based assessment practices, and assessment training needs in Iran. Sixty-eight instructors who were randomly selected through academic social networks filled out a questionnaire. Eight instructors were also interviewed. The results indicated that the instructors had received insufficient training, especially in practical aspects, because they had solely been exposed to assessment concepts and theories in the limited and impractical assessment courses offered to preservice teachers in their universities. Also, they had recurrently failed to put their limited assessment knowledge into practice. Despite this situation, they preferred to get basic rather than advanced assessment training due to personal and contextual constraints. The study bears implications for university English instructors, teacher educators, and university administrators.

Keywords: assessment training needs, Iranian context, language assessment, literacy, university English instructors

Este estudio indagó sobre las necesidades y experiencias de capacitación y las prácticas de evaluación de 68 docentes de inglés universitarios iraníes. Los participantes, seleccionados al azar de redes sociales académicas, diligenciaron el cuestionario. Ocho participantes fueron entrevistados. Los resultaron mostraron que los participantes habían recibido poca capacitación, especialmente en aspectos prácticos, a través de limitados cursos diseñados para docentes en formación sobre aspectos conceptuales y teóricos. Los participantes también indicaron un consistente fracaso para poner en práctica su poco conocimiento sobre evaluación. A pesar de esto, los participantes prefieren recibir capacitación básica en lugar de una más avanzada debido a limitaciones personales y contextuales. El estudio tiene implicaciones para docentes de inglés universitarios, formadores docentes y administrativos universitarios.

Palabras clave: evaluación de lenguas, contexto iraní, docentes de inglés universitarios, literacidad, requerimientos de capacitación

Ali Sayyadi https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2055-9154 · Email: ali.sayyadi@ut.ac.ir

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Introduction

Assessment has been widely recognized as an indispensable part of a language teacher's job. A great deal of a teacher's time is typically spent on undertaking various assessment and evaluation activities such as developing and administering tests, rating examinees' performances, and making appropriate decisions regarding the test-takers' proficiencies and the quality of teaching and learning activities (Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010). Language assessment is not solely a means to monitor and rank students' achievements at the end of a course and make decisions about their futures (i.e., assessment of learning). Teachers may also carry out *assessment for learning* in order to improve students' learning through providing frequent informative feedback, building their confidence, and helping them undertake self-regulated learning and assessment to feel responsible for their own success (Levi & Inbar-Lourie, 2020; Stiggins, 2002). It might also be beneficial for teachers by providing them with ample evidence to regulate their instruction and to sharpen their pedagogic and evaluative qualities (Mertler, 2016). Accordingly, it is necessary for language teachers to have sufficient language assessment literacy (LAL) to maximize teaching and learning practices in classrooms through carrying out efficient assessments (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Harding & Kremmel, 2016).

Widely acknowledged as a significant construct (Scarino, 2013; Taylor, 2013), LAL is generally regarded as the skills, abilities, knowledge, and expertise that language assessors are required to attain in order to carry out efficient language assessments (Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2017). Fulcher (2012) defines teachers' LAL and, more specifically, the skills that they need to acquire to be assessment-literate as:

> The knowledge, skills and abilities required to design, develop, maintain or evaluate, large-scale standardised and/or classroom based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. The ability to place knowledge, skills, processes, principles and concepts within wider historical, social, political and philosophical frameworks in order to understand why practices have arisen as they have, and to evaluate the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals. (p. 125)

In spite of the continuing controversy about what LAL is required for different stakeholders (Inbar-Lourie, 2017), there is a consensus that language teachers are the largest group of LAL users and, consequently, require LAL most immediately (Harding & Kremmel, 2016). To perform assessment activities that are consistent with the desired learning objectives, language teachers are required to obtain appropriate LAL. Lack of LAL would threaten the reliability and validity of a test considered for the evaluation of language learners and, as a result, impede students' language learning (Xu & Brown, 2017). Therefore, promoting teachers' LAL through, for instance, launching language assessment training programs, appears essential in developing their assessment skills. Apart from tapping into the knowledge and skills that teachers are required to acquire to be assessment-literate, language assessment training programs need to address teachers' perceptions and personal training needs (Vogt et al., 2020).

Different facets of language assessment training have been studied in western academic settings including teachers' training needs and the efficiency of face-to-face and virtual training (Malone, 2008; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). However, it is still underexplored in the higher education context, particularly in parts of the world where education is exam-oriented (Yan et al., 2018). Accordingly, there is a dearth of research concerning language assessment training in the Iranian higher education context. In other words, previous studies have scantly explored the assessment training university English instructors have received or wish to receive in the Iranian context. The present study, therefore, sought to examine university-level English instructors' assessment

training experiences, classroom assessment practices, and assessment training needs (ATN) in Iran. University instructors are recurrently busy with assessment-based activities such as generating and administering tests, rating or ranking performances, providing feedback, and making decisions. Therefore, exploring university instructors' ATNs may help them generate a more profound understanding of their assessment skills and, consequently, induce teacher educators to design and offer training programs in line with the instructors' needs.

The present study sought to find appropriate answers to the following questions:

1. What assessment training have Iranian university English instructors received?
2. What are Iranian university English instructors' assessment training needs?

Literature Review

The term *assessment*, for many years, was associated with the process of evaluating and summing up what pupils had learned and achieved at the end of a certain course. In this traditional approach, known as *summative assessment* or *assessment of learning*, "the actions that guided learning processes before the end of the course were generally not regarded as kinds of assessment" (William, 2011, p. 4). More recently, however, there has been a growing tendency to practice *formative assessment* or *assessment for learning* with the aim of guiding and forming students' learning based on their potential capabilities and adjusting pedagogic practices to the needs of the learners. Despite some minor distinctions between *formative assessment* and *assessment for learning* (see Swaffield, 2011), the two terms are usually used synonymously in the related literature (see Dann, 2014, for further discussion). Motivated by the *assessment for learning* initiative, developing LAL has become critical for language teachers and the subject of discussion and research in the related literature (see Hasselgreen, 2008; Hasselgreen et al., 2004; Reckase, 2008; Scarino, 2013; Taylor, 2009; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014; Walters, 2010).

The related literature is replete with studies which have examined LAL among English language teachers working in schools (e.g., Chung & Nam, 2018; Guerin, 2010; Hasselgreen et al., 2004; Watmani et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2018; Zulaiha et al., 2020) and institutes (e.g., Crusan et al., 2016; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Lam, 2015). The teachers in most studies (e.g., Crusan et al., 2016; Lam, 2015; Malone, 2017; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014; Watmani et al., 2020) were reported to demonstrate underdeveloped LAL and to lack adequate skills and knowledge to carry out a fair and efficient assessment. Watmani et al., for instance, studied LAL among 200 Iranian high school teachers of English and concluded that the teachers had poor assessment literacy competence.

The disappointing condition of language teachers' LAL highlights the urgent need for training teachers in this regard (Fulcher, 2012; Malone, 2017). Hasselgreen et al. (2004), for example, examined this issue in the European context and came to the conclusion that insufficient attention was paid to training teachers in the field of language assessment and evaluation. Guerin (2010) also reported that the participants in his study had not received adequate assessment training and called for programs that could enable them to become more skillful assessors. Fulcher (2012) and Chung and Nam (2018) have also reported similar findings in their studies in which the participating instructors voiced the need for training programs that prepared them to be experts in designing and developing tests. On the other hand, the teachers who participated in Gan and Lam's (2020) study did not give much weight to assessment training programs and refrained from attending such programs due to personal factors. Hence, it seems that no consensus on the criticality of assessment training programs has been reached in the related literature.

In general, the findings reported in previous related studies have suggested ATNs as highly contextualized and individualized factors. Language instructors from various settings with specific educational norms have reported different training needs. Tsagari and Vogt

(2017), for example, scrutinized language teachers' ATNs across seven European countries and found that the instructors from different countries focused on varying priorities in their assessment training programs and whether they showed desires to attend training programs depended on the assessment culture of their country. Greek teachers, for instance, required advanced training courses since the English curriculum standards as well as the Ministry of Education in the country emphasized the significance of assessment practices in academia. In contrast, German teachers exhibited moderate training desires concerning skill-based assessment because German foreign language learners were evaluated by national tests mainly based on linguistic skills.

Due to the context-specific nature of LAL, ATNs are often customized. Specifically, since teachers' LAL involves their knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and beliefs about assessment (Scarino, 2013), their ATNs can differ individually. The English language teachers participating in various studies (e.g., DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Yan et al., 2018) voiced greater training needs for assessment practice than for assessment theory. They, specifically, did not show any interest in theoretical principles of language assessment and refrained from applying the theories in their assessment practices. ATNs are also individualized owing to some contributing factors. Yan et al. (2018) argued in this regard that an enormous workload prevents language teachers from expressing their ATNs in assessment theories and principles because it is challenging and time-consuming to study and acquire these theories and principles. Teachers' varying individual desires may also be due to the imbalanced training contents that they have received (Lam, 2015). Lam (2015) also argued that language assessment courses fail to provide preservice teachers with the essential assessment skills. This inefficiency, in his view, results in the generation of different assessment skills and, consequently, various ATNs.

Although the previous studies have yielded precious insights into assessment training for language teachers, they have mainly been concerned with English teachers working in schools or institutes and only a few were on university instructors. Likewise, as the review of the related literature indicates, university English instructors' ATNs are underexplored in the Iranian context. The current study, therefore, was carried out to fill this gap.

Method

A mixed-method design was used in the present study. More specifically, in order to complement and triangulate the collected data to provide a more profound understanding of Iranian university English instructors' ATNs, both quantitative and qualitative data were accumulated and analyzed. Online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

Participants

The study was conducted after the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, which gave the researcher no choice but to find appropriate cases through social networks. More specifically, to sample the participating university instructors, the researcher randomly looked for appropriate cases in some academic social networks such as LinkedIn and Academia and sent them messages containing a brief description of the objectives of study along with formal participation requests and the questionnaire. They were also requested to share their demographic information and leave their telephone number or email address at the end of the questionnaire if they were interested in receiving the follow-up interview. The messages were sent to more than 300 English instructors who taught at the university level in Iranian state, Azad, Payame-Nour, and applied science and technology universities.

Eventually, 68 instructors (28 men and 40 women) with the age range of 30 to 58 years participated in the study by filling in the questionnaires. Fifty-nine participants taught English to non-English major students and nine taught English major students. The majority

of the participants (about 80%) got a master's degree in applied linguistics, linguistics, English literature, or English language translation. The rest had a doctoral degree in the mentioned fields of studies. Their teaching experiences ranged from 3 to 21 years.

Fourteen participants agreed to receive follow-up interviews. The researcher, subsequently, selected one volunteer randomly and interviewed him through Skype. After analyzing the recorded data, he interviewed another case through the same procedure and kept it up to reaching the status of data saturation and coherence. The recorded data saturated after the participation of eight participants whose demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Interviewees

Interviewees	Gender	Age	Teaching experience	Degree
I1	Male	35	5 years	Master's
I2	Female	38	9 years	PhD
I3	Female	36	5 years	Master's
I4	Male	39	11 years	PhD
I5	Female	32	3 years	Master's
I6	Female	35	3 years	Master's
I7	Female	37	6 years	Master's
I8	Female	45	15 years	PhD

Data Collection Instruments

To accumulate the quantitative data, the questionnaire developed by Vogt and Tsagari (2014) was adapted and used. This instrument was selected since it has also been employed and validated in similar studies on ATNs such as Lan and Fan (2019). It consists of three sections. The first section seeks participants' demographic information including their gender, age, academic degree, teaching experience, student types (English or non-English major), and educational background. The second section investigates the assessment training respondents have received and wish to get. This section comprises three thematic areas including concepts and content of language testing, aims of testing and assessment, and classroom assessment performances. Each thematic area is divided into two parts: received training and needed training. A three-point Likert scale is used for each item with *not at all*, *a little*, and *advanced* options for received training and *none*, *basic*, and *advanced* for needed training. It is worth mentioning that the terms *a little*, *basic*, and *advanced* are quantified to dispel any likely ambiguity. More specifically, the terms *a little*, *basic*, and *advanced* are specified as training for *one day*, *two days*, and *three or more days* respectively. At the end of the questionnaire, one open-ended question is used to seek instructors' perceptions about their specific ATNs.

The questionnaire was piloted with four English instructors teaching in Iranian universities. As a result of the comments provided by the respondents, some minor changes were made to the questionnaire including removing similar items, rewording the technical terms, and reordering the items. Eventually, the questionnaire (see Appendix A) comprised 22 items including nine items for concepts and content of language testing, four items for aims of testing and assessment, and nine items for classroom assessment performances.

Semi-structured interviews were also used to triangulate the collected data and let the respondents extend, elaborate on, and provide details about their perceptions of their ATNs. Such a plan could lead to the richness and depth of the responses given by the respondents as well as the comprehensiveness of the emerging findings. The interview questions were concerned with the respondents' classroom assessment practices, assessment training experiences, assessment learning resources, and ATNs. The interview questions (see Appendix B) were developed in English and, subsequently, checked by two experts who were teaching English-major students in Iranian universities.

Data Collection Procedure

Since the study was conducted after the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 and also focused on a wide range

of university teachers from various universities in the country, the researcher sought to take the advantage of academic social networks (e.g., LinkedIn and Academia) to collect the data. More specifically, the researcher found cases with the required features on social networks and sent them the intended message and the questionnaire. Seventy-one respondents returned the questionnaires after about three months. Three submissions were excluded due to incomplete responses. The responses given in the rest (68 questionnaires) were loaded into SPSS 24 to be analyzed.

After collecting the quantitative data, the researcher strived to contact the respondents who left their telephone number or email address at the end of the questionnaire and set an interview time with the volunteers. The interviews were conducted and recorded through Skype. To facilitate the communication and give the respondents the chance to elaborate on their viewpoints at length, they were privileged to opt for the language to respond freely. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher sought to avoid bias through the recommended strategies (for more details see McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). More specifically, he persistently employed field work, accounted for participants' language verbatim accounts, and checked the data informally with the participants during the interviews. In addition to recording all interviews with the permission of the participants, the researcher took hand-written notes of the key points of the interviewees' responses throughout the interviews.

Data Analysis Procedure

SPSS 24 was employed to analyze the data collected through the questionnaires. Analysis of the data indicated a strong internal and consistent reliability of the questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.92$). Descriptive statistics of the 23 items, including their frequencies and percentages, were reported to answer the research questions quantitatively. Besides, the frequency of the recurring themes was calculated to analyze the responses given to the open-ended question.

The recorded interviews were analyzed inductively and deductively. To conduct the inductive procedure, the interview contents were analyzed through code-labeling and identifying recurring themes. That is, the data from both interviews and open-ended questions were transcribed verbatim and integrated with the notes taken. The transcriptions were then read frequently and recursively so that the interactions could be envisaged in detail. This also helped to find connections between the results emerging from both sources. The researcher developed open codes concerning the research questions independently, which sometimes entailed going back and forth through the data. The categories and relationships among the themes emerged from more refined cross-referencing among the themes, memos, and participants' accounts. This procedure proceeded incrementally up to data saturation and coherence and, eventually, conclusions. The deductive approach taken in the data analysis procedure involved referring to questionnaire items as categories. To ensure coding reliability, coding and thematizing were verified by an expert who was an associate professor of applied linguistics and had a great wealth of research experience.

Results From Questionnaires

The results are discussed in the three thematic areas considered in the questionnaire including concepts and content of language testing, aims of testing and assessment, and classroom assessment performances.

Content and Concepts of Language Testing

As can be seen in Table 2, it seems that most of the training the respondents received in the content and concepts revolved around the qualities of a test. That is, less than 11% of the respondents claimed that they had received no training in the concept and content of test reliability, validity, and discrimination. Only two respondents reported no training in the concept and content of test reliability and validity. On the other

hand, more than half of the participants did not receive any remarkable training in the content and concept of assessing language skills and the social dimension of language assessment. Social dimension, among all content and concept areas, appears to be the most neglected one in training, with 74% of respondents reporting no training in this regard. Integrated language skills were reported to be the second least trained area of content and concepts among the respondents, 70% of whom claimed no training at all.

Table 2. Respondents' Assessment Training Received and Needed in Content and Concepts

		Received training		Needed training	
		f	%	*f*	%
Receptive skills (listening/reading)	Not at all	36	53	9	13
	A little	27	40	37	54
	Advanced	5	7	22	33
Productive skills (writing/speaking)	Not at all	36	53	9	13
	A little	27	40	37	54
	Advanced	5	7	15	33
Integrated language skills	Not at all	48	70	6	9
	A little	18	27	43	63
	Advanced	2	3	19	28
Validity	Not at all	2	3	6	9
	A little	51	75	41	60
	Advanced	15	22	21	31
Reliability	Not at all	2	3	6	9
	A little	51	75	41	60
	Advanced	15	22	21	31
Discrimination	Not at all	8	11	8	11
	A little	52	76	39	58
	Advanced	8	13	21	31
Difficulty	Not at all	10	15	6	9
	A little	50	73	42	61
	Advanced	8	12	20	30
Statistics	Not at all	15	23	5	8
	A little	46	67	36	53
	Advanced	7	10	27	39
Social dimension	Not at all	50	74	8	12
	A little	16	23	39	57
	Advanced	2	3	21	31

Note. The percentages have been rounded up and down.

Concerning the respondents' ATNs, Table 2 indicates that the majority of the respondents longed to receive training in all concept and content areas of language assessment. However, their needs for basic training were unveiled to be stronger than those for advanced training. That is, more than half of the respondents reported a need for basic training in all content and concept areas, whereas about one-third of them desired advanced training in content and concepts.

Aims of Testing and Assessment

The results in Table 3 show that more than one-third of the participants had not received any training in the four areas concerned with the purposes of testing and assessment. One out of two respondents claimed that they had received basic training in the four issues dealing with the purpose of testing. It was also revealed that the amount of advanced training that they had received in any of the four areas was negligible. That is, only less than 5% of the respondents reported receiving advanced training in the purpose of testing and assessment.

Table 3. Respondents' Assessment Training Received and Needed in Purpose of Testing

		Received training		Needed training	
		f	%	*f*	%
Giving grades	Not at all	25	36	7	10
	A little	40	59	43	63
	Advanced	3	5	18	27
Finding out what is needed in teaching and learning	Not at all	27	39	2	3
	A little	39	58	37	54
	Advanced	2	3	29	43
Placing students	Not at all	26	38	9	13
	A little	38	58	44	64
	Advanced	4	4	15	23
Selecting students	Not at all	26	38	10	16
	A little	38	58	41	59
	Advanced	4	4	17	25

Note. The percentages have been rounded up and down.

Most of the participants also thought they still lacked training in the four areas covered in this theme. However, they showed greater tendencies to attend basic training sessions about the purposes of testing and assessment rather than advanced ones. The participants seeking to receive training in "finding out what is needed in teaching and learning" made up the largest percentage of advanced training applicants at 43 percent. It may indicate the respondents' attention to the significant connection between assessment and teaching.

Classroom-Based Assessment Performances

The results in Table 4 indicate that more than half of the respondents received no training in the practical aspects of classroom assessment except for "selecting appropriate assessment methods," with less than two-thirds of the respondents receiving training. Among these classroom-based assessment practices, "preparing students for high-stakes tests" and "using integrated assessment" seem to be the most neglected areas in

training, with more than four-fifths of respondents reporting no training in these aspects. Less than 8% of the respondents reported attending advanced training sessions in any of the classroom-based assessment practices. On the other hand, nearly 90% of the respondents expressed their desire to attend either basic or advanced training sessions in the practical aspects. Except for "preparing students for high stakes exams," the instructors expressed more need for basic training in classroom-based assessment practices.

Table 4. Respondents' Assessment Training Received and Needed in Classroom-Based Assessment Practices

		Received training		Needed training	
		f	%	*f*	%
Developing classroom-based assessment	Not at all	50	73	8	11
	A little	15	22	36	53
	Advanced	3	5	24	36
Selecting and using ready-made tests	Not at all	43	63	6	9
	A little	22	32	36	53
	Advanced	3	5	26	38
Giving feedback based on assessment	Not at all	35	51	6	9
	A little	30	44	30	44
	Advanced	3	5	32	51
Using self-assessment	Not at all	52	76	8	11
	A little	15	23	50	73
	Advanced	1	1	10	16
Using peer-assessment	Not at all	53	77	6	8
	A little	14	22	48	70
	Advanced	1	1	14	22
Using integrated assessment	Not at all	55	81	8	11
	A little	12	18	45	66
	Advanced	1	1	15	23
Using portfolio	Not at all	40	58	8	12
	A little	20	29	39	57
	Advanced	8	13	21	31
Preparing students for high-stakes tests	Not at all	55	81	2	3
	A little	13	19	30	44
	Advanced	0	0	36	53
Selecting appropriate assessment methods	Not at all	25	36	10	12
	A little	37	54	40	57
	Advanced	6	10	8	31

Note. The percentages have been rounded up and down.

Table 5. Overall Trend of Assessment Training

		Received training	Needed training
		%	%
Content and concepts	Not at all	34	9
	A little	55	58
	Advanced	11	33
Purpose of testing	Not at all	38	10
	A little	58	60
	Advanced	4	30
Classroom-based assessment practice	Not at all	66	9
	A little	30	57
	Advanced	4	34

Note. The percentages have been rounded up and down.

Overall Results

As indicated in Table 5, the majority of the instructors (66%) had not received any training in the practical aspects of classroom assessment, which also turned out to be the most neglected area among the examined assessment themes. The proportion of the instructors receiving no training in the other two thematic areas was similar (i.e., about one-third). Besides, most of the training that the respondents had received was reported to be basic.

The results also show that the respondents demonstrated similar ATNs in the three thematic areas. That is, nearly 60% and 30% of the instructors reported their desire to get basic and advanced training respectively in any of the examined areas. Also, about 10% of the respondents had no interest in receiving training in any of the three thematic areas.

Findings From the Interviews and the Open-Ended Question

The interviews were carried out to reveal the respondents' assessment training experiences, classroom assessment practices, and ATNs. The latter was also scrutinized by the open-ended question used at the end of the questionnaire.

Training Experiences and Classroom Practices

Iranian preservice instructors are typically exposed to various assessment and testing concepts, principles, and approaches in formal higher-education courses for the first time (11, 12, & 16). Some common testing and assessment concepts —including reliability, validity, practicality, rating, and assessment purposes— were learned from those courses (11, 12, 15, & 16). However, as four of the respondents argued, they have failed to apply the knowledge and skills they learned in actual classes since they became in-service instructors. Also, no training plan has been considered by universities to help in-service instructors to extend and enact their prior assessment knowledge (12, 14). This is vividly presented in 12's words:

> I have to admit the fact that I have learned nothing about language testing except some broad theories, definitions, and principles that were presented in my university courses. Honestly, what happened to me

> regarding language testing was just superficial learning. I just memorized the most important definitions and notes to pass my testing exams. And, honestly, I do not remember much about my testing lessons because I have never tried to use those theories in my classroom assessment practices. Also, my university has never required us or has never considered a program to train us to employ our testing knowledge in practice.

The interviewees were also asked to elaborate on the strategies they had used to compensate for the lack of assessment training. Seven out of the eight respondents maintained that they had done nothing to promote their classroom assessment abilities after graduation and had never been exposed to any language testing resources because language testing had never been their academic area of interest. Two instructors (I2 & I7) also attributed this negligence to their universities, which did not attach much weight to "recent and up-to-date testing methods" (I7) and required their instructors to "stick to old-fashioned methods" (I7). I3 was the only instructor who had compensated for his lack of assessment training through "reading assessment books and recently-published papers."

Assessment Training Needs

Nearly 90% of the participants who answered the open-ended question aired their needs for training in various assessment areas. They were eager to receive training in practical aspects of testing ($n = 42$) and, more specifically, learn to develop a standard test ($n = 16$), implement formative assessment in their classes ($n = 12$), interpret test scores efficiently ($n = 8$), and prepare candidates for high-stakes exams ($n = 5$).

Along the same lines, all interviewees unanimously voiced strong desires for getting training in assessment because, to them, it might lead to promoting their LAL, classroom-assessment practices, and students' quality of learning. They were also required to elaborate on their specific training needs. Although three respondents did not provide any clear response to this question, the rest expected to receive training in some assessment skills including various formative assessment methods and techniques, test and scale development, item writing, and score interpretation. Concerning her specific ATNs, I5 stated:

> I like to learn basically how to apply formative assessment in my classes because I have always used summative assessment to evaluate my students' performance. Although I assign some scores to students' class activity and attendance, I know what I do is not systematic or scientific.

I2 called for training programs that mainly focus on applied aspects of classroom assessment rather than theories and principles: "We are fed up with various theories of language testing. I suppose we did not learn how and where to apply those theories. I am eager to get training in anything which can be used in classrooms."

Discussion

The current study sought to examine Iranian university English instructors' assessment training experiences, classroom assessment practices, and ATNs. The results of the study showed that the instructors had received insufficient assessment training (specifically in classroom-based assessment practices), had low LAL, and had failed to put their limited testing and assessment knowledge into practice because they had solely been exposed to various theoretical assessment lessons in the limited courses they had taken in their undergraduate and post-graduate studies. Similar findings have been reported in studies conducted in other settings (e.g., Fulcher, 2012; Jin, 2010; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). Jin (2010), likewise, attributes the failure of enacting language instructors' assessment knowledge in classrooms to the limited time devoted to classroom practice in language testing and assessment courses. The results, however, are not supported by Lam's study (2019) in which university instructors in Hong Kong were reported to have high

LAL for receiving professional training in language assessment. This difference might be explained by the fact that instructors in this region are mandated to pass the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers Test to be qualified officially to start their career (Coniam & Falvey, 2013). Therefore, taking professional assessment training to prepare for the test appears to be necessary for the instructors. On the contrary, getting such a qualification is not considered a job prerequisite in the Iranian context. Besides, assessment training programs offered to preservice instructors in Hong Kong, unlike in Iran, are reported to be comprehensible and efficient (Lam, 2015).

The results of the study also revealed that the participants, despite their lack of assessment training, had refrained from using other resources to compensate for their insufficient LAL since they were not interested in the testing and assessment area and also had to comply with the testing regulations adopted in their universities. This is not consistent with the results in Tsagari and Vogt's study (2017) where the instructors were reported to resort to books and recently-published papers and turn to their colleagues for practical advice in order to make up for their low LAL.

Another important finding of the study was that a great majority of the respondents (nearly 90%) expressed their desire to get assessment training. It appears that they assumed taking efficient assessment training programs to be effective in addressing their assessment needs and, consequently, enhancing their assessment literacy competence. As Tajeddin et al. (2011) concluded in their study, taking assessment training programs can help untrained or insufficiently-trained Iranian teachers develop a more profound understanding of different language proficiency concepts and make, for instance, more insightful and reliable raters through mainly focusing on macro-level and higher-order components of language while assessing their students' performance.

On the other hand, the teachers mainly showed unwillingness in taking advanced and rigorous training programs and required basic training in content and concepts in assessment, purposes of testing, and classroom-based practices owing to their disinterest in the language assessment area (i.e., a personal factor) and insufficient support from their universities (i.e., a contextual constraint). This is in line with the findings reported in the study by Yan et al. (2018) in which the participants mainly tended to take less advanced assessment training courses to improve their LAL and, consequently, classroom practices. Yan et al. also argued that the tendency to get basic rather than advanced training can be accounted for by personal factors and/or contextual constraints. It accordingly seems that the university instructors may reinforce their interest in promoting their assessment knowledge and skills if more emphasis is placed on their assessment competence in their workplaces and adequate support and budget are provided for them to improve their LAL. A lack of support as well as strict regulations set by universities may discourage instructors from improving their LAL and assessment practices because the instructors are generally graded and evaluated based on the quality of their publications rather than on classroom practices (Mohrman et al., 2011).

More support and emphasis on LAL may reinforce the instructors' interest in getting more advanced assessment training and induce them to pursue more recent and novel approaches to language assessment (Lam, 2015). For instance, they may strive to practice *assessment for learning* to support students' learning and benefit from their assessment results to improve the quality of their teaching. Also, they may resort to the sociocultural theory of language teaching, learning, and assessment to assist their learners to move through their zone of proximal learning through constructive feedback on their performances and scaffolding. The tendency to grow such skills was also pointed out by the instructors who voiced their desire to learn to practice formative assessment.

The results also showed that when the interviewees were required to voice their specific ATNs, some of the respondents were found to be hesitant to answer. This supports Tsagari and Vogt's (2017) study in which the language instructors failed to specify their ATNs clearly. As Hill (2017) argued, the difficulty to know ATNs appears when instructors fail to employ their assessment knowledge in classrooms or when they lack skills to elaborate on the efficiency of their classroom assessment practices.

Conclusion

The study attempted to explore university English instructors' assessment training experiences, classroom assessment practices, and ATNs in Iran. In general, the findings revealed that the instructors had not received enough training to promote their LAL and classroom-based assessment practices because they had solely been exposed to language assessment principles in the limited courses offered to preservice teachers in universities, which had mainly revolved around concepts and theories of language assessment and had given short shrift to the practical aspects. In spite of this situation, the instructors had a stronger desire for one-to-two-day training programs (i.e., basic training programs) rather than advanced ones lasting more than three days. This tendency might be ascribed to different personal and contextual constraints including the instructors' disinterest in the language testing and assessment area and lack of support from universities.

The study, however, is subject to some limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, it is a small-scale study with 68 participants who filled out the questionnaire and eight interviewees. Moreover, some terms used in the questionnaire (e.g., basic and advanced) may still look ambiguous, although they are quantified by being day-based. This ambiguity may give rise to varying interpretations and, consequently, different responses from participants.

Despite such limitations, the study may have some practical implications to enhance assessment training for university English instructors in Iran. For instance, the results obtained in the current study may contribute to growing the body of knowledge in the related literature. They may also raise teacher educators' awareness of the Iranian university instructors' LAL, assessment training experiences, classroom-based assessment practices, and ATNs. This awareness might induce them to design and implement more efficient assessment training programs in line with instructors' lacks and actual needs. Further, the results may encourage Iranian university administrators and department heads to give more weight to their instructors' assessment practices, to consider practical and effective assessment training programs for the preservice and in-service instructors, and to provide enough financial support for them to promote their LAL.

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About the Author

Ali Sayyadi holds a PhD in teaching English as a foreign language from the University of Tehran. His main area of interest is language assessment.

Appendix A: Questionnaire on Language Assessment Literacy and Assessment Training Needs

Part I. General Information

1. Do you work in (country)? Yes ☐ No ☐

2. What subject(s) do you teach?

3. What subjects have you studied?

4. What is your highest qualification? Please specify:

5. Type of school/institution you teach at:

6. Average age of pupils:

7. Your functions at your school/institution:
   ☐ Teacher
   ☐ Head of department or school
   ☐ Mentor
   ☐ Advisory function for authorities (local government, ministry, etc.)
   ☐ Other? Please specify:

8. During your preservice or in-service teacher training, have you learned something about testing and assessment (theory and practice)?
   ☐ Yes (please specify:)
   ☐ No

Part II. Questions About Training in Language Assessment

1. Content and concepts of language testing

1.1. Please specify if you were trained in the following domains.

	Not at all	A little	Advanced
Assessing receptive skills (reading/listening)			
Assessing productive skills (speaking/writing)			
Assessing integrated language skills			
Assessing social dimensions of language			
Establishing reliability of tests/assessment			
Establishing validity of tests/assessments			
Establishing test/assessment discrimination			
Determining the test difficulty			
Using statistics to study the quality of tests/assessment			

1.2. Please specify if you need training in the following domains.

	None	Basic	Advanced
Assessing receptive skills (reading/listening)			
Assessing productive skills (speaking/writing)			
Assessing integrated language skills			
Assessing social dimensions of language			
Establishing reliability of tests/assessment			
Establishing validity of tests/assessments			
Establishing test/assessment discrimination			
Determining the test difficulty			
Using statistics to study the quality of tests/assessment			

2. Aims of testing and assessment

2.1. Please specify if you were trained in the following domains.

	Not at all	A little	Advanced
Giving grades			
Finding out what needs to be taught/learned			
Placing students into courses, programs, etc.			
Awarding final certificates (from school/program; local, regional, or national level)			

2.2. Please specify if you need training in the following domains.

	None	Basic	Advanced
Giving grades			
Finding out what needs to be taught/learned			
Placing students into courses, programs, etc.			
Awarding final certificates (from school/program; local, regional, or national level)			

3. *Classroom-assessment performances*

3.1. Please specify if you were trained in the following domains.

	Not at all	A little	Advanced
Preparing classroom tests			
Using ready-made tests from textbook packages or from other sources			
Giving feedback to students based on information from tests/ assessment			
Using self-assessment			
Using peer-assessment			
Using integrated assessment			
Preparing students for high-stakes tests			
Using portfolios			
Selecting appropriate assessment methods			

3.2. Please specify if you need training in the following domains.

	None	Basic	Advanced
Preparing classroom tests			
Using ready-made tests from textbook packages or from other sources			
Giving feedback to students based on information from tests/ assessment			
Using self-assessment			
Using peer-assessment			
Using integrated assessment			
Preparing students for high-stakes tests			
Using portfolios			
Selecting appropriate assessment methods			

3.3. Please specify if you have any other language assessment training needs.

Appendix B: The Interview Questions

1. How familiar are you with different contents and concepts of language assessment?

2. Do you use different language assessment methods to evaluate your students?

3. Have you ever received any training in language assessment?
   a. If yes, what were the training programs?
   b. How long did they last?
   c. What was the training mainly about?
   d. How effective was the training?
   e. To what extent have you applied the training topics in your actual classes?
   f. Do you think you have been sufficiently trained?

4. Have you done anything to compensate for your lack of assessment training? If yes, what?

5. What are your language assessment training needs?

6. Do you prefer to get basic or advanced language assessment training? Why?

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Children's Social Representations of English Teaching and Learning: A Study in Medellín, Colombia

Las representaciones sociales de los niños sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés: un estudio en Medellín, Colombia

Isabel Cristina Cadavid-Múnera
Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia

This article reports the findings of a qualitative interpretive research study that explored the social representations children have about the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in elementary schools in Medellín, Colombia. Sixty children in first, third, and fifth grades of public and private schools participated in the study. Techniques such as drawings, pretend play, conversations, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Three analogies summarize children's perceptions in this study: learning as "echo," teaching as a power instrument, and English as a tool to "survive" or to "live and interact with others." Finally, a reflection and some implications for the teaching of English to children are presented.

Keywords: English teaching, learning English, perceptions, social representations, young learners

Este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación de corte cualitativo interpretativo que exploró las representaciones sociales que tienen los niños sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés en las escuelas primarias de Medellín, Colombia. Sesenta niños de primero, tercero y quinto grados de escuelas públicas y privadas de la ciudad participaron en este estudio. Se recolectaron datos por medio de dibujos, juegos dramáticos, conversaciones y entrevistas semiestructuradas. Tres analogías resumen las percepciones que tienen los niños: el aprendizaje como "eco"; la enseñanza como "instrumento de poder"; y el inglés como una herramienta para "sobrevivir" o para "vivir e interactuar con los demás". Finalmente, se comparte una reflexión sobre la enseñanza de inglés a niños en nuestro contexto.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje de inglés, enseñanza de inglés, niños, percepciones, representaciones sociales

Isabel Cristina Cadavid-Múnera https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9843-037X · Email: isabel.cadavid@udea.edu.co

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Introduction

In her article about doing research with children, Punch (2015) states how, in an adult-dominated society, children are not used to freely expressing their views or to being taken seriously by adults. Typically, there has been an adult-centeredness in matters that concern children directly, and very rarely, their voices are heard. In the case of including English in the elementary school curriculum in Colombia, for instance, voices from experts, scholars, teachers, and adults, in general, have been consulted, but children have not been asked; their voices have not been included. This article presents a research project carried out *with* children and *for* children, not only *about* children; a research project that asked them their views about English in their everyday lives and about the process of learning and teaching this language at school. Two primary purposes guide this article: first, the description of this research project and its findings; second, a reflection on the teaching of English to children and an invitation to question our adult views based on theirs. What can adults learn from children, and from what they have to say? Are young learners considered active participants in the process of education?

This article will be structured as follows: first, a description of the research project that includes objectives, theoretical framework, data collection instruments, and results supported by evidence from drawings, pretend plays, and conversations with the children; the article will conclude with a reflection about English teaching to children in our context.

Background

This study was conducted in Medellín, Colombia, with elementary school children from public and private schools. In this context, English can be considered a foreign language since the language surrounding students and the one in which life unfolds is Spanish; English is a school subject, and most children in public schools have little exposure to the language at school and little access to the language outside the school context. Even though it is the medium of instruction in some private schools, and is considered a second language, this is not the case for most public elementary schools in the city.

Local researchers have found a gap in the teaching of English in public and private schools regarding the teachers' language proficiency and use of English in classes, the access to professional development programs, and teaching resources (Bastidas & Muñoz-Ibarra, 2011; Correa et al., 2012; González, 2010). Researchers agree that most teachers in public primary schools are teaching English because the law imposed it, but in most cases, primary teachers do not have the necessary preparation to face this task since they hold undergraduate or graduate degrees in areas other than foreign language teaching. Besides, they are responsible for teaching all subjects (math, social studies, physical education, English, Spanish, and others). English lessons are held once a week, usually for 45 minutes, with overcrowded classes of 45 to 50 students. Activities carried out in those lessons are mainly affective or organizational; translation is used to ensure understanding and teachers often model and organize, while the learners generally answer the teacher's questions, repeat individually or chorally, or copy from the board.

As can be seen, the teaching of English in elementary schools in our context has been explored and insights have been gained from the perspective of researchers and teachers. We know what teachers think and do, but we do not know what children think or feel; their voices have been missing. Although their views can contribute to making classrooms better for learners, they have not been included so as to express their ideas in processes of planning, assessment, or even research. It is precisely within this framework, that a group of researchers at Universidad de Antioquia decided to conduct this study to open the road of exploration of children's attitudes, beliefs, and information regarding English and the processes of teaching and learning it in the city. We acknowledge that children's views of

teaching and learning can inform curricular, methodological, and pedagogical decisions that affect children directly. Those views can also help adults to question their beliefs and practices regarding English teaching. If we want to move towards educational processes that are truly learner-centered, the voices of those learners should be seriously considered and made visible.

Thus, we decided to explore children's perceptions through social representations (hereafter SR), as this concept encompasses attitudes, beliefs, interpretations, and information young learners have. Even though the importance of the study of SR in the field of education in general and foreign language education in particular is undeniable, there are very few studies about this specific topic with children in Colombia. So, the study presented here is a contribution to the field of foreign language teaching as it focuses on the viewpoints of children and opens the path to future research.

The purpose of the study was first, to explore children's SR about English in their everyday lives and about the processes of teaching and learning it; and second, to try to derive possible implications that these representations would have for the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in our context to illuminate decision-making at the level of classroom practices and policy-making processes.

Theoretical Framework

Social Representations

The concept of SR, one of the objects of study for social psychology, is one of the underpinnings of this project. SR were first studied and conceptualized by the social psychologist Serge Moscovici in his 1961 doctoral thesis where he claims that reality is a social construction arising from the interaction among subjects belonging to a group, and that these individuals, in turn, rely on this construction to develop their subjectivity and their position in the world.

In the words of Sotirakopoulou and Breakwell (1992), SR become concrete in the ideas, beliefs, values, practices, feelings, images, attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and explanations about a particular social object.

Conversely, Jodelet (1991) defines SR as images that summarize diverse meanings that allow people to interpret social events; they are categories that can be used to classify situations, circumstances, events, and people with whom we interact. Both Moscovici and Jodelet highlight the importance of the social nature of knowledge construction and acknowledge the critical role played by the context in the construction and interpretation of SR.

In the same vein, Howarth (2006) characterizes SR as being the products of the interaction among individuals, that is, collective meaning construction on objects that allow for the identification of what is relevant to individuals in a given group and how they are affected by them. SR give an account of what things are truly real or valid for a group or society. Similarly, for Araya-Umaña (2002), SR are mechanisms of classification and interpretation built within a community and allow us to define and make sense of the world we live in.

Araya-Umaña (2002) defines three dimensions of an SR: attitude, information, and field of representation. Attitude is the affective element of all SR. This component is always present and is the most evident of the three dimensions since it is expressed through emotions. Although attitude is present in all SR, this alone does not constitute the SR. Information refers to the knowledge that a group has about a social object. This dimension shows prejudices and stereotypes people might have about social phenomena. The field of representation is the dimension in which attitude and information are hierarchized and systematized, giving place to opinions, beliefs, and understandings. These elements allow the creation of conceptions and positions towards real-world issues. This three-dimensional framework will be used to present the findings of this study.

Social Representations, Education, and Foreign Languages

Howarth (2006) points out how the field of SR is continuously growing, and, in the last 40 years, has interested new researchers from all over the world, especially Europe, South America, Australasia, and even the USA. One likely reason for this expansion is the richness that this concept offers in reading and interpreting social realities and phenomena. Its multidisciplinary nature makes it a complex, polysemic notion that provides insights about different issues in different social and human sciences, including education and foreign language teaching.

In education, Jodelet (2011) highlights the appropriacy of the SR approach as an instrument and a mediation well suited to the multiple problems tackled in the field. SR are valuable in education because they allow an approximation to teachers' and learners' understandings of events in their environments and shape the way they act. The flexible nature of SR can be used to analyze various aspects of school life including the curriculum, interactions, the functions and purposes of education, and educational policies.

According to Jodelet (2011), in addition to giving an account of the conceptions that are held about educational realities and allowing their interpretation, SR have a pragmatic impact and contribute to shaping practices; also, exploring and analyzing SR sheds light on how these processes are perceived and how they can be modified.

Similarly, in the field of foreign languages, SR have been the object of study both for linguistics and language teaching. In this regard, Castellotti and Moore (2002) point out how sociolinguists have studied people's attitudes and representations regarding, among others, languages and their nature, position, or function. Concerning the teaching of foreign languages, the authors show the significant influence of the learners' representations on the language learning process since they can reinforce and enhance it or, on the contrary, inhibit it. The study of representations provides useful insights on both perceptions and practices in foreign language teaching and have allowed the exploration of a wide range of diverse themes that include, but are not limited to, teachers' beliefs (Gabillon, 2012), culture in EFL classrooms (Menard-Warwick, 2009), identity issues in textbooks (Yen, 2000), and the perception of preservice teachers about racism and ethnocentrism (Carignan et al., 2005). As can be seen, SR is a multifaceted concept that lends itself to explaining and comprehending complex educational phenomena.

It is this connection to education in general, and to learning processes in particular, that makes SR a central and valuable concept for this study. The analysis of children's perceptions of teaching and learning English can inform classroom practices, decision-making processes about education policies in foreign languages, and the relevance to the context where such policies are implemented. Following Castellotti and Moore (2002), the importance of SR for educators lies in the fact that they would allow teachers to understand some language learning phenomena, and to implement suitable teaching activities.

In the same vein, Kuchah's (2013) study involving young learners and their teachers in identifying good practice reveals that both teachers and learners have their own perceptions about what constitutes good practice, and those views (sometimes convergent, and sometimes divergent) have more impact on the life of the classroom than the guidelines established by the Ministry of Education. The author suggests that classroom practices should be grounded in the sociocultural realities experienced by the learners, and even be elicited from them. Hence, the importance of doing research that includes the voices of children on this issue and gives them the opportunity to express what they think.

The Study

The core question that guided this study was: What are the SR that children in private and public schools in Medellin have regarding the English language and

the processes of teaching and learning it? We wanted to explore children's views about the importance of English in general and in their everyday lives, what they use it for, and what they think about the teaching and learning of English and its significance in their lives.

A qualitative interpretive research methodology was used in the study, and within this paradigm, the grounded theory methodology was selected to analyze data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that grounded theory is drawn from data, offers insight, and enhances understanding of the object of study. The authors also highlight that theory derived from data is more closely related to and resembles reality. In this study we aimed at understanding the meanings and interpretations of children and getting close to their SR regarding the teaching and learning of English. To do this, a grounded theory analytical process was used as categories emerged from the data and were not previously established. The project was developed in four stages. First, participants were selected and contacted: two private and two public elementary schools in the city were selected, and in each of them, three groups of children from first, third, and fifth grade were randomly selected to participate. Sixty children altogether participated in the project. Their parents signed consent forms before the implementation of the research. After this, data collection took place.

Given that this study aimed precisely at delving into children's ideas, attitudes, and interpretations, it involved the implementation of data collection techniques that allowed us to come close to the children in a non-inhibiting way, namely, drawings and pretend play sessions, both accompanied by a conversation with the children to unveil the meanings they wanted to convey. Data were collected in four different sessions in every school where we worked with the groups corresponding to first, third, and fifth grades separately. The purpose of the first session was to get to know each other, explain the purpose of the work to be done, have children get familiarized with the researchers and the tools to be used like tape recorders and video camera so that these devices were not a cause of distraction in future sessions. In the second session, children were asked to draw the English class, and then there was a semi-structured interview with one of the researchers; the third session was about pretend play: Children were asked to "act out" one English class they liked, and one they disliked. Video recordings of both were kept, and a conversation about these dramatizations took place afterward. The final session was a closure in which the children presented their drawings as in an art exhibit, followed by viewing the videos and a conversation to collect their final remarks and show appreciation for their participation.

After obtaining the data and classifying the information by institutions and grades, we created an identification code for each one and we started the analytic process. For this, we used NVivo software, which allows uploading the data in their original format, that is, the drawings scans, scripts, and videos of the pretend play sessions, and the transcripts of interviews conducted after the drawings and pretend plays. Once the information was organized, and coded, we used an inductive approach to data analysis (data-driven), as categories emerged from the data. This process implied open categorization, making memos or preliminary elaborations and interpretations of data, identification of a core category, and establishing relationships among categories, within the framework of grounded theory presented by Creswell (2011).

Data Analysis

Analysis of the Drawings

Once the drawings were organized and properly coded, we analyzed them as visual texts, trying to make sense of the symbols, signs, and messages, that were present in those depictions of the English class. We use the term "visual texts" in the sense that Albers et al. (2009) use it, referring to "a structure of messages within which are embedded social conventions and/

or perceptions, and which also presents the discourse communities to which the visual text maker identifies" (p. 239).

We used scheme analysis (Sonesson, 1988) as a reference for interpreting the drawings and their messages. These schemata refer to traits or the organization of elements found within a visual text, which defines its content and meanings. Based on the author, we analyzed the following schemata in the drawings: (a) principles of relevance, which include intensity of shapes, volume, repetition, colors, exaggeration and distortion of human features, size of human figure; (b) body scheme, which includes hair, body shape, directionality, clothing, and body parts; (c) behavior, which includes setting, actions, roles and interaction with others; (d) activities, which include the location of people involved in the drawings (students and teacher), active or passive movement, and so on. The Appendix illustrates how these drawings were analyzed. From the analysis of those schemata, categories emerged.

Analysis of Pretend Plays

Every pretend play session was video-recorded, and each video text was transcribed in the form of a script that included actions and dialogue. The analysis of the data collected through the pretend plays was based on the content of such scripts. We identified recurrent aspects present in the way girls and boys assumed each character in the game. The framework of analysis proposed by Sierra-Restrepo (1998) was used for analysis. It focuses on actions, characteristics, expressions, relationships, and interactions between participants. With this framework we identified the role of students and teachers, the types of interactions that took place, the rapport between teachers and students, the kinds of activities and materials used in the classes, and the language of instruction, among others. Based on the analysis of those elements in each of the scripts, we drew closer to children's thoughts and feelings about the English class.

Categories emerged from the analysis; they were saturated with instances from all the sources (drawings, pretend plays, interviews), then refined and triangulated to obtain the findings presented below. Although the examples from data presented to support the findings belong to one of the data sources, the findings condense the results obtained from analyzing all the sources used and are not limited to one or some of them.

Triangulation was ensured by the researchers' perspectives and different information sources, namely, drawings, pretend plays, and conversations with the children. Findings were condensed in the three dimensions of an SR: attitude (what they feel), information (what they know), and field of representation (what they believe or interpret; Araya-Umaña, 2002).

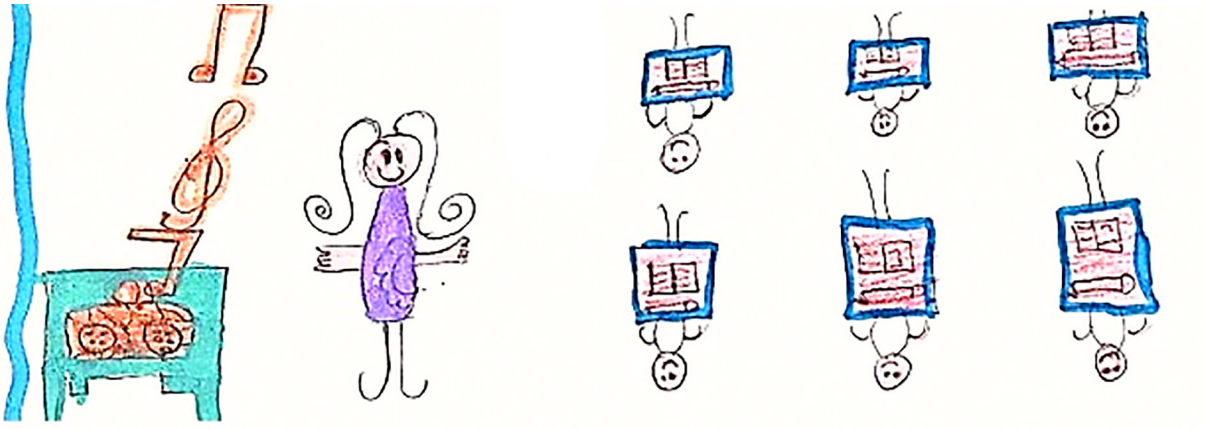
Findings

What They Feel

One of the dimensions of SR, is attitude. It refers to emotions and feelings towards a social phenomenon or event. In this case, both public and private school children reported having a positive attitude towards English and the English class. Concerning English, they expressed that it is a very important language, and there is a need to learn it (see below "what they believe or interpret"). Regarding the English class, there was a generally positive perception of the activities developed, and the class atmosphere was described as pleasant.

> Researcher: *Decime, ¿por qué decidiste dibujar esta clase de inglés y no otra?* [Tell me, why did you decide to draw this class and not another one?]
>
> Student 1 (Grade 3, public school): *Porque, no, porque me gusta, el momento en que ella llega es como algo alegre, como que uno cambia de clase, y ya es más divertida, y ya no hay que escribir tanto*. [Because I like it; the moment she arrives is like something happy, one changes to another class and it is more fun, and you do not have to write much.]

Figure 1. Drawing of the English Class by Student 4, Grade 3, Private School



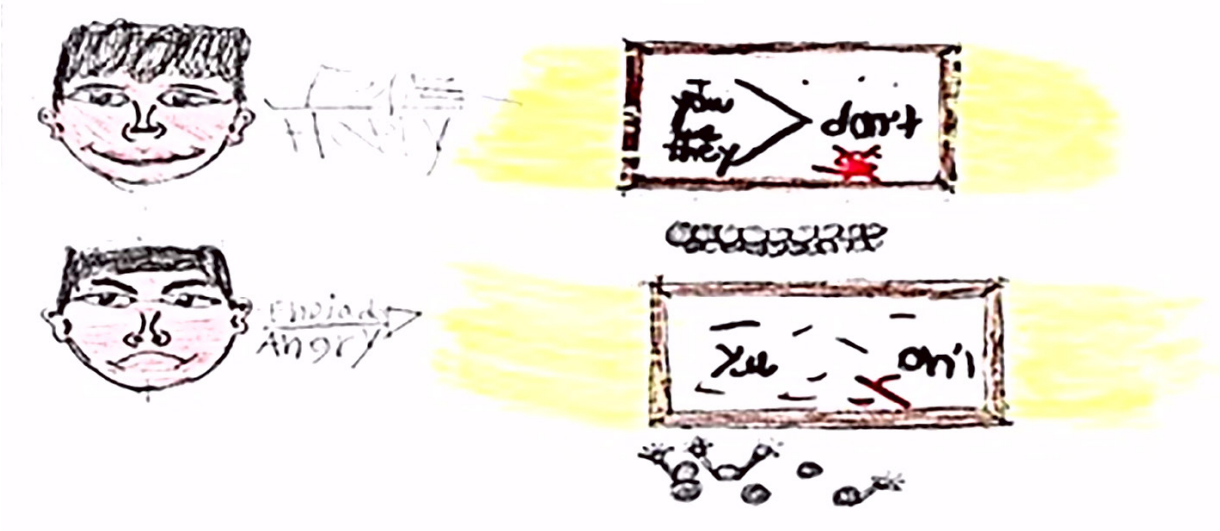
The previous quote summarizes two recurrent aspects highlighted by children in conversations: First, their positive attitude towards the English class and most of activities, and second, their dislike for writing activities in class. They refer to those activities as "*copiar*" (copying) and they consider this a boring class activity that takes a considerable amount of class time. In general terms, the English class was perceived as a cheerful, relaxed, agreeable moment that was different from the rest of the classes in the school day. Most children expressed through drawings and in the conversations how they enjoyed the classes and the activities proposed by their teachers. The atmosphere of classes is perceived as positive; children in public and private schools enjoy activities like games and songs (see Figure 1). They feel that the class environment is not stressful, and they do not find the English class especially difficult or unappealing.

Concerning the attitude of teachers, children presented them as displaying a positive attitude, most drawings show teachers with smiley faces, and children used the adjective "*feliz*" [happy] to describe them. Based on the analysis of pretend plays, we can state that when dramatizing the English class they liked, teachers were represented as having a respectful, kind attitude towards students, and, in turn, children also had a positive attitude towards the class and the activities. From the interviews, we could infer how children established a causal relationship between children's behavior and teachers' positive attitude. Children repeatedly expressed how, in order for the teacher to be in a good mood, their behavior was essential. Describing his drawing, (see Figure 2) a third-grade boy stated:

> *El dibujo consiste en cuándo está el* teacher *feliz y cuándo está enojado. Dependiendo de nuestro comportamiento se enoja o se pone feliz. Feliz, nosotros estamos escribiendo, terminamos rápido, nos desatrasamos, todo*. [The drawing represents when the teacher is happy and when he is upset. Depending on our behavior, he gets mad or happy. Happy, we write, finish quickly, catch up with work, everything.]

It is striking to see in Figure 2 how, when the teacher is happy, children are represented as if they were a group of little immobile "stones"; conversely, at the bottom, the teacher's face changes when children are raising their hands and moving. This seems to indicate that a passive role from children is required for the teacher to be "happy," and also how children's positive behavior is rewarded by a positive attitude from the teacher that, in turn, becomes a critical element for a good classroom environment. This highlights the connection between teacher's positive attitude and learners' behavior.

Figure 2. Drawing of the English Class by Student 3, Grade 3, Private School



The interrelation of affective factors and second/foreign language learning has been the object of study of researchers from different fields. In educational psychology, Wang and Wu (2020) argue that the learning outcome of the second language acquisition is greatly influenced by the affective factors of the learner, such as motivation, attitude, anxiety, and empathy, to name but a few. In the field of language teaching, Kumar (2017) also points out that emotions filter all learning and cognition, so the study of affective factors in second language learning is quite significant. The impact of affective factors on the learning process makes evident the need of provoking and sustaining positive attitudes towards learning and teaching.

What They Know

Based on the information children acquire from the adults around them, as well as media and propaganda, children consider English a very important language in the world and derive from there the importance of learning it. For instance:

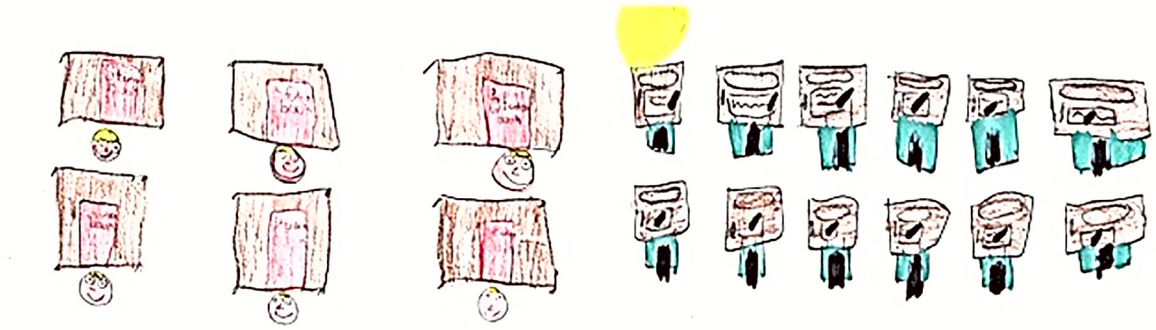
> *Como el inglés es el lenguaje universal y mi mamá dice que yo soy muy disciplinada, entonces…* [as English is the universal language and my mom says that I am very disciplined, then…]. (Student 4, Grade 5, private school)
>
> *Pues, es otra puerta que abrimos, porque cada vez que uno habla inglés es abrir una ventana.* [Well, it is another door we open, because every time one speaks English is like opening a window.]
>
> Researcher: *¿Para qué aprender inglés?* [Why learn English?]
>
> Student 5 (Grade 5, private school): *Para que nosotros avancemos y ellos nos puedan entender.* [So that we move forward, and they can understand us.]

These quotes show how English is seen as the requirement to connect to the world, since it opens doors probably to new possibilities, to a good job, to a better life. The last quote establishes a difference between *them* (English-speaking people) and *us* (Colombians) and highlights how learning English is for us a sign of progress, a possibility to understand them, and also a requirement as we have to learn this language if we are to move forward.

When asked about the use of English in their future, children repeatedly answered:

> Researcher: *¿Y a uno para qué le sirve por ejemplo aprender inglés?* [And what is the use of learning English?]
>
> Student 4 (Grade 5, public school): *De pronto cuando trabaje, una reunión o algo, a veces es en inglés.* [Maybe at work, meetings sometimes are in English.]

Figure 3. Drawings by Third-Grade Students: Private School (Left) and Public School (Right)



As can be seen, the discourse of children in public and private schools has been permeated by the values and views prevalent in their contexts in which the job market is one of the main reasons for learning English. The images presented to children in our context highlight the importance of learning English, not an additional language, and the purposes for learning it are usually instrumental, being access to a better job the most recurrent.

Regarding the context for learning English, in general terms, children see it as circumscribed to the classroom and to the use of books and dictionaries. Figure 3 illustrates this point.

Children also show awareness of the importance of the context when learning a language. In their own words:

> *Es que es muy difícil aprender uno inglés en un lugar en el que uno no ve inglés, todo no es inglés como en Estados Unidos que cualquier letrerito está en inglés, todo está en inglés. Es más difícil.* [It is very difficult to learn English in a place where one does not see English, everything is not English as in the United States where any little sign is in English, everything is in English. It is more difficult.] (Student 1, Grade 5, private school)
>
> *Yo pienso que se aprende como el español estando rodeado de muchas personas que lo hablen, entonces uno se acostumbra.* [I think that English is learned as Spanish, being surrounded by many people that speak the language, then, you get used to it.] (Student 5, Grade 5, public school)

Children consider that learning English requires being surrounded by a supportive environment where the language is used and, for that reason, it is difficult to learn this language in our context where exposure to the language outside the classroom is scarce.

In contrast to what they think about the process of learning the language and about the need of being exposed to it, children in elementary school know from their experience in class that learning English implies repeating, writing, and memorizing lists of words and grammar structures even though they consider that the purpose of learning a language means being able to speak it fluently in interactions with others: "*Saber inglés es como un idioma y una forma de comunicarse con otras personas*." [Knowing English is like a language and a way of communicating with other people.] (Student 3, Grade 3, private school).

As to learning,

> Researcher: *¿Tú cómo has aprendido inglés?* [How have you learned English?]
>
> Student 2 (Grade 3, public school): *Porque la profe nos y repite, y repite, y ya nosotros lo sabemos, entonces cuando ya repetimos, y repetimos, ya primero nos sale mal porque no hacemos bien la pronunciación, y después ya que uno repite y repite ya, ya lo sabe bien.* [Because the teacher repeats, and repeats, and we learn it, so when we repeat, and repeat, first it turns out badly because we do not pronounce well, and then, as you repeat and repeat, you learn it.]

There seems to be a gap between children's views of English, what it means to have a good command of the language, and what happens in class. English for life outside school is one thing, and English at school is another. This

information children have about language itself and about teaching and learning processes is nourished by their experiences inside and outside schools and what they hear from adults and the media around them.

What They Believe and Interpret

This third dimension, field of representation, is related to what children believe and interpret. The findings about English, its usefulness in children's lives, and what they believe about the processes of learning and teaching it are presented through the following analogies: learning as "echo"; teaching as a "power tool"; and English to "survive" or "to live and interact." After analyzing the data and keeping in mind that SR are images that help explain the social phenomena studied, we decided to select images that captured the essence of the SR children had regarding English in their lives, and what learning and teaching meant to them. After establishing relationships among categories that emerged from the drawings, pretend plays, and interviews, the images that better depicted children's beliefs and interpretations were learning seen as "echo" as it represents the idea of repetition, prevailing in the data; teaching as a "power tool" as this image accurately captures what children think about teaching and how they interpret their rapport with teachers; and English to live or survive, as a powerful image to show the difference between the views of children in public and private schools.

Learning as "echo." As previously stated, learning is perceived by children in both private and public schools as a process of memorizing lists of words and structures, and being able to repeat them on an oral or written test as proof of their learning.

> Researcher: *¿Cómo se aprende inglés?* [How do you learn English?]
>
> Student 2 (Grade 5, private school): *Escribiendo, memorizando, hablándolo, dibujando también hay veces.* [Writing, memorizing, speaking, and sometimes drawing.]
>
> Researcher: *Y fuera de que una persona le repita a uno la palabra y uno se la vaya aprendiendo, ¿cómo más se puede aprender inglés?* [And apart from having a person repeating the word for you to learn it, how else can you learn English?]
>
> Student 3 (Grade 3, public school): *Que uno escuche una palabra y todos los días la repita.* [When you listen to a word and repeat it every day.]

These answers seem to indicate that English teaching emphasizes activities of mechanical repetition and promotes children's echoing of what teachers present in class; there are no opportunities to use language creatively, use imagination, or express feelings or ideas. It can be inferred that language is conceived as a code to be mastered, and repetition is the most effective way to achieve this goal. Both public and private school children drew and described lessons where the teaching of grammar and vocabulary was the focal point, and their answers emphasized the need to memorize and repeat those lists.

Even though memorization and repetition are cognitive processes needed for learning a language, it should go beyond mechanical reproduction and promote meaningful uses of the language and social interactions within creative and flexible environments. This was also supported by children when they requested more playful class activities.

It is essential then to transcend the mere repetition of words to promote meaningful uses of the language at the level of children. Learning a language should be more than just "echo."

Teaching as a power instrument. Power issues are present in classrooms, and children made them evident in their drawings, pretend play sessions, and conversations. Drawings usually depict a teacher in front of the class with the board behind, and children organized in lines working individually indicating a vertical relationship between teacher and students; children are usually seated and paying attention to the teacher with no interaction among themselves (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. Drawing by Student 3 (Grade 5, Private School)

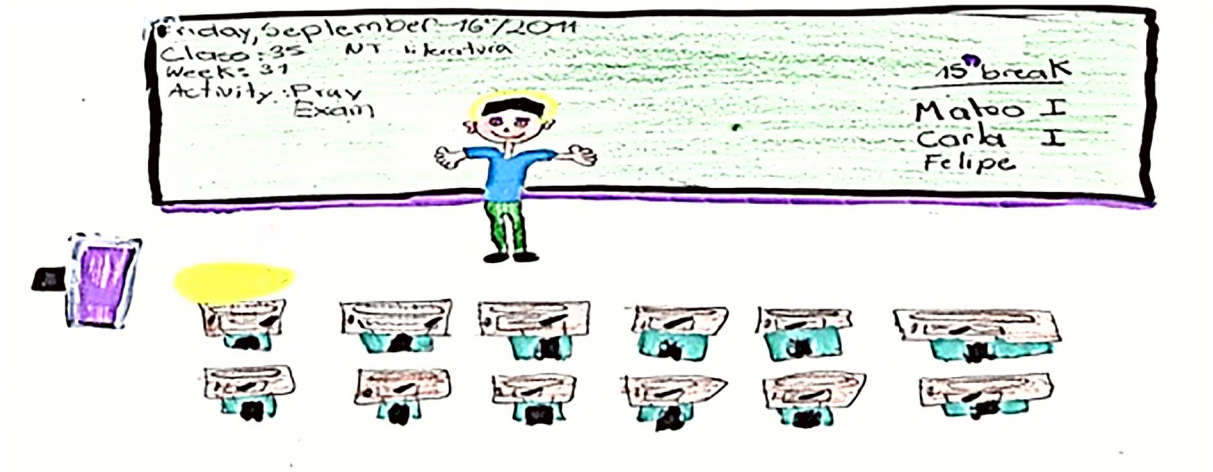


Figure 5. Drawing by Student 2, Grade 3, Private School

Drawings portray children sitting down, writing, and sometimes raising their hands. Individual work is recurrent in drawings and in the pretend plays indicating how children's role is usually a passive, non-interactive one.

This teacher-centeredness depicted in the drawings is reinforced by expressions children used to refer to what the teacher does in the classroom. Common expressions like "*nos pone a aprender, nos pone a escribir*" (the teacher makes us learn, or write) show that power lies in the teacher and is not limited to instances of evaluation but has permeated the teaching process as well. Only one of the drawings portrayed a child writing on the board; this is definitely the teacher's action zone that creates distance with well-defined spaces for students and the teacher. These invisible limits reinforce a vertical relationship between the teacher and the children. The classroom setting is usually very similar in all the drawings, and some drawings portray little teacher–student interaction, let alone students' interaction. Both the drawings and pretend play sessions present teacher-centered lessons. The teacher oversees planning, teaching, evaluating, and

discipline, leaving children a passive role of obedience and acceptance. As a result of this, some children report how learning English implies being attentive, silent, and quiet. Their role is a passive one.

> Researcher: Tell me, how do you learn English?
> Paying attention, listening to the class, having a good memory capacity. (Student 1, Grade 3, public school)
> Paying attention to the teacher. (Student 2, Grade 3, public school)
> Listening, not speaking, paying attention, and everything. (Student 1, Grade 5, public school)

More active, interactive, collaborative activities and learning environments are required for children to see English as a language that accomplishes multiple social purposes and to promote more social learning processes with children as the center of the activities. It is important to offer children opportunities for more equitable, less vertical relationships to learn with each other and from each other.

One of the instruments traditionally used by teachers to exert their power is grades. However, in this project, we could observe that when teaching, this power was also evident in the control of discipline in the classroom through the punishment of disruptive behavior and the widespread use of writing as punishment. The following excerpt from a pretend play transcript illustrates this point:

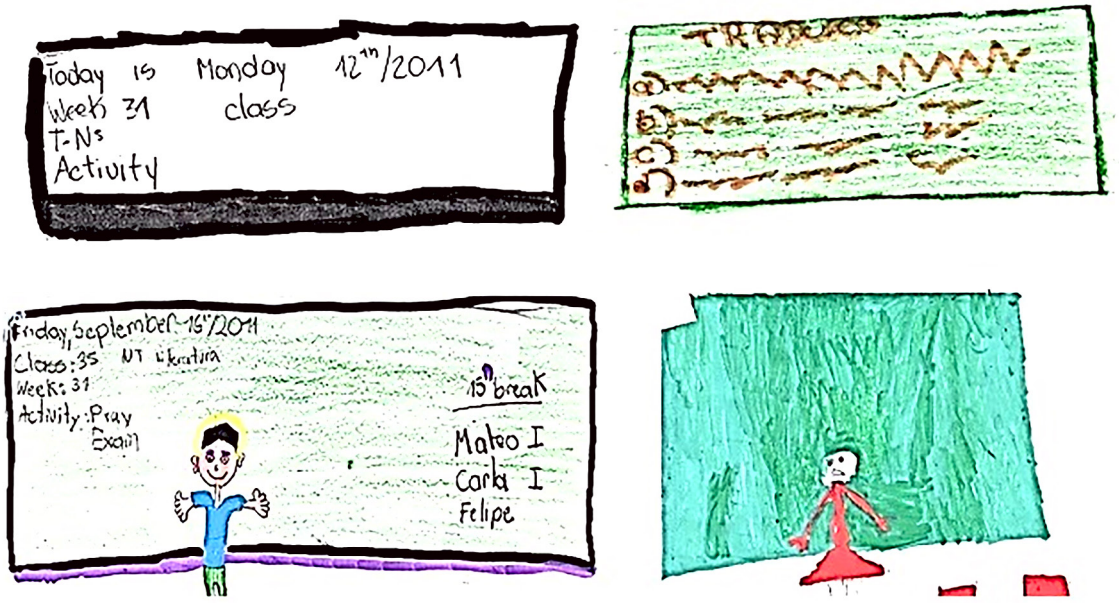
> The teacher (N1) appears with a threatening attitude and points at N2 with her right index finger.
> Teacher: Sit down! Sit down!
> N2: OK, OK! (N5 goes to his desk)
> The teacher stands in front of the students. N3 raises his hand.
> N3: Can you explain this to me, please?
> Teacher: No! Silence! (Pointing his index to N3).
> N2: Teacher, can I go to the board?
> Teacher: No! (Pointing his finger energetically at N2).
> At the end of this pretend play, students decided to go to the principal to express their unconformity with the English class.
> Now, N1 assumes the role of principal for a few moments. The principal approaches the children.
> N2: The English teacher is not teaching us anything and scolds us.
> N3: And it is English class, not scolding class.
> N4: And she does not even explain to us.
> Principal: I am going to talk to the teacher. He leaves, and students return to the classroom.
> The teacher (N1) reappears where the children are.
> Teacher: Then you are going to write a book of at least five pages.
> N4: No teacher!

This is a depiction of the power teachers have in the classroom, the passive role of obedience expected from students, and what they stated in several instances of conversation: writing is used as punishment. It also shows how students are empowered to take actions leading to change. They voice their inconformity with the principal and, aware of the situation, they act upon it and change it. They are not passively accepting the actions of teachers; they are moving towards change.

Fortunately, this teacher power is also a possibility; it can be used to make a difference, and some teachers actually do. Even though one might expect better teaching practices in private schools given their favorable conditions in terms of resources, equipment, facilities, and prepared teachers, we found that positive teaching practices took place in both contexts regardless of their conditions. Children in private schools reported visits to the computer room, song festivals, and connections to other content areas in the English class, and public-school children mentioned the use of some games in class and connection to other areas like physical education.

Teachers make the difference with their ability to seek appropriate pedagogical and didactic strategies to bring children closer to the foreign language. The disparity in teacher preparation and access to equipment and resources means that the processes are different in the public and private sectors. For instance, the use of English in class is more evident in private schools than in public ones. In the drawings, the children reflect this (see Figure 6), and also in the pretend plays in which the children of one of the private schools used English when dramatizing the English lesson. This means that children in private schools have more exposure to the language at school and outside school as well, as will be presented in the next section. A reason for this might also be that teachers in private schools hold an undergraduate degree in foreign language teaching, whereas most of the teachers in public schools hold degrees in many different fields, but not in language teaching. Therefore, these teachers use different methodologies and use a different language as the means of instruction.

Figure 6. Excerpts of Drawings of the English Class (Boards): Private School (Left) and Public School (Right)



English as a tool to "survive" or to "live and interact." This finding reveals a big difference in the way children in public and private institutions conceive English. Mostly for the former, English is a tool to pass exams or to obtain passing grades at school, that is, it is a tool to "survive" in their academic environments. In some cases, English is also a tool to "serve" others (foreigners) that come from abroad, and we should be prepared to understand them and determine what they need. In contrast, for the latter, English is a tool to read instructions, play video games, talk with relatives who live abroad, or interact with others when they travel. These two different perspectives reflect the possibilities children have access to or are deprived of depending on their contexts and socio-economic conditions. Table 1 presents some answers about the use of English in their lives.

Table 1. Children's Answers About English Use

Children in private schools	Children in public schools
A veces en el internet hay cosas en inglés, entonces… [Sometimes on the Internet there are things in English, so…]	*Para estudiar, para pasar todas las materias, y todos los años.* [To study, to pass all the subjects, all the school years.]
Para escribir correos, para mandar cartas a Estados Unidos, para poder hablar con primas, tías. [To write emails, to send letters to the United States and talk to my cousins, aunts.]	*En un trabajo o en un restaurante, de pronto cuando viene gente del extranjero.* [In a job or in a restaurant, or maybe when people come from abroad.]
Nos sirve para cuando vamos a viajar. Por ejemplo, vamos a viajar a Canadá entonces allá podemos intercambiar frases y oraciones con las personas de allá. [It is useful when we travel. For example, we are going to travel to Canada, so there we can exchange phrases and sentences with the people there.]	*Para las clases y pa' las notas.* [For the English classes, and also for the grades.]

Researchers that study SR have emphasized the influence of the context in which SR originate. Castellotti and Moore (2002) argue how these images are created, preserved, and spread in society through different means like media, literature, manuals, among others. According to the authors:

> Representations vary according to learning *macro-contexts*, which include language teaching curriculum options, teaching orientations and relationships between languages both in society at large and in the classroom, and *micro-contexts*, which relate directly to classroom activities and the attitudinal and learning dynamics they set up. (p. 21, emphasis in the original)

Findings show that in our context, children see English as a universal language, as very important, as a window to another world or the door to the job market. These ideas circulate around them and are perpetuated by the educational system and the media.

This project arose from the need to open a space to listen to children's voices about English teaching and learning in Medellín. We learned that it is necessary to develop research projects that can account for what children think and feel concerning education in our Colombian context, with a view to illuminating teaching practices and educational policies in this field. Research related to the teaching and learning of English in Colombia has focused mainly on the perceptions of adults and thus, research that includes and takes seriously the views of children is needed as it could inform changes in the content taught or in the materials and methodologies used. When we hear the voices of children, we can hear our own adult voices and stop for a moment to reflect and question them. How can positive attitudes be supported and enhanced? Is this the message we want to convey about teaching and learning? Whose interests are we serving? Do we want to maintain those power relations as they are? How can our beliefs and practices be transformed?

Conclusion

This article presented a qualitative interpretive study about the SR that children in elementary schools in Medellin, Colombia, hold regarding English teaching and learning. Drawings, pretend play sessions, informal conversations, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Findings reveal that both teachers and children have a positive attitude towards the teaching and learning of the language. Children perceive English either as a tool to survive in the academic context (public

school children) or to communicate with others (private school children). For the participants in this study, the learning process is circumscribed to the classroom setting and implies repetition and memorization of words and grammar structures. Vertical relationships between teachers and students are widespread, and little interaction is promoted in the English lessons.

One of the limitations of this study was the analysis of data coming from children in first grade, given that we found it was difficult for these children to separate the English class from the other school day activities, and also because more knowledge about the cognitive and developmental processes of this group was required to be able to interpret what they expressed. More research is needed concerning the methodological tools to be used with this group of learners and also in the analytical processes to unveil their meanings.

This paper is an invitation to further research that explores children's interpretations, feelings, and thoughts regarding the learning and teaching of additional languages in our context. This may help overcome the adult-centeredness that has characterized research and teaching for so long.

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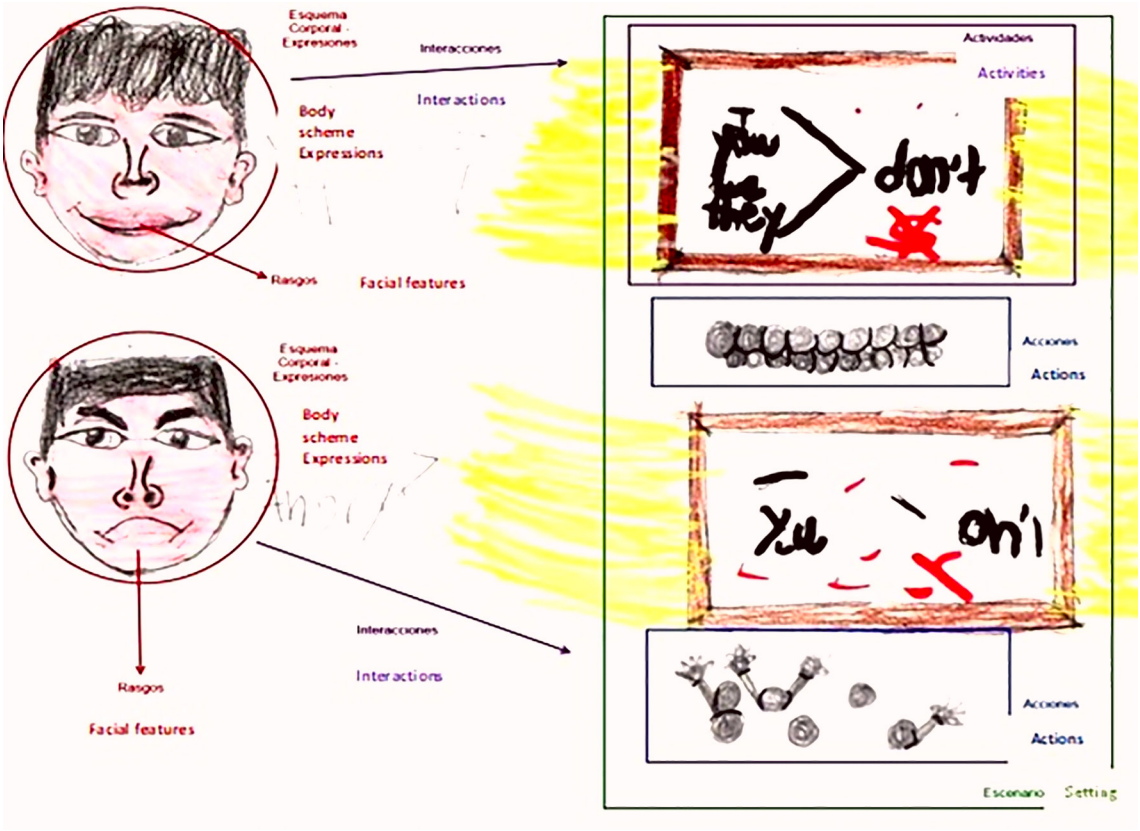
About the Author

Isabel Cristina Cadavid-Múnera, teacher-educator and researcher at Universidad de Antioquia. Member of the research group "Pedagogy and foreign language teaching" at the same university. She holds a BA in foreign languages, a diploma in translation from Universidad de Antioquia, and an MA in TESOL from West Virginia University.

Appendix: Analysis of a Drawing



https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v24n1.92481

The Educational Purpose of Language Teaching at University: Giving Voice to Native Communities

El propósito educativo de la enseñanza de lenguas en la universidad: dar voz a los pueblos originarios

Gabriela N. Tavella

S. Carina Fernández

Universidad Nacional del Comahue, San Martín de los Andes, Argentina

This paper reports the findings of a case study carried out in an English for specific purposes class with student tour guides at an Argentinean university. The main objective of this research project was to analyse how the teaching practices in the English language classes favoured intercultural exchanges. Data were gathered through document analysis, surveys, and interviews with students and with core-subject professors. Results were analysed qualitatively. We conclude that we must foster a friendly and safe learning environment to give voice to learners from native communities so that they can express their own identities and thus give way to enriching intercultural dialogue.

Keywords: education, English for specific purposes, foreign language instruction, intercultural communication, native communities

Este trabajo informa sobre los resultados de un estudio de caso en una clase de inglés con propósitos específicos con estudiantes de guía universitario de turismo en una universidad argentina. El objetivo principal del trabajo de investigación fue analizar el modo en que las prácticas áulicas en las clases de inglés favorecieron los intercambios interculturales. Los datos fueron recolectados a través del análisis de documentos, encuestas y entrevistas a estudiantes y a docentes de las materias específicas de la carrera. Los resultados se analizaron cualitativamente. Concluimos que debemos propiciar un ambiente de aprendizaje amigable y seguro en el cual los aprendientes de pueblos originarios tengan voz para expresar sus identidades y así enriquecer el diálogo intercultural.

Palabras clave: educación, comunicación intercultural, enseñanza de una lengua extranjera, inglés para propósitos específicos, pueblos originarios

Gabriela N. Tavella https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4649-2667 · Email: gabriela.tavella@fadel.uncoma.edu.ar
S. Carina Fernández https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1739-5865 · Email: silvia.fernandez@fadel.uncoma.edu.ar

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to report the findings of a case study carried out in an English for specific purposes (ESP) class with student tour guides in Argentina. The main objective of this four-year research project was to analyse how the teaching practices in the English language classes favoured intercultural exchanges; how pedagogical interventions considered students' beliefs, expectations, and prejudices towards the learning of English; and how teachers could give voice to every student in the class (Tavella & Fernández, 2019a).

Over the years, our ESP courses at university have gradually moved from a more traditional standpoint towards a more context-sensitive approach. In doing so, we started to reconsider the theoretical background of our teaching practices in light of content and language integrated learning (CLIL), intercultural competence, and post method pedagogies.

Theoretical Background

Within our ESP practices, needs analysis (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) has always been considered when designing our syllabi; however, in recent years we have additionally revisited our materials and teaching practices to suit our specific situational context. In doing so, we decided to abandon the use of textbooks, for we adhere to Tomlinson's (2008) concepts about mass-produced course books. These materials do not foster strong personal and affective relationships between content and learner, as they usually select insipid texts with the purpose of avoiding culturally controversial themes. They suggest literal interpretations from the learners, instead of aesthetically intense and singular readings.

Content and Language Integrated Learning

CLIL and its four Cs (Coyle, 2007)—content, cognition, communication, and culture—has paved our path towards the reformulation of our classes. *Content* was selected considering the curricula of core subjects, which are: natural resources, historical and cultural heritage, tourism as a social practice, recreation, professional practices, tourist organisations, social and group psychology, and first aid. *Cognition* is fostered through the design of meaningful activities aimed at promoting the development of thinking skills, namely, the activities and practices are situated. Just to mention an example, when dealing with interpretive stops,[1] we go around the town and the students carry out their guided tours trying to use the L2 to interpret[2] their local heritage. Afterwards, we take some time for reflection upon linguistic and non-linguistic needs (language and content). *Communication* is enhanced through the choice of relevant linguistic items meant to convey meaning. For example, when dealing with historic buildings in town we anticipate students' language needs by providing them with specific lexis and grammar. Finally, *culture* is embedded in all teaching practices to fit the particular class identity. In any guided tour, students' cultures are represented in their utterances, for they choose what to say and share, how to express it, and what to omit. Many times, it is only when they present a topic of their choice that students from native communities share aspects related to their origins and identities.

We adhere to the concept of intercultural communicative competence, defined by Byram et al. (2002), as the "ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and [the] ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality" (p. 10). This notion is the result of considering the close interdependence between language and culture and thus, the impact on language teaching and learning. Classroom activities

1 According to Gutiérrez et al. (2004; Chair of professional practice at the university where the study took place), an interpretive stop can be a monument, building and/or a natural element with heritage value at the time it is selected, analysed, and included within the tourist attractions of an area.

2 Interpreting in tourism refers to the contextualization of the natural or cultural resource and the multiple relations this may have with the environment. This means that students not only describe the natural or cultural attraction but also interpret its context.

are chosen considering this interrelation; for instance, when dealing with local Mapuche stories students are given the choice of *which* story to retell and *how* to tell it. Each student in our English classes chooses among their multiple identities which one(s) to share in order to generate appropriate understanding.

Furthermore, the post method approach and its three parameters (particularity, practicality, and possibility) have also enlightened our analysis. Particularity refers to the idea of considering the specific context in which teaching and learning take place. "Situational understanding" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) is a key issue and a guiding principle when selecting, designing, and adapting the materials to be used in our classes. It has been our main aim to choose and design tasks relevant to the specific context in which we are immersed. Typical flora and fauna of our national parks are dealt with, historic buildings are interpreted in terms of the historic period in which they were built, and natural processes that affected the area are also tackled. Thus, the post method teachers reflect, monitor, and act in their own teaching context (practicality) and they are aware of what a good practice implies. This parameter is clearly reflected in our research questions: How the teaching practices in the English language classes favoured intercultural exchange; how pedagogical interventions considered students' beliefs, expectations, and prejudices towards the learning of English; and how teachers could give voice to every student in the class. As revealed in the research questions, teaching practices were regularly self-monitored, with a deep awareness that all of them are always tainted with teachers' and learners' ideas concerning the learning of a foreign language in particular (possibility; Tavella & Fernández, 2019b).

Further Research Areas

Our research areas were expanded considering English as a lingua franca (ELF; Jenkins, 2007) and postcolonialism, discourse as symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991; Butler, 1997; Kramsch, 2011; Weedon, 1987) and language teaching with educational purposes (Porto & Byram, 2015). These lines of research arose as a result of giving voice to students' own perspectives as regards material design, choice of words, and teaching practices. Regular feedback from students was taken into account to select context-sensitive content, to rethink and reformulate materials and teaching practices, and to reflect upon the denotation and connotation in the choice of words and utterances.

We adhere to the concept of ELF from a pluricentric approach (Jenkins, 2009, p. 202), which implies that the learning of a language should favour intercultural communication and that there is no idealised target culture to reach. The implications of learning English in particular cannot be disregarded as the English language teaching tradition has always tended to rely on methods and teaching practices pervasively linked to the ideology of native speakerism (Holliday, 2005). Within this paradigm the learner has been considered an outsider, a "linguistic tourist" (Graddol, 2006) who seeks the approval of the target community. According to Kumaravadivelu (2012), "the non-English speaking world learns and uses the English language more for purposes of communication than for purposes of cultural identity formation" (p. 7).

In the case of future tour guides, the search for freedom to express their local identities brings about the development of local linguistic varieties which in traditional approaches would be considered as interferences in the development of the target language. In our multicultural context, students come to English classes with varied linguistic codes, different ideas of what is correct and appropriate (Kramsch, 2014). As stated by Seidlhofer (2007), nowadays, communities of practice share particular registers, with English being the most used code.

In line with ELF insights, our practices have been revisited so as to listen to the plurality of voices present in our classes. Feedback sheets are distributed regularly in order to listen to our students' opinions on the materials,

the choice of topics, and the way of approaching local/regional content. In a similar vein, reflection upon the situated syllabus is triggered. In addition, the texts and activities about Mapuche traditions, local stories, and *rukas*[3] were assessed by students of Mapuche origin in terms of choice of words, ways of addressing the topics, and respect for the Mapuche people's cosmovision; and they were modified when necessary. In this context, it is important to understand discourse as symbolic power (Kramsch, 2011) as it reveals aspects of social identities, collective memories, emotions, and aspirations. As stated by Sapir (1929), "language is a guide to 'social reality' . . . it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes" (p. 209). Consequently, the choice of words to express ourselves is revealing of our ideas, feelings, and values.

This research intended to foster the notion that the teaching of a foreign language should be intertwined with a deep respect for intercultural citizenship. The reformulation of our teaching practices made us transcend the instrumental purpose of the teaching of English to promote intercultural dialogue and consider its educational purposes (Porto & Byram, 2015). According to Kumaravadivelu (2012), although learners can see the importance of speaking English, they are also aware of the need to preserve and protect their linguistic and cultural identities, as is the case of the target population in this study.

Method

The research team was multidisciplinary; there were four teachers of English as a foreign language, a teacher of a content subject (natural resources), the administrative coordinator of the course of studies, two graduate students, and an undergraduate belonging to a native community (Mapuche) in Patagonia.

This project lasted four years and was designed as a case study defined by Yin (2018) as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 15). In our study, the boundaries can sometimes be blurred as we are teacher-researchers carrying out research upon our own context of practice.

Context and Target Population

This research study was carried out at one of the campuses of a state-run university in Argentinean Patagonia between 2017 and 2020. This campus welcomes students from all over the country each year. As described in Tavella and Fernández (2013, 2017), the course of studies started in San Martín de los Andes in 1992, and the groups have usually been composed of students who come from Mapuche[4] communities in Patagonia, students who have been born and raised in the town, and other students who come from around the country. They come from diverse backgrounds and with varied concepts and pre-concepts about English.

The target population of this research project in particular was student tour guides belonging to the above-mentioned native Mapuche communities. These students, in turn, come from varied backgrounds. Some of them spend their childhood with their families within native communities located in the countryside, in the mountains, or in the Patagonian steppe. The lands they inhabit have generally been assigned to these peoples by the provincial government after many years of conflict. The children usually go to rural primary schools[5] and then commute to the secondary schools in the nearest towns. There are also cases of students who attend

3 Dwelling places in Mapuche communities.

4 Native peoples who live in the territory of Argentinean and Chilean Patagonia. In Argentina, they inhabit Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego, the region of Antarctica and South-Atlantic islands. The university has campuses distributed along Neuquén and Río Negro provinces.

5 The teaching of Mapudungun (Mapuche people's ancestral language) as a foreign language is included in the curricula of rural schools in Neuquén province. This was incorporated as a means to promote the use of Mapudungun, which is gradually disappearing, especially among younger generations.

primary and secondary state-run boarding schools and return home at weekends. Some others live in Patagonian towns and attend urban schools. When the students coming from native communities graduate, they usually go back home to help their people offer better services to tourists and use the additional language to share aspects of their own culture with visitors from around the world who are not always native speakers of English (Tavella & Fernández, 2019a, p. 19).

Before starting our research, we had noticed that the percentages of university students representing each of the three groups mentioned above (students of Mapuche origin, local students, and students from around Argentina) varied every year. Yet, what remained unchanged, year after year, was our concern about our teaching practices: Did they give voice to minority groups?

Data Collection

During the first year, we gathered information about interculturality from university documents. For the revision of bibliography on intercultural teaching practices and CLIL, we received guidance from two experts in these fields who were the project's external consultants. We also designed and carried out students' surveys. They were completed by the students who were finishing their first and third semester of the English course. All students in the English class (a total of 37) participated in the survey. The following year, our work was mainly devoted to the analysis of the surveys.

In the same year, the three student-participants—who had volunteered to be part of the project after an open call carried out by the Chair—regularly carried out classroom observation tasks. As follow-up, informal interviews took place, and students shared their notes about classroom practices connected to the issues under research: content developed and omitted during the class (intercultural considerations) and how this content was tackled (intercultural considerations and teaching practices), plus the way in which language teachers addressed students (intercultural considerations and teaching practices). In the two remaining years, interviews with 11 teachers from the content subjects mentioned above were carried out. The corpus (document analysis, classroom observation notes, surveys, and interviews) used for the project was heterogeneous and we will describe and explain the data obtained from its analysis qualitatively (Mertens, 2015) considering different standpoints.

Data Analysis

Document Analysis

The curriculum, the profile of graduate students, and the university initiatives were looked into in terms of intercultural practices. In its introduction, the course curriculum describes the profession of the tour guide as a social one.

> The tour guide's performance is closely linked to the environment and the expectations of those who visit the tourist site. Then, this social activity is crossed by its diversity. Groups are diverse in terms of age, nationality, interests, financial situation, and personal stories. Tour guides are diverse as well and that diversity is present in the heart of the hosting community. (Our translation)

Within the professional profile, the document states that

> the tour guides will have a sensitive attitude, will be engaged in and respectful of the local development and the local values. As regards the sociocultural, historic, physical, and financial dimensions, they will adopt a critical mindset and will be responsible for the needs and interests of the groups of tourists. They will also respect the features of the place where they will be guiding. (Universidad Nacional del Comahue, 2006; our translation)

After the analysis, the question to pose was whether these concepts were mere theoretical claims or if there were institutional policies to promote diversity and respectful practices.

In this sense, most recently there have been university initiatives that include the intercultural aspect among the issues to be considered in order to foster the development of institutional capacities to cater for people with special needs (Secretaría de Políticas Universitarias, 2016). Our university has started to include intercultural principles as a means to abandon monocultural practices and promote its insertion in the context in which it is settled. One of the actions implemented is regular visits to small villages in Northern Patagonia and to Mapuche communities. These visits are aimed at informing prospective university students about access to the free-of-charge university education offered by state-run universities in our country; the wide choice of courses of studies in the different university campuses; the features of and requisites for the different scholarships; plus, the chance of using students' dormitories as dwelling places throughout the course of studies.

After analysing the curriculum, the profile of graduate students, and the university initiatives, we concluded that our university policies have gradually started to promote interculturality and inclusion.

Surveys

Students' responses were analysed and relevant segments of the responses were underlined. This constituted the initial coding phase (Mertens, 2015); then two broad categories emerged: intercultural considerations and teaching practices. The students' mother tongue (Spanish) was used for the design of the questions and for their responses. For the purpose of this paper, we will focus on those answers that enlighten the analysis.

Intercultural Considerations. In the responses, students refer to diversity in terms of place of origin and individual characteristics and how these different identities mark the features of the class. Most of the answers refer to the wide variety of hometowns and provinces present in the class, which covers the five-thousand-kilometre distance of our vast country. Students also mention their diverse socio-cultural backgrounds as an asset to their professional development.

Within this context, it is relevant to mention that in the English class most students from Mapuche communities do not dare to share their origin. In many cases this could be related to instances of discrimination they have suffered. This constituted a major constraint throughout our research project.

Of special interest is that in the surveys, students in general do not make a distinction between their cultures and the Mapuche's, only some of them mention the fact that our university is made up of students from different origins and thus, possess different identities. There is one response that we consider worth analysing for the aim of the present contribution: "We deal with *their* traditions, legends, and this helps us understand *their* culture a bit more" (Student A,[6] our translation and emphasis). The choice of words in this answer could be interpreted as an instance of an intercultural exchange as described by the Council of Europe (2016), a "dialogue that takes place between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other" (p. 6). At the same time, this response could also show that the student places themself as being an outsider, not belonging to the Mapuche community. The student refers to the activities in the English class as being inclusive because the Mapuche culture is dealt with. The use of "their" to refer to another culture which is not their own may reflect the student's inability to get familiar with the unfamiliar, unable to place themself from the perspectives and worlds of the other (Porto et al., 2016).

Teaching Practices. Teaching practices were not directly addressed in the students' answers. The only relationship we can establish between their answers and the category of analysis is when they emphasize group work as a type of pedagogical intervention, which

6 To protect students' identities, we will use letters to differentiate them.

promotes attitudes such as respect and understanding of others. They stress the time shared with different people with different ideals and knowledge; plus, group work conceived as a means to promote interaction and to learn from others. They point out the possibility of exchanging varied standpoints with people of varied origins with varied ideas and cultures. In one of the answers there is a transfer of this particular teaching practice to the tour guide's specific field: "We can share different knowledge from different viewpoints; group work helps provide more experiences that build up social identity" (Student B, our translation).

Interviews With Student Participants

From the unstructured interviews carried out with student-participants, we will refer to the responses given by one of the female students. The reason why we selected this interview in particular is because of its relevance for the present study in terms of the experiences she went through as a member of a Mapuche community in the Neuquén province.

The interviewee was asked about why some members of the Mapuche community were reluctant to share their origins. Student C explicitly stated that many did not do it because they were afraid of being discriminated against. She told us the story of a university classmate, a member of a Mapuche community in the province, whom for the aim of this account will be called Student D. When referring to Mapuche people, Student D talked about "them,"[7] excluding themself from that group; deliberately choosing the pronoun "they." As stated by Lakoff (2001), language choice "legitimizes power, and power permits the blanketing of all conduits with the messages of one group, to the exclusion of others" (p. 310). Student C spoke about the social burden of belonging to native communities in the region and referred back to her personal experience in the building of her pride to belong. She shared some childhood experiences in an urban school where some peers made fun of her origins teasing her with pejorative terms. At this stage of the interview, she made a point about the role of her family in the construction of her identity as a descendant of two Mapuche families. Student C rejects the use of "we" and "they," "they" being the Mapuche people. In her view these pronouns are words that index social identity; she is showing social reality through speech; thus, expressing dislike for being seen as one of "the others."

Consequently, it is of utmost importance to seriously consider the selection of words. Power is exercised through the choice of language. Language is arbitrary; it is not just a code. It always indexes something; something which is different for each individual. In this particular case *the others* index the Mapuche community, the ones that are being discriminated against. Therefore, it is important to understand discourse as symbolic power (Kramsch, 2011); it reveals aspects of social identities, collective memories, emotions, and aspirations.

During the interview, Student C talks about "suffering," "getting distressed," and "being hurt." These words arise when referring to some experiences encountered during school and university life. She tells us the story of a comment made by a teacher: "People from your origin have difficulties in acquiring university knowledge" (our translation). In this particular case, Student C is being wounded, this utterance has had a strong effect on her as it was performed by one in a position of power and, as Butler (1997, p. 26) states, it has the effect of resubordinating those who are already in a subordinate position.

As has been previously mentioned, language produces effects. Student C has been injuriously addressed and affected by the professor's utterance. Language can wound:

> Language can act in ways that parallel the infliction of physical pain and injury . . . Certain words or certain forms of address not only operate as threats to one's

7 The terms are deliberately written between inverted commas as they are translated quotes of the terms used by Student C.

> physical well-being, but there is a strong sense in which the body is alternately sustained and threatened through modes of address. (Butler, 1997, pp. 4–5)

Interviews With Core-Subject Teachers

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in which all content teachers participated. The interviews focused around three key points: the concept of interculturality, the approach taken by each Chair, and the role of the tour guide.

Regarding the concept of interculturality, through the interviews we could conclude that teachers have varied standpoints. From the professors' stances, the term was depicted as a social construct which depends on the socio-cultural and historical context. It was associated with culture, with cultural diversity. It was also considered a complex and difficult concept to define, sometimes confusing, not easy to tackle. It was linked to the understanding of other people's cultures and it was also connected to respecting one's own culture. It is worth mentioning that all respondents associated interculturality with the Mapuche communities in the area. Just to mention an example, the professor of historical and cultural heritage pointed out the limitations of talking about other peoples' cosmovision when one feels like an outsider.

As for the way of addressing intercultural matters in each subject, the answers showed that all teaching practices included these issues either as specific curriculum content or as an aspect to be covered across each subject. Some teachers stated that university experiences empower the students from Mapuche communities, give them voices, and strengthen their identities. For instance, one of the teachers of recreation pointed out that students shared their childhood experiences when recalling the games they used to play. In this account, their students' own culture was evidenced even when the concept was not directly addressed. The professor of social and group psychology pointed out the importance of dealing with the concept of interculturality all throughout the subject, and to relate it to the students' future professional role.

In reference to the role of tour guides, it was asserted that they were key agents when sharing their insights with others. Professors stated that there were different ways to interpret realities framed within the perspective of each tour guide. More specifically, the respondents referred to the role of the tour guide in our region as intercultural and interethnic informants. The standpoint of the professor of professional practices is to be mentioned. She stated that

> in a Mapuche [people's] display at a museum, when a student that is a member of that community is guiding, they place their own stamp; their beliefs are revealed in the organisation of the speech and in the choice of words. (Our translation)

From the analysis of the professors' interviews, we can say that intercultural issues were covered in all subjects. In addition, we can conclude that, in general, students from Mapuche communities are reluctant to share their origins. In this context, giving voice to learners from native communities can foster a friendly learning environment in which they can safely express their own identities; thus, giving way to enriching intercultural dialogue.

Concluding Remarks

Turning back to the research questions, the project was conceived on the assumption that our language classes were planned placing intercultural exchanges at the core. They were intended to foster respect for students' identities, individualities, previous knowledge, ideas, and pre-concepts, and to give voice to all students. Through surveys and students' feedback, interviews, and document analysis, we started to question our pedagogical interventions so as to evaluate whether all our students were given voice in our classes.

The scope of the research was widened to the development of intercultural dialogue and the enhancement

of tolerance and responsible citizenship. This new line of research was due, on the one hand, to students' feedback and surveys, and, on the other, to the above-developed interview with the student member of the Mapuche community. Both reveal that individual identities are respected in the English classes. However, we still believe that there is a need to cater to every student's needs and to give voice to learners belonging to native communities. It is only when students of Mapuche origin dare share aspects of their own being that we feel we are giving voice to every student in our class and that our teaching practices really become inclusive.

In the present study, explicit actions were taken to listen to the voice of students from Mapuche communities by trying to analyse our own teaching practices from their perspectives. This is backed by Porto et al. (2016) when they assert that the difficulty in approaching the otherness lies in the fact that in order to get familiar with the unfamiliar, to reach the minds of the others and hear their inner voices, we need to evaluate the actions and beliefs of others from the perspectives and the world of others. If language teachers are willing to transcend the instrumental purposes of language teaching, their practices should favour intercultural dialogue and consider their educational aims (Porto & Byram, 2015).

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About the Authors

Gabriela N. Tavella is an ESP professor and director of a research project in the Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional del Comahue (Argentina). Her main research interests are ELT methodology, CLIL, culture/intercultural matters in ELT, and individual differences in language learning.

S. Carina Fernández is an ESP lecturer and researcher in the Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional del Comahue (Argentina). Her main research interests are intercultural matters in the teaching of languages, postmethod pedagogies, and ELF.

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Compiling a Corpus of Audiovisual Materials for EFL Learning: Selection, Analysis, and Exploitation

Compilación de un corpus de materiales audiovisuales para el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera: selección, análisis y explotación

Paula Wood-Borque
Universidad de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, Spain

Films and series are usually consumed in leisure moments, but they can be included in the English as a foreign language classroom as they offer real-life language in context, which can help develop learners' communicative competence. This paper examines how audiovisual materials can promote English acquisition in secondary education and proposes a corpus of films and series for this purpose. Two surveys will be presented, one for compiling fragments, and the other regarding students' viewing habits. The fragment selection process will be explained, and some illustrations of the fragments' exploitation will be described. This medium's language learning benefits will be discussed, and it will be argued that using this corpus can have a positive influence on students' communicative competence development.

Keywords: audiovisual materials, communicative competence, corpus, secondary education

Las producciones audiovisuales pueden servir como material en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, pues ofrecen ejemplos del lenguaje en contexto, lo cual ayudaría a desarrollar la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes. Este artículo estudia cómo los materiales audiovisuales favorecen la adquisición del inglés en la educación secundaria, y propone un corpus de películas y series con este propósito. Se presentarán dos encuestas, una hecha para la compilación de fragmentos, y la otra relacionada con los hábitos de visualización de los estudiantes. Se explicará el proceso de selección de fragmentos, con algunos ejemplos de esta explotación. Se argumentará que el uso del corpus puede tener una influencia positiva en el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: competencia comunicativa, educación secundaria, corpus, materiales audiovisuales

Paula Wood-Borque https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4686-7067 · Email: 718596@unizar.es

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Introduction

Students in secondary education today are usually skilful in the use of technology, and some studies have focused on the usefulness of this exposure to the media for the L2 classroom (Feng & Webb, 2020; Montero-Pérez, 2020; Webb & Rodgers, 2009b). Moreover, most schools are starting to normalize the use of technological devices in the classroom. Many teachers and educational researchers have seen an opportunity in this technological and media proficiency on the part of the students, and its acceptance on the part of the schools, as a way of taking advantage of the media's intrinsic motivation for learners in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching. As a result, this article presents the process undertaken to create and exploit a corpus of audiovisual materials (AM)—such as films and TV series—to use as a learning resource in the EFL classroom to improve language learning and the development of students' communicative competence.

Recent studies have explored the benefits of using AM in the EFL classroom, such as the many examples of language use in real-life context they display (Peters & Muñoz, 2020; Puimège & Peters, 2020), the variety of topics they might tackle (Sert & Amri, 2021), the advantages of imagery for vocabulary learning (Webb & Rodgers, 2009a; Pujadas & Muñoz, 2020) and the possibility to use captions while viewing (Lee & Révész, 2020; Peters & Muñoz, 2020; Wisniewska & Mora, 2020). Films are usually intrinsically attractive (provided the topic appeals to the viewer) and they are said to be one of the most enjoyable and accessible forms of entertainment, which can work as a motivator and an educator for EFL students (Feng & Webb, 2020), enhancing the language learning process as long as appropriate materials are selected and suitable activities designed (Donaghy, 2015).

The main purpose of this paper is to explore how AM, such as scenes from films and series, can be selected, analysed, and exploited in the EFL classroom to develop students' communicative and comprehension skills. The creation of a corpus of useful and exploitable audiovisual fragments will be explained, identifying and collecting examples of fragments of films and series that can be used to promote language learning. This could help other teachers by offering possible scenes to use in class that are also relevant in their professional contexts. Furthermore, the way in which the intrinsic attractiveness of audiovisual resources may improve secondary education students' motivation and engagement will be highlighted.

First, there is a discussion of the theoretical framework behind the compilation of the corpus CAMELLS (Corpus of Audiovisual Materials for English Language Learners in Secondary) and its exploitation. Next, the methodology used will be explained, which was based on two surveys distributed to secondary education students to learn more about their likes and preferences on films, series, and EFL classroom activities. The process undertaken to choose scenes in the corpus will be described. Finally, the main findings will be presented, which stem from another survey done regarding the use of AM and other common practices in the EFL classroom. In this section, the CAMELLS corpus will also be presented, and some possible ways of exploiting it in the secondary education classroom will be discussed. The limitations and implications of the study will be highlighted in the conclusions section.

Theoretical Background

Making use of AM in the EFL classroom can present many benefits while learning the second language, as "meaning is communicated through moving images more readily than print because of its immediacy, making film literacy an incredibly powerful teaching tool" (Donaghy, 2015, p. 12). This means that the visual component of AM is likely to help with language acquisition, since the images "support the verbal message and provide a focus of attention" (p. 19). Moreover, these kinds of materials can be very useful, especially in terms of improving students' motivation and engagement (Feng & Webb, 2020; Peters

& Muñoz, 2020; Pujadas & Muñoz, 2020). Films and TV series will probably be intrinsically attractive to students, especially if they are interested in the topic. Therefore, a survey was designed (see Method section and Appendix A) to learn more about students' interests and preferences. Motivation is said to be "one of the main determinants of second/foreign language (L2) learning achievement" (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 273), which means that if students do not feel motivated or are not engaged in the lessons, it will be more difficult for them to acquire the language. Dörnyei (1994) claims that there are three levels in the L2 motivation framework: the *language level*, the *learner level*, and the *learning situation level* (p. 279). These three levels were taken into account to try and increase the attractiveness of the content of the course under investigation by using authentic AM and visual aids and exploiting them to increase students' interest and involvement.

Another benefit of the use of these resources can be familiarizing students with the English language in real-life contexts and situations for communication, so language learning can be improved by providing authentic input that might be hard to display through other materials (Alluri, 2018; Donaghy, 2015; King, 2002). Real-life audiovisual models of the foreign language can help develop comprehension skills, aside from providing different contexts for the development of activities. AM provide a clear context for the students to better understand and acquire vocabulary (Kalra, 2017) since multi-sensory input is likely to aid memory retention more effectively. Using AM helps train "verbal skills, writing, vocabulary, grammar and cultures," but it is the teacher's job to come up with activities that work these skills (Alluri, 2018, p. 148).

Furthermore, films and TV series make a great tool for intercultural communication, since they are "cultural documents" that help to communicate cultural values and customs to viewers, as well as making them "better understand their own culture" (Donaghy, 2015, p. 19). They also offer "an opportunity for being exposed to different native speaker voices, slang, reduced speeches, stress, accents, and dialects" (King, 2002, p. 511). This means that they are an appropriate and realistic source of representation of different Anglo-speaking countries with their different accents and registers, which is something required to develop students' communicative competence and its sociolinguistic component. Also, "by introducing various cultures to students through films we can make students tolerant, liberal and sensitive to other cultures and respect them" (Alluri, 2018, pp. 148–149), which is something that must be taken into account since one objective as an EFL teacher is to develop students' intercultural competence without prejudices or stereotypes.

The benefits of AM for promoting students' communicative competence, their motivation and engagement, and their intercultural awareness have been well attested. As has been pointed out, when seeking to introduce AM in the EFL classroom attention has also to be placed on what use is made of such materials and how they are exploited. Ellis et al. (2002) argue that students will not achieve a high level of linguistic competence if there is not a focus on form in the EFL lessons. This means that teachers cannot rely on the film's topic alone if they want students to acquire the language. In his words, "learners need to do more than to simply engage in communicative language use; they also need to attend to form" (p. 421). AM are a source of authentic language which can be brought and exploited in the classroom to foster communicative competence in line with communicative language teaching principles (Brown, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2014; Richards, 2006), but in order to be effective, students' attention needs to be drawn to specific features of the language (Han et al., 2009; Izumi, 2002).

Through films and series students can be exposed to contextualized language and such input can contribute to developing their grammatical, discourse, functional, and strategic competences. This can be done through the use of input enhancement. Larsen-Freeman (2014) explains that "by highlighting . . . certain non-salient grammatical forms in a reading passage, students' atten-

tion will be drawn to them" (p. 258), and thus, input enhancement is achieved. Han et al. (2009) points out the reasons why input enhancement should be used in the L2 classroom; first, learners may "lack sensitivity to grammatical features of target language input." Secondly, "certain grammatical features in the input . . . are inherently non-salient," so learners may not notice them. And finally, "learners' first language may act as a hindrance to their ability to notice certain linguistic features in the input" (p. 598). When using AM, learners' attention can be drawn to particular language features, for example through the use of subtitles: "movie subtitles through input enhancement can have a facilitative role in the achievement among the participants and it can affect their speaking ability" (Okar & Shahidy, 2019, p. 101); or by highlighting specific salient features as will be argued in the Findings section.

Previous research on the effects of AM on students' acquisition of English as an L2 has pointed out the importance of such authentic input to be comprehensible and the actual impact on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation learning. The input students are exposed to needs to be comprehensible, and for that, a vocabulary of the most frequent word families need to be covered by the films and series. Webb and Rodgers (2009a) determined that a lexical coverage of 3,000 word families would be necessary, concluding that "if 95% coverage is sufficient for comprehension then movies may be an appropriate source of L2 input for many language learners" (p. 418). In contrast, if 98% coverage is necessary then additional support should be given in order to ease comprehension, like pre-viewing activities or the use of captions or scripts (Webb & Rodgers, 2009a). Very similar results were found when investigating the vocabulary coverage of TV programs (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2020; Webb & Rodgers, 2009b). Combining visual and aural input might make comprehension easier than listening comprehension, since it may "effectively link L2 form with L1 meaning" (Webb & Rodgers, 2009a, p. 410), and that in an EFL context these materials could "improve listening skills, [improve the] learn[ing of] vocabulary," and help "focus on specific language points" (p. 420). Pujadas and Muñoz (2020) argue that, even if students are motivated to use AM for language learning, some films or series might be too difficult to understand, and they showed how captions eased such comprehension.

Students' vocabulary range has been shown to improve thanks to AM. Puimège and Peters (2020) explored the incidental learning of formulaic sequences (FS) from audiovisual input, and found that knowledge of FS benefits language processing in both native speakers and L2 learners and is a key predictor of L2 writing and speaking proficiency. Nevertheless, FS usually present difficulties for L2 learners due to their low frequency in texts. In the light of their results, Puimège and Peters concluded that "TV viewing can be a highly effective method for acquiring L2 vocabulary" (p. 546).

As regards the development of students' grammatical knowledge, Lee and Révész (2020) argue that "captions cannot only facilitate the acquisition of L2 vocabulary but also have the capacity to promote development in L2 grammatical knowledge" (p. 642). Finally, Wisniewska and Mora (2020) examine the potential benefits of captions on pronunciation, finding that they enhanced "not only the ability to segment speech, . . . but also the ability to process speech faster and more efficiently" (p. 616).

Looking at the findings of all of these recent studies on audiovisual input for language learning, I think it could be affirmed that AM can be very useful in the EFL classroom if they are appropriately selected, and if they are suitably exploited. This paper aims to present the process of selection, analysis, and exploitation of AM in the EFL secondary education classroom.

Method

Instruments

Two surveys were designed with the purpose of creating the CAMELLS corpus and exploiting it. The

first one was aimed at secondary education and baccalaureate students (i.e., 12- to 18-year-olds in Spain). It was sent to the participants through Google Forms in the students' L1 (Spanish). The survey called for information such as age, gender, the academic year in which they were currently studying, and requested participants to name two or three English-speaking films and two or three English-speaking series they enjoy watching (see Appendix A). The main intention of this first survey was to take into account students' preferences and find out what kind of films and series appeal to different ages in order to ensure that the clips to be used will actually be motivating for the students.

The second survey was carried out with the intention of finding out students' opinion on using audiovisual resources in the EFL classroom and what kind of activities they find most engaging during these classes. This survey concerned three main points: the participants' viewing habits as an out-of-class activity; the use of AM in their EFL classes; and the activities they usually carry out in the EFL classroom. It first asked how participants usually watch English-speaking films and series (if dubbed into Spanish, with English or Spanish captions, or in the original version) and why would they prefer to watch AM in English—if they did so. Then, if they ever use AM in the EFL classroom, and how they do so (similar to the first question). Finally, the survey requested students to grade typical EFL activities according to their level of engagement. It consisted of six linear-scale questions and three open-answer ones (see Appendix B).

Participants

Secondary education and baccalaureate students (i.e., 12- to 18-year-olds in Spain) participated in the first survey, while only fourth year secondary education students (i.e., 15–16 years old) took part in the second survey. The first survey received 46 responses (32 female and 14 male respondents) and 49 students participated in the second one.

Procedure for the Administration of the Survey

Responses to the first survey were progressively collected and then a list was made with the films and series that had more than one vote. Initially there was a great variety of titles, but most of them had been selected by just one person (since the survey was open-question, the responses had little cohesion), so only the titles, which had more than one vote, were selected (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). The titles in the corpus were intended to be used with fourth-year secondary education students (i.e., 15–16 years of age). However, since the sample would have ended up being too small if only the titles chosen by students of this age were considered, the ones suggested by students one year younger or older were also taken into account (considering that most answers had been given by third-year students).

Procedure for the Selection of Titles and Fragments

However, some of the titles chosen by fourth-year secondary education students were finally not used because of their topic or because of age restrictions, even if they had received many votes—titles such as *It* (which received four votes), *Joker* (four votes) or *The Walking Dead* (two votes). These are a substantial number of votes considering that the majority of films and series that the participants selected had just one or two, and that it was an open-question survey (that is, the participants could write down any title they wanted as long as English was the original language). I decided not to include these titles using my own criteria as a teacher, since I would not want the clips used in class to upset any student (both for moral and practical reasons; a frightening or generally uncomfortable clip would probably affect the students' performance when carrying out an activity), and because there were many others to work with. Similarly, even if many titles from this final selection could be useful due to their content, there were also an ample number of them that I considered unattractive due to their lack of action and that were not used. Again, my own criteria were used for

this, since the idea of something being boring or tedious is very subjective. The scenes considered non-engaging were the ones which included long dialogues with no action (for instance, some of these were found in the first episode of *Peaky Blinders*), that may not be appealing to students.

After this, I started watching the films and series on the final list and noting down different fragments that were expected to be both practical for English language teaching and engaging for the students. The fragments were selected taking into account two main elements: the topic(s) and the linguistic features present, which needed to follow the fourth-year standards in this case. To meet these criteria, the fragments had to include some sort of dialogue with useful language for the students (e.g., grammatical and syntactic structures, lexis), and also include interesting topics, ensuring that students would find them enjoyable.

Procedure for the Analysis of Selected Fragments

Then, the fragments selected (24 in total, as can be seen in Table 4 in the Findings section) were analysed. This entailed transcribing the corresponding script and highlighting different language elements (such as vocabulary, grammatical structures, and syntax, among others) that would be suitable for the academic year I was focusing on. A coding system was used on the scripts (see Figure 1) to highlight the main linguistic features that should be taught in the fourth year of secondary education. This could also make it easier for the learners to notice certain elements, if they also work with the scripts and not just with the audiovisual fragments.

Figure 1. Coding System of Fragments Selected

Courtesy and register, accent and slang
Vocabulary
Descriptions, Reported speech
Grammar (structures, verb tenses, syntax)
Instructions + Directions
Modality

Regarding the exploitation of CAMELLS, two different protocols were followed for the initial step of the development; either choosing a fragment that could be useful for a specific academic year and then coming up with an activity; or thinking about a convenient activity to work some particular features and then choosing a scene that could be employed for this. Due to the nature of this project and the corpus of fragments created, the first protocol was the one followed for the most part, so most of the activities are based on a previously analysed fragment. In regard to the second protocol (first coming up with an activity or deciding what the activity should focus on before having a scene for it), the scenes chosen included important grammatical and/or lexical features for the students' level, as well as those that had relevant topics. The intention of the fragments chosen was to focus students' attention on particular forms and make them notice them through input enhancement in subtitles and scripts (Okar & Shahidy, 2019).

Findings

In this section, the results of the two surveys conducted will be presented. Then, the corpus CAMELLS, which was compiled according to the results obtained from the surveys, will be described. The corpus presented in this paper can be considered a pilot version, since it is expected to be developed in the future through further research.

Results From the Surveys

In the first survey, 46 responses were received, most of them including 5–6 titles, so the corpus ended up with 67 film titles; there were 99 suggestions in total regarding film titles, but as this included the repetition of titles the final number was 67. The same goes for the series titles; there were 92 suggestions in total, but counting the repeated ones, it turned out to be 57 titles (Table 1). From the 46 responses, 27 (58.7%) were selected as a representative sample of the academic years under study: 11 from the third-year secondary education, 8 from the fourth-year secondary education, and 8 from the first-year baccalaureate.

Table 1. Summary of Results for First Survey on Students' Choice of Audiovisual Materials (*N* = 46)

Initial number of suggested film titles		**Final number of film titles (excluding repeated ones)**
99		67
Initial number of suggested series titles		**Final number of series titles (excluding repeated ones)**
92		57
Academic year of the participants' responses considered		
3rd-year secondary education	4th-year secondary education	1st-year post-secondary education
11	8	8

In regard to the second survey, results revealed that 28 out of 49 participants (57.15%) watch films and series in English as a leisure activity. The main reasons for this are that they believe watching them in English will help them learn and practice the language (Appendix C). They also acknowledged that they prefer hearing the actors' real voices and original script because of problems like mistranslated puns. Therefore, more than half of the participants stated they would find watching films in English in the EFL classroom useful and enjoyable. Moreover, even if 21 participants declared they do not watch films or series in English for leisure, 43 out of 49 (87.75%) participants claimed to have watched films or series in the EFL classroom before.[1]

Regarding what kind of activities the students found most motivating, they indicated that they would like to break away from the routine of using their every-day English books and doing grammar exercises. They expressed they would like to be active participants in the EFL classroom and use different resources and materials. This is related to the question regarding students' attitude towards watching films in English in the EFL classroom, since 10 participants (20.4%) claimed that they would enjoy watching videos or films and commenting on them. This information is further supported by the results obtained in the question "What would you change or improve about your English lessons?" More than half of the answers (30 out of 59) belonged to the group "more fun, entertaining, and interactive" lessons, and changes in relation to academic work and the use of AM in class was also demanded. In summary, the participants report they prefer more engaging and interactive lessons, less focused on grammar and more focused on speaking and games.

These results revealed that the lack of motivation for most students lies in Dörnyei's (1994) *learning situation level*, which can be divided into three areas: course-specific motivational components, teacher-specific motivational components, and group-specific motivational components. Most of the answers expressed in the survey were related to course-specific motivational components, since students claimed to be displeased with the teaching method, the learning tasks, and the materials. Taking all of these data into account, one sees it can be affirmed that using audiovisual resources could help with students' engagement, especially of an interactive kind in which they are active participants. This would make our lessons more effective in terms of language acquisition and motivation.

Description of the CAMELLS Corpus

After compiling the responses of the 46 participants of the first survey, the final count was of 67 film titles and 57 series titles, although many of these were selections with just one vote. The number of votes each title received was included in a table, ending up with 16 film titles (Table 2) and 16 series titles (Table 3), to make way for the next step.

1 Full results from the second survey can be consulted in Appendix C.

Table 2. Film Titles in CAMELLS

2 votes	*The da Vinci Code*, *Mean Girls*, *The Greatest Showman*, *The Notebook*, *Wonder*, *The Lion King*, *The Incredibles*, *A Monster Calls*
3 votes	*The Hunger Games*, *Spider-Man*, *Five Feet Apart*
4 votes	*Star Wars*, *Joker*, *It*
5 votes	*Harry Potter*
6 votes	*Avengers*

Table 3. Series Titles in CAMELLS

2 votes	*Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*, *Vikings*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Jane the Virgin*, *CSI*, *Raising Dion*, *Voltron: Legendary Defender*
3 votes	*Shadowhunters*, *Glee*, *The Society*
4 votes	*Peaky Blinders*, *Gossip Girl*, *13 Reasons Why*
6 votes	*Stranger Things*
8 votes	*Friends*

Some problems were encountered during the first response count; for instance, many students had written down *Avengers* as their favourite film, which posed a challenge since there are many films related to this title (*The Avengers*, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, *Avengers: Infinity War*, and *Avengers: Endgame*), and most of the main characters have their own film. There were also many students who wrote down titles of films belonging to this saga (such as *Iron Man*, *Doctor Strange*, and *Spider-Man*). Because of this, all of these titles were counted as belonging to the category of *Avengers* since they are all quite similar in their topics and style, thus of these films being appropriate for my project.

The fragments used in this project were selected so as not to contain spoilers, or at least not significant ones. They are from the first episodes of the series they belong to, from the first scenes of a film, or from the first film of a well-known saga. The main purpose of this is not to spoil the films or series for my students, since that might even decrease their motivation or produce some kind of discontent that could affect the session, like raising their affective filter. Krashen (1981) defines the affective filter as an attitude related to second language acquisition, in which "performers with high or strong filters will acquire less of the language directed at them, as less input is 'allowed in' to the language-acquisition device" (p. 22). That is, if the learner is stressed, anxious, or in a bad mood it can prevent him or her from learning, which is something to avoid as a teacher. Spoiling some TV series or film that students might have liked to watch at some other moment can negatively affect their mood, and thus their attitude towards the lessons and their disposition to learn.

Table 4 shows the titles compiled with the fragments selected and their exploitation. The first column includes the titles of the films or series from CAMELLS, selected for script analysis. The middle column contains what episode or film from the franchise was chosen (in the case of *The da Vinci Code* it was left blank, since there is only one film). The last column indicates the fragments analysed and their minutes. Each fragment received a title, with the intention of reflecting the main topic and to make it easier to identify. The titles in bold have been selected to illustrate the two protocols followed for their exploitation in the next section.

Table 4. Titles and Fragments Selected in CAMELLS

Films or series	Selection for exploitation	Selection of relevant fragments
Avengers	*Iron Man*	"Meeting a celebrity" (0:40–3:50)
Harry Potter	1st movie	"A new family" (1:35–4:00) "A disappointing birthday" (4:04–5:55) "Visiting the zoo" (6:00–8:32) "Meeting Hagrid" (12:30–18:22) "Choosing a wand" (24:43–28:45) "You-Know-Who" (28:45–31:00) "**Looking for platform 9 ¾**" (31:05–33:55) "New friends" (34:20–37:47) "Welcome to Hogwarts" (39:30–41:27) "The sorting hat" (42:50–46:05) "Nasty Snape" (51:18–53:16) "Flying class" (55:05–59:10)
The da Vinci Code		"**Cultural relativism**" (3:30–5:13)
The Hunger Games	1st movie	"The president's speech" (12:50–14:00) "Survival techniques" (26:00–28:36)
Friends	Season 5, Ep. 9 Season 10, Ep. 3	"Ross' sandwich" (11:35–13:35) "Fake tan" (4:40–7:12)
Peaky Blinders	Season 1, Ep. 1	"Pub fight" (10:00–14:35)
Stranger Things	Season 1, Ep. 1 Season 1, Ep. 2	"Dungeons and Dragons" (1:43–4:50) "Will's whereabouts" (11:08–12:40) "School bullies" (12:50–13:57) "Officer Hopper" (16:15–18:52) "A weird girl" (0:10–4:30)

Exploitation of CAMELLS

After the compilation of CAMELLS while bearing in mind students' choices and preferences of films and series, and its analysis in terms of potential uses in the secondary education EFL classroom, the two protocols that can be used for the exploitation of the selected fragments will be illustrated. An example of the corpus lexico-grammatical analysis using the coding system specified in Figure 1 can be found in Figure 2. As can be seen, there is a particular feature that is repeated recurrently—modal verbs—and thus students' attention, once their comprehension of the fragment has been checked, could be drawn to it, focusing on form (Ellis et al., 2002) as modal verbs are presented in a meaningful, relevant context. Some features could be marked when students are focusing on the comprehension of the message making use of input enhancement strategies (Larsen-Freeman, 2014; Okar & Shahidy, 2019), both using the script or captions when viewing (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2020).

The modal verbs present are for positive deduction (*must*), prediction (*will*), permission/request (*can*, *could*), obligation (*have to/have got to*) and possibility (*might*). The teacher may also have to explain and provide examples of the modals not present in the fragment, like ability, negative deduction, no obligation/necessity, prohibition, and advice. Students could be asked to identify and point out the modal verbs in this fragment, which would help them understand them better and recognize them in future texts. Also, modal verbs could

be highlighted to make them salient making use of input enhancement techniques and drawing their attention to them (Larsen-Freeman, 2014; Okar & Shahidy, 2019).

Figure 2. Example of Coded Fragment in CAMELLS

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (31:05–33:55)
Hagrid: What are you looking **at**? Blimey, is that the time? Sorry, Harry, I'm gonna have to leave you. Dumbledore**'ll** be wanting his… well, he**'ll** be wanting to see me. Now, uh, your *train* leaves in 10 minutes. Here's your *ticket*. *Stick to it*, Harry that's very important. *Stick to* your *ticket*.
Harry: *Platform* 9 ¾? But Hagrid, there must be a mistake. This says Platform 9 ¾. There's no **such** thing… **is there?**
Man: Sorry.
Harry: Excuse me, excuse me.
Trainmaster: Right on your left, ma'am.
Harry: Excuse me, Sir. Can you tell me **where** I might find *Platform* 9 ¾?
Trainmaster: 9 ¾? **Think you're being funny**, do ya?
Mrs. Weasley: It's the same year after year. Packed with *Muggles*, of course.
Harry: *Muggles*?
Mrs. Weasley: Come on. *Platform* 9 ¾ this way! All right, Percy, you first. Fred, you next.
Fred: He's not Fred, I am!
George: Honestly, woman, you call **yourself** our mother!
Mrs. Weasley: Oh, I'm sorry, George.
Fred: I'm only joking. I am Fred.
Harry: Excuse me! **C-could** you tell me **how** to -
Mrs. Weasley: How to get **on** the *platform*? Yes, not to worry, dear. It's Ron's first time to Hogwarts as well. Now, all you'**ve got to** do is walk **straight at** the wall **between** *platforms* 9 and 10. Best do it **at a bit of** a run if you're nervous.
Ginny: Good luck.

This fragment also has different functions related to the topics it covers, like asking for and giving directions, use of politeness and giving instructions. Because of this, the scene can also be exploited in other ways and used for different lessons. An activity focused on teaching how to give instructions can be combined with teaching modal verbs, since instructions are usually constructed with them (*must/mustn't*, *need/not need to* and *have/not have to* will probably be used for this purpose). This may also be the case with an activity focused on politeness (asking for things politely, like Harry does in this scene; *could*, *may*, *might*, and *will* are probably going to be used). Aside from the modal verbs and the topics mentioned, the character of Hagrid speaks with a West-country English accent and uses rustic expressions, like "will be wanting to see me." This may be useful for the EFL classroom as an example of English accents and expressions different from the "standard" usually present in the EFL course books. Some useful vocabulary has been highlighted, as well as a collocation ("stick to it"), which can also be learnt from audiovisual input and which are important for students to know (Puimège & Peters, 2020).

Whereas in the example in Figure 2 a particular grammatical feature stood out, in other fragments selected in CAMELLS, that may not be the case (see Figure 3). In this case the exploitation is based on the fragment's meaning and content to a greater extent.

This is a good scene with which to talk about the topic of symbolism and cultures with students. This fragment focuses mostly on vocabulary (mainly racism, religion, mythology, and pop culture) and the grammar present is quite simple and within fourth-year students' level (it is limited to how-questions, that-relative clauses, present simple and continuous, and demands), so in this case it may be more interesting and beneficial for students that the activities have a focus on meaning. The scene is very versatile; the activities arising from it could focus on current symbolism, that is, new language (like emojis and memes, which students will be familiar with), but also on the idea of multiculturalism and the relativity of images depending on how and where one has been brought up. Students could be asked to give their opinions and to write messages making use of those new ways of expressing meaning these days.

Figure 3. Example of Coded Fragment in CAMELLS

The Da Vinci Code (3:30–5:13)
Langdon: Thank you. Thank you. *Symbols* are a language that can help us understand our past. As the *saying goes*, "a picture says a thousand words." But… **which** words? *Interpret* for me, please, this symbol. First thing that *comes to mind*, **anybody**.
Woman 1: *Hatred*, *racism*.
Man 1: Ku Klux Klan.
Langdon: Yes, yes, *interesting*. But… they **would** disagree with you in Spain. There **they are *robes* worn by *priests***. Now, this symbol. **Anyone**?
Man 2: *Evil*.
Woman 2: La fourche du diable.
Langdon: In English, please?
Man 3: Devil's *pitchfork*.
Langdon: Poor, poor Poseidon. That is his *trident*, a *symbol of power* to millions of the *ancients*. Now this symbol.
Woman 3: Madonna and child.
Woman 4: *Faith*, *Christianity*.
Langdon: No, no, it's the *pagan god* Horus and his mother Isis *centuries* before the birth of Christ. **Understanding** our past determines *actively* our ability to understand the present. So, **how do we** *sift truth* from *belief*? **How do we** write our own histories, *personally* or *culturally*, and *thereby* define **ourselves**? **How do we** penetrate years, centuries, of *historical distortion* to find original *truth*? Tonight, this **will** be our *quest*.

It could also be useful for cross-curricular activities or projects, since it can be easily related to subjects such as history (with the theme of the Ku Klux Klan and the robes used in the Easter celebrations in Spain), art and literature (the images of Poseidon and Isis). Although this suggestion is not related to the main EFL activities proposal, it could be interesting to relate the English language classes to other subjects to motivate students and help them associate concepts, since many things that are taught in school should not be seen in isolation if the objective is to promote better understanding.

When checking the different fragments analysed for exploitation, I found that it is very difficult to find one that focuses on only one or two linguistic items (either lexical, syntactic, or grammatical items) as is the case of the example in Figure 2. There tends to be variety in the use of the language, as films and series usually attempt to mimic real-life situations and conversations, and people do not normally use just one tense or type of adverb (for instance) when communicating. Regarding the subject matters of the fragments, initially many of the themes in the analysed fragments were similar. For instance, several examples of instruction-giving and commands were found (in *Stranger Things*, *Friends*, and various scenes of *Harry Potter*), as well as the theme of bullying (*Harry Potter*, *Stranger Things*). However, the fragments can be exploited in different ways—mainly because some of them do not cover just one topic, and because one can choose to put the focus of an activity on either form or meaning. In any case, students would be exposed to authentic uses of the language and would be having an active role responding and working with it, fostering their communicative competence in the English language.

Conclusion

Secondary education EFL students nowadays are constantly surrounded by AM through the media, and teachers are starting to include these in their lessons as a means of motivation and presentation of authentic language. Taking this into account, a corpus of audiovisual titles and fragments (CAMELLS) was proposed. Apart from keeping learners engaged in the lessons, this corpus could promote effective learning of the English language by developing their communicative and comprehension skills. The process of the creation of CAMELLS was explained, which took into account learners' opinions on the titles used as well as their impressions on their EFL class practices. AM, in addition to intrinsically attracting students, are a source of authentic language models and clear contexts for better comprehension. CAMELLS was thus constructed by carrying out a survey regarding students' preferred titles. However, in order to improve EFL students' com-

municative competence, appropriate activities for each fragment in line with communicative language teaching principles should be carried out. By studying the scripts through a coding system, one is able to determine which fragments would be most useful for each academic year, regarding either the topics or the lexico-grammatical features available. Additionally, a second survey revealed that secondary education students demanded a more active role in their EFL lessons, with more interactive activities and a higher use of AM, which should also be considered in their exploitation.

My study presents some limitations. First, the number of students that participated in both surveys can be considered low and were restricted to a very particular context. The titles and fragments in CAMELLS were chosen taking into account responses of participants in the fourth year of secondary education, and the analysis of fragments was also done taking the curriculum of this year into account. It would be a good idea to expand CAMELLS for it to include titles and fragments suitable for every year of secondary education. Another limitation is that the activities proposed have not actually been implemented and evaluated for an EFL lesson.

As some future lines of research, the fragments proposed should be implemented in the secondary education EFL classroom, along with suitable activities, in order to verify the actual effect of their use on the learners' language learning and communicative competence development. It would also be important to take into account students' level of satisfaction with this procedure, since this is also a crucial aspect to ensure language acquisition. Moreover, there is an aim to expand CAMELLS—since, as mentioned earlier, the one presented in this paper should be considered a pilot version—and to make it more encompassing, addressing every grade of secondary education.

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About the Author

Paula Wood-Borque is a PhD student at the Universidad de Zaragoza (Spain). She completed an MA in English Teacher Training for Secondary Education in 2020. Her research focuses on the use of audiovisual materials in the EFL classroom to enhance students' learning and engagement.

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Appendix A: Survey 1

1. Gender:[2]
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. I'd rather not say
   d. Other
2. Age:
3. Academic year:
   a. 1st year of secondary education
   b. 2nd year of secondary education
   c. 3rd year of secondary education
   d. 4th year of secondary education
   e. 1st year of post-secondary education
   f. 2nd year of post-secondary education
   g. Other
4. What films do you like? (Write 2 or 3 titles): please, they must be originally in English.
5. What series do you like? (Write 2 or 3 titles): please, they must be originally in English.

2 The two surveys were originally presented in Spanish, but they have been translated here for publication purposes.

Appendix B: Survey 2

1. What academic year are you in now?
   a. 2nd year of secondary education
   b. 3rd year of secondary education
2. If you watch films/series filmed in English, how do you watch them?
   a. Dubbed into Spanish
   b. In the original version (English)
   c. In the original version (English) with Spanish subtitles
   d. In the original version (English) with English subtitles
   e. Other
3. If in the question above you selected that you watch films/series in English (either with or without subtitles), please explain why. (Write a short answer)

4. Do you ever watch films/series/videos in the EFL classroom?
   a. Yes
   b. No
5. If the answer to the previous question was "Yes," how do you watch them?
   a. In the original version without subtitles
   b. In the original version with English subtitles
   c. In the original version with Spanish subtitles
   d. Other
6. How much do you like working cooperatively with your classmates?

1	2	3	4	5
I don't like it at all				I really like it

7. How much do you like doing role-plays?

1	2	3	4	5
I don't like it at all				I really like it

8. How much do you like speaking in English in the EFL classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
I don't like it at all				I really like it

9. How much do you like doing grammar exercises from the *Student's Book*?

1	2	3	4	5
I don't like it at all				I really like it

10. How much do you like working with your *Smart Planet* English books?

1	2	3	4	5
I don't like it at all				I really like it

11. How much do you like using additional materials? (e.g., photocopies)

1	2	3	4	5
I don't like it at all				I really like it

12. Please, indicate another activity in the EFL classroom that you enjoy:

13. Overall, what is your opinion on your EFL lessons?

14. What would you change or improve about your EFL lessons?

Appendix C: Second Survey Results

Reasons for watching audiovisual materials in English (Survey 2, Question 3)[3]

Learn/practice	It's better in English (real voices/ bad translations)	Other (the question was not properly understood or the answer was unclear)
14	10	7

What kind of activities do students find most motivating? (Survey 2, Question 12)

Videos and films (and commenting on them)	10
Games (such as irregular verb bingo)	10
Dialogues, role plays, and speaking	10
Thematic classes and activities (for especial days such as Halloween or Easter)	4
Other (crafts, video calls, multimodal activities)	4
Tasks and projects	3
Mind maps and diagrams	3
Workbook exercises	3
None	3
Listening exercises	2

What would you change or improve about your English lessons? (Survey 2, Question 14)

More fun, entertaining, and interactive activities	**Changes in relation to academic work**	**More audiovisual materials**	**Changes in relation to people**	**Other**
30	18	4	2	5
More interactive activities (e.g., theatre). More speaking and dialogues. More fun activities. Fewer exercises, more games and projects.	More group exams. More explanations (not just copying). Repetitive grammar. No more web vocabulary.	Watch films at the end of the term. Watch more videos.	Treat students better. Choose the cooperative group.	Don't change anything. Change everything and the book. More didactic lessons.

3 Answers were given in Spanish, but a translation into English has been made for publication purposes.

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Assessment of Students' Oral Communicative Competence in English Through a Web Conferencing Platform

Evaluación de la competencia comunicativa oral de estudiantes de inglés a través de una plataforma de videoconferencias

María de los Milagros Cruz-Ramos
Escuela Normal "Juan Enriquez", Veracruz, Mexico

Luz Edith Herrera-Díaz
Universidad Veracruzana, Veracruz, Mexico

This manuscript reports on a study carried out at a public university in southeast Mexico aimed to determine whether changes in the instructional design of an online English course benefit students' oral communicative competence. The research followed a quantitative quasi-experimental design that involved two groups of students. One of them took a modified version of an online English II course that provided contextualized instruction of the syllabus language topics. This group's communicative competence was assessed online, which represented a major shift from the face-to-face assessments typically delivered to online groups. The results showed that online assessment is possible, and also that students' communicative competence improved and was directly related to the intervention.

Keywords: assessment, instructional design, language instruction, online courses, oral communicative competence

Este estudio se llevó a cabo en una universidad pública del sureste mexicano. Su principal propósito fue determinar si las modificaciones al diseño instruccional de un curso de inglés en línea beneficia la competencia comunicativa oral de los estudiantes. El diseño del estudio fue cuantitativo y cuasi-experimental con dos grupos; uno de ellos recibió instrucción contextualizada de los diferentes temas lingüísticos del programa. La competencia comunicativa de este grupo fue evaluada en línea, lo cual representó un cambio importante con respecto a la evaluación presencial que tradicionalmente se suministra a estos grupos virtuales. Los resultados mostraron que la evaluación en línea es viable, y que la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes mejoró en relación directa con la intervención.

Palabras clave: competencia comunicativa oral, cursos en línea, diseño instruccional, enseñanza de idiomas, evaluación

María de los Milagros Cruz-Ramos https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1346-662X · Email: milcruz@msev.gob.mx
Luz Edith Herrera-Díaz https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0410-4328 · Email: luherrera@uv.mx

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Introduction

English is the most taught foreign language in Mexico, which in turn has forced both public and private institutions to make English as a foreign language (EFL) courses available in various modalities of instruction. Online courses became particularly popular due to the time and space constraints they can help surpass. In the particular case of a public university in southeast Mexico, online courses are available for the two compulsory basic English levels undergraduate students have to take as part of their bachelor's degree programs. However, online EFL courses have been found to be the most criticized modality of instruction within that institution, being two of the biggest problems the online course design and the support provided to students (Herrera-Díaz & González-Miy, 2017; Ocampo-Gómez & González-Gaudiano, 2016). Within the official course curriculum, the ultimate goal of all compulsory English courses within this university is for students to be able to engage in meaningful communication in this foreign language (Sampieri-Croda & Moreno-Anota, 2015). However, according to the work of multiple linguists over the last decades (Bachman, 1995; Canale & Swain, 1980; Council of Europe, 2001; Hymes, 1972; Nguyen & Le, 2013; Sanhueza-Jara & Burdiles-Fernández, 2012), being able to engage in communication is related to the development of learners' *communicative competence*, which seems not to be happening in the context where our study took place.

Based on the abovementioned authors, this competence is defined within this paper as the use individuals make of their grammatical knowledge of morphology, phonology, and syntax, as well as their social knowledge to exchange information and negotiate meaning in communication. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, upon analyzing the compulsory online English courses at the university under study, the disarticulation between the course goals, instruction, and assessment also seemed evident. On the one hand, the current instructional design fosters little interaction between participants and instructor in the target language. That is to say, students are not exposed to language models that allow them to actually learn the language according to the principles of the teaching approach used in other modalities (the communicative language teaching [CLT] approach).

It is also possible to argue that without *input* in the target language (activity instructions, examples and explanations are usually presented in Spanish), students are not likely to be able to go through all three stages of the interaction hypothesis, which purports to explain how the learning of a language occurs (Ellis, 1991, 2008; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Ghaemi & Salehi, 2014). The stages in the interaction hypothesis, according to Ellis (1991), are described as follows: (a) *noticing*, the individual perceives and is aware of the linguistic characteristics of the input he or she is receiving through interaction; (b) c*omparison*, the individual compares the characteristics of the input with that of his or her own spoken output; (c) *integration*, the individual constructs his or her own linguistic knowledge, thanks to the two previous elements, and internalizes it. Therefore, if online instruction does not provide students with interaction and enough language models, it would be nearly impossible for them to build their own language. That is, we would be expecting students to communicate in the language without providing them with the tools to do so.

Assessment, on the other hand, is standardized for all modalities of instruction. This means that those students enrolled in the online version of the courses are expected to take communicative oral tests at the end of the course even if they were not given the chance to ever interact orally with their classmates in the target language prior to the test. Moreover, these oral assessments are provided to online course students in a traditional face-to-face setting, disregarding the technology-based nature of the course itself. So far, the institution has not shown any real interest in delivering oral assessment in a way that is congruent to the principles of online courses, which, in turn, could be discouraging teachers from pursuing it as well. Nevertheless, according to the principles of CLT, instructional design, and assess-

ment of communication, it seems evident that both the technological and pedagogical aspects of the course can be improved so as to provide students with a real opportunity of developing communicative competence in these online courses.

Consequently, this educational intervention aimed at improving the techno-pedagogical design of the second level of the compulsory EFL online courses within this Mexican university. According to Coll et al. (2008), the term techno-pedagogical emphasizes the two dimensions of instructional design for courses supported by technology: (a) the technological, concerned with the tools and resources to be applied within the learning environment; and (b) the pedagogical, which has to consider students' characteristics and needs, as well as the learning objectives and competences to be achieved. The modifications made to the English II online course were based on the RASE (Resources, Activities, Support, Evaluation) techno-pedagogical model, proposed by Churchill et al. (2013), as well as on the CLT approach, as described by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2012).

The four components tackled by the RASE model were modified and enriched following not only its own proposed principles (Churchill et al., 2013), but also disciplinary principles for language teaching and learning. Both the RASE model and the CLT approach are based on constructivism, which made their integration unproblematic. As a matter of fact, both of them regard evaluation and assessment as a task or series of tasks that must relate and be similar in nature to the resources and activities students were exposed to throughout the course (Churchill et al., 2013; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2012). Therefore, online synchronous interaction in the target language among participants and online assessment can work together to achieve the course's goal: have students develop the skills and competence they need to communicate in English through the exchange of information and negotiation of meaning.

It is worth mentioning that the present article is focused on the fourth component of the RASE model: Evaluation, that is, communicative assessment online, as was provided to students in the aforementioned English II online course. Therefore, the objectives that guided the study, with regard to evaluation, were:

- To describe how communicative assessment can be implemented online following the same disciplinary and institutional principles applied in face-to-face assessment.
- To determine whether the provision of synchronous contextualized oral practice influences the students' communicative competence.

Literature Review

Understanding the Concept of Communicative Competence

Hymes (1972) coined the term communicative competence relating it to the importance of learning not only what is grammatically correct but also what is appropriate. Although Hymes' work was not originally created in relation to learning foreign languages, it led linguists such as Canale and Swain (1980) and Savignon (1983) to reassess the original definition, determining that this competence must be observable in communicative acts. These authors also identified the need to look for ways to contribute to the development of communicative competence, as well as their evaluation since they considered it measurable. Several other authors (Bachman, 1995; Council of Europe, 2001; Pilleux, 2001; Sanhueza-Jara & Burdiles-Fernández, 2012; Widdowson, 1983) have laid the foundations for the development of new techniques, methods, and approaches to teaching/learning languages, as well as for the evaluation of communication.

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for learning, teaching, and language assessment (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018) provides one of the most accepted descriptions of communicative competence based on "different competence models developed in applied linguistics since the early 1980s"

(Council of Europe, 2018, p. 130). Drawing from the work of the authors mentioned in this section, it is possible to distinguish at least three dimensions of communicative competence: linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence, each of which can be studied through certain indicators (see Table 1).

Table 1. Dimensions and Indicators of Communicative Competence

Dimension	Definition	Indicators
Linguistic competence	Use an individual gives to his or her grammatical, lexical, and phonological or spelling knowledge (depending on the means or modality of the communication).	• grammatical accuracy, control, and range • lexical accuracy, control, and range • phonological or orthographical accuracy, control, and range
Pragmatic competence	Communicative use of the language that is consistent and appropriate according to the function or need that the individual intends to fulfill when interacting in the target language.	• discourse organization • style • register • fluency • coherency • cohesion
Sociolinguistic competence	Appropriate use of linguistic and pragmatic competences according to the context in which communication takes place.	• contextual appropriateness

The introduction of methodologies and approaches aimed at communicative learning and assessment of a language in order to reflect the components of the so-called communicative competence was nothing less than revolutionary (Savignon, 2017). Following the work carried out by Savignon (1983) almost five decades ago, one could see it was demonstrated that grammatical accuracy (related to linguistic competence) could be developed to the same degree in groups that had had communication-focused practice and in groups that had not been exposed to that type of practice; however, it would be the groups exposed to the communicative practice that would show greater mastery of the foreign language when exposed to different communicative situations (Savignon, 2017). Therefore, communication is essential to both the teaching and assessment of students' communicative competence because during communication the use of all three components of this competence are evidenced.

In this study, communication is understood as: "The exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals with the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols, oral and written/visual models, and the production and comprehension processes" (Canale, 1983, p. 4). Communicative competence is, then, reflected during the communication and interaction between individuals through the use of linguistic components (linguistic competence), combined with a consistent and adequate use, according to the function or need that the individual intends to fulfill/satisfy (pragmatic competence), and according to the social context in which the communication takes place (sociolinguistic competence).

Principles for the Assessment of Students' Communicative Competence

The CEFR provides guidelines for the teaching, learning, and, perhaps most importantly, assessment of communication skills in foreign languages. According to the CEFR, it is of utmost importance that an assess-

ment procedure be practical (Council of Europe, 2001). This relates to the fact that assessors only see a limited sample of the language the student is able to produce, and they must use that sample to assess a limited number of descriptors or categories in a limited time. What this means is that if we were trying to assess all indicators of all three dimensions of students' communicative competence, the procedure would not be practical, and it might not be feasible due to time constraints while carrying out the assessment. Moreover, the Council of Europe (2001), through their CEFR, establishes that oral assessment procedures "generalize about proficiency from performance in a range of discourse styles considered to be relevant to the learning context and needs of the learners" (p. 187). Therefore, an oral assessment procedure should keep some relation to certain needs and situations speakers of a language face in real life.

The CEFR also addresses the subjective nature of the grades awarded to students. Grading of direct oral performance is awarded on the basis of a judgment, which means assessors decide how well a student performed taking into account a list of factors or indicators. These decisions are usually guided by a pre-established set of guidelines which is usually nurtured by the assessors' own experience. Nevertheless, the advantage of this subjective approach is that it acknowledges "that language and communication are very complex, do not lend themselves to atomization and are greater than the sum of their parts" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 188). In other words, guided-judgement-based assessment is a fit solution to a complex issue, especially since the subjective factor can be controlled through the use of a clear set of criteria or guidelines to use for the assessment, and the undertaking of training on how to use said criteria.

Another key issue to the assessment of oral performance is what to assess. When attempting to assess students' communicative competence, it would seem obvious to measure each of the indicators shown in Table 1, in the previous section. However, a set of eleven indicators would reduce the practicality factor an oral assessment procedure is supposed to keep. In consequence, the CEFR advises that indicators should be combined, reduced, and even renamed into a smaller set of criteria deemed appropriate to the needs of learners and the requirements of the task. According to the Council of Europe (2001), the resulting criteria could be awarded the same weight or not, depending on whether certain factors are considered more crucial than others. Here we could even propose that when assessing communicative competence, it is important to find a balance between form (represented by the linguistic competences) and use (related to the pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences).

We could argue that finding this balance in indicators of form and use relate to the original tenets of Hymes (1972) and would thus help assess whether students have learned what is grammatically correct and can use it appropriately. In consequence, an instrument to measure three indicators that represent form and three that represent use was designed to be used as part of this intervention, and it will be described in the Method section. The guidelines provided by the CEFR, in addition to those by authors such as Brown (2005) and Fulcher and Davidson (2007), allow the development of communication-oriented tests which can also be referred to as communicative tests. In this regard, Brown indicates five characteristics that a test must have to be considered communicative: (a) the use of authentic situations, (b) the production of creative language, (c) significant communication, (d) integrated language skills, and (e) unpredictable language input. Bakhsh (2016) adds that communicative tests differ from other language tests in that they intend to predict how students would react in a real communicative situation. Facing real communication situations involves the integrated use of language skills. The effectiveness of communication will depend on the extent to which the conversation helps students meet the fictitious needs assigned to them in the communicative test.

Method

Context of the Study

As has been previously mentioned, oral assessment of the target language, within the higher education institution where the study was carried out, follows the same standardized procedures regardless of the modality of instruction. This means students from blended, autonomous, and online courses are expected to undergo the same oral assessment procedure as those who have received 90 hours of instruction and practice of the language in a traditional face-to-face setting. Nevertheless, under the current instructional design of online English courses, students never communicate orally in the target language prior to the oral assessment.

All students enrolled in any of the compulsory English courses are assessed at least twice to determine their oral performance in the language: the first time (partial exam) around the eighth week of the course and the second (final exam) after the sixteenth week. Even though there is a written counterpart to the oral assessment procedure, the oral test seems to be more challenging for students even when enrolled in a traditional face-to-face course. The oral performance is assessed in pairs or trios, during two tasks, the first of which is individual with the instructor asking each candidate a set of personal questions related to heretofore covered language points or topics. The second task is carried out in pairs or trios, and demands for the participants to engage in an unplanned conversation, which, as previously stated, the students had never been prepared for. This conversation must emerge from a communicative situation they are provided with on a card.

The communicative-situation cards contain the description of a fictitious situation and a list of language prompts they can use to create questions around that situation. According to several authors (Bakhsh, 2016; Brown, 2005; Fulcher & Davidson, 2007), these kinds of tasks fit within the definition of a communicative test because they try to predict how students would react in a real-life communicative situation. That is the main reason why the institution where the intervention took place gives the same oral tests to all students, regardless of the modality under which they take the course, because the aim is to determine how effectively students can communicate in (semi)authentic situations.

During the oral assessment procedure, the assessor listens and grades concurrently. Assessors grade two areas, form and communication, thus assigning two scores for each task. Even when these two areas are the ones we mentioned in the previous section in relation to the tenets of Hymes (1972)—what is grammatically correct and what is appropriate—we can now argue that including only two indicators for each task might oversimplify what we have already established as a complex issue: communication. Not providing enough indicators could lead to subjectivity issues the CEFR warns about. The oral assessment procedure described in the present section is always carried out in a face-to-face setting, which means that students, who study English online during the whole semester, are required to meet their teachers/online instructors at the Language Center facilities. By not finding ways to arrange online assessment, the whole purpose of allowing students to benefit from a modality of instruction that avoids time and space constraints is partially defeated.

Using a Web Conferencing Tool for Communicative Assessment

The intervention carried out in the present study aligned the four elements of the RASE model (Resources, Activities, Support and Evaluation) through the use of contextualized explanations and group practice (guided by the instructor), synchronous peer interaction (through online interactive resources and activities), as well as oral assessment (through a web conferencing tool). In other words, students in the experimental group were provided with explanations, resources, and opportunities to use the language in contextualized situations (e.g., plans after they graduate, directions around the campus, previous vacations), and they were

evaluated accordingly. It must be said that both the activities and the evaluation were administered on the web conferencing tool.

During the investigation, students were assessed three times, which means an additional assessment moment was added to the two that usually take place, as described above. That is to say, students were required to meet their English instructor before the official start of the course in order to take a pre-test and sign the corresponding consent forms. This first assessment (pre-test) used the contents from the previous course, English I, and sought to gather information on students' oral performance before the intervention. Both the experimental and control groups took the pre-test under identical circumstances (see the composition of the groups in the Design of the Study section). As a matter of fact, the groups were mixed during the procedure and no distinction was made in regard to which group participants belonged to until after the data had been recorded in the corresponding grid.

After the pre-test, over the next two assessment moments (one control test and a post-intervention test), the oral assessment procedures were carried out completely online for the experimental group (EG). This implied first and foremost a change in the setting, but it also helped make schedules more flexible and accessible to students. In other words, assessing students' oral performance online allowed them to avoid time and space constraints in the same way online courses work.

The oral assessment was carried out via the Zoom platform, and each online session involved four participants: a pair of students, the course instructor, and an assistant teacher. Only when both students were online, did the instructor open his microphone and started delivering instructions. The nature of the tasks during the control test did not change from the face-to-face counterpart; there were still two: (a) an individual task where the instructor asked the students personal questions based on the contents of the corresponding units; and (b) a joined communicative task, where the students were presented with a communicative situation for which they had to interact with each other, asking and answering questions to fulfill a fictitious need.

The delivery of task instructions slightly changed for the second task, as students listened to the instructions instead of reading them on a situation card. While the instructor read the situation and instructions to them, the assistant teacher typed the same instructions in the chat section and delivered them to each student individually (in private chat messages) in case they needed support. In sum, the main difference in the assessment procedure for the second task was the method of delivery of instructions: no situation cards but oral instructions/prompts for the assigned communicative situation, and the fact that the students were not provided with prompt words like the ones found on the communicative situation cards handed out in face-to-face settings.

The tasks in the post-intervention test were slightly changed, but still complied with what was established in the program for the online English II course: a final project presentation in which students were asked to prepare a short presentation they delivered orally during a synchronous web conferencing session. This assessment procedure consisted of two tasks: (a) presenting information they had a chance to plan in detail in relation to some key topics of the course (talking about past experiences, family, future plans, hobbies, etc.); and (b) answering non-planned questions the instructor and the assistant teacher asked regarding the information they had just presented. The second task was given particular attention because it involved the spontaneous production of language and the use of integrated language skills (listening to some of the questions and reading some others in the chat), while talking about their own life and experiences. Therefore, this new oral assessment procedure still complied with the key characteristics of a communicative test as described by Brown (2005).

Grades were recorded in the same way they would be if the assessments had been applied face-to-face; that is to say, the assessor (course instructor) assigned

them concurrently as the students performed using what could be considered guided judgement. Instead of simply assessing form and communication as in the institutional scoring grid, the assessor used a new instrument that assessed six areas or indicators of the three dimensions involved in communicative competence. The instrument was specifically designed for this study and will be described in the next section.

Design of the Study

This study follows a quasi-experimental design that uses two groups (experimental and control) and three data collection moments. This kind of design aims to test a hypothesis by manipulating at least one independent variable in contexts where random sampling is not possible (Fernández-García et al., 2014). The variable to be manipulated was the instructional design of an online English II course. As explained previously, the course followed the principles of the RASE model and of the CLT approach. According to different authors (Campbell & Stanley, 2011; Fraenkel et al., 2012), a design with these characteristics gains certainty in the interpretation of its results due to the multiple measurements made. The 221 students enrolled in the online course during the 2019 spring semester across the five regions of the university constituted the target population of the study; whereas, the accessible population was constituted by the 46 students enrolled in said course in the Veracruz-Boca del Río region over the same period of time.

Students enrolled in these online English courses usually have diverse backgrounds in regard to their previous educational experiences studying the language. However, a characteristic they all have in common is having validated or credited the previous course or level (English I). Students in the accessible population belonged to 21 different degree programs. The 46 students taking the course were divided into two groups: experimental (EG) and control (CG). However, the final sample was constituted by the 17 students who were active in the EG and the 13 who were active in the CG. For this intervention, as part of the changes made to the instructional design regarding the second component of the RASE model (Activities), the students in the EG were asked to join web conferencing sessions where they received contextualized instruction as well as interactive oral and written practice in the target language. To achieve this, the students used their microphones and the chat capabilities of the web conferencing platform Zoom, where the oral assessment of the language also took place. The CG, for their part, took the online course under the original instructional design and conditions, that is, they followed the course remotely with no opportunities for peer-on-peer interaction, and were then assessed in individual face-to-face sessions with the instructor.

Assessment Instrument

An assessment grid was designed to record the scores obtained by the EG students in the two communicative tasks they were to complete as part of the pre-test procedure. The design of the grid took into account the guidelines and examples offered by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The operationalization of the communicative competence variable into dimensions and indicators (see Table 1) was also considered in the creation of this instrument, and it was based on the literature presented in the Literature Review section. Six aspects were included, three of which were related to linguistic competence and the other three to pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences, to balance form and use. The aspects originally included in the oral assessment grid were: (a) accuracy and lexical and grammatical control; (b) lexical and grammatical range; (c) pronunciation; (d) style and register; (e) fluency, coherence, and cohesion; and (f) contextual property. In agreement with the ideas of Leung (2005), these indicators allowed assessors to consider not only standard English, but also what we may call a local variety of the target language. That is to say, the students were expected to perform as effective users of the target language during their assessment process, with no consideration for specific accents.

Table 2. V of Aiken Coefficient

Linguistic competence						Pragmatic competence				Sociolinguistic competence	
Aspect 1		Aspect 2		Aspect 3		Aspect 4		Aspect 5		Aspect 6	
Coh	Rel	Coh	Rel	Coh	Rel	Coh	Rel	Coh	Rel	Coh	Rel
1.00	1.00	0.92	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.83	0.83	0.92	1.00	0.75	0.75
1.00		0.96		1.00		0.83		0.96		0.75	
0.99						0.90				0.75	
0.88											

Note. Coh = coherence, Rel = relevance.

The grid uses a scale from 1 to 5 (5 being the maximum score for each aspect), resulting in a score of 5 to 30 points. In order to determine the validity of the instrument, two procedures were followed. The first consisted of a workshop where three experts in teaching EFL, all of which had previous experience working with online English II groups within the institution, emulated the process originally followed for the design of the grid. As a result of that workshop, it was decided that cohesion should not be assessed in the oral performance of students of such a basic level, since their utterances are usually short. The second procedure for testing the validity of the instrument was expert evaluation. A different group of experts was asked to evaluate the coherence and relevance of each aspect included in the grid, specifically in relation to the measurement of students' communicative competence. The experts scored each indicator using a format proposed by Escobar-Pérez and Cuervo-Martínez (2008), which resulted in the V of Aiken coefficient shown in Table 2.

Due to the subjective quality of the instrument, product of the guided judgement required to use it, two assessors tested the scoring agreement as a means to ensure its reliability. Having two oral examiners, or assessors, is not only common but also recommended in certain institutions, due to the fact that two different interpretations of the qualification criteria can balance each other, leading to the advantage of impartiality when assessing (Sun, 2014). Eleven students (apart from the 46 participants of this study) were assessed in two communicative tasks at the end of an online English course at the institution where the study was conducted. Nine students received identical or very similar scores, and two received scores with drastically different results. The results of the pilot test to determine scoring agreement in relation to the reliability of the instrument show an agreement at an acceptable level in line with the principles established by Fraenkel et al. (2012).

Data Analysis

In order to determine how students' communicative competence had developed over the 16 weeks the course lasted, students were assessed three times. Students from both the EG and the CG were given an oral pre-test in a traditional face-to-face setting before the online course started. Afterwards, two oral assessment procedures were carried out online on the web conferencing tool called Zoom with the EG, and the members of this group were scored using the grid described in the previous section. The same grid was used with the CG, which was following the traditional assessment procedure. The data analysis followed the four stages proposed by Creswell (2015): data processing, basic analysis, advanced analysis, and in-depth analysis. During the first two stages, the scores originally registered in the grid were transcribed into a database in SPSS®, which was repeatedly *cleaned*. As part of the advanced analysis, the mean scores of each group were obtained and contrasted. The descriptive statistics were also obtained as per the indications of Creswell and Guetterman (2019). In the final stage, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was run and contrasted against Q–Q plots. The reasoning behind choosing the

Shapiro-Wilk test is that it is suitable for small sample sizes (Pedrosa et al., 2014; Razali & Wah, 2011) such as the one reported in this article.

Once the data were proved to have a normal distribution for all three oral assessment moments, the conditions for a repeated measures test established by Ho (2006) and Pituch and Stevens (2016) were verified and the aforementioned test was carried out.

Results

As can be observed in Table 3, the average scores the EG obtained when measuring its members' oral communicative competence increased steadily from the first to the third oral assessment procedure. However, the average scores for the CG decreased from the first to the second test and increased again on the third test.

Table 3. Mean Communicative Competence Scores of the Experimental (EG) and Control Groups (CG)

	EG	CG
Pre-test	17.20	18.00
Control test	19.50	13.67
Post-intervention test	20.21	17.23

Even though the CG managed to recover from the second to the third assessment moment, the mean score they obtained in the post-intervention test was still almost three points below the one of the EG. A possible cause for the fall of their communicative competence mean score from the first to the second moment, in particular when compared to the scores obtained by the EG, could be the fact that the control test for English II (for both groups) covers a language point that is typically regarded as challenging for students: the simple past tense. Although the mean scores obtained by the EG showed a better oral performance and thus a more developed communicative competence, this result was further confirmed as a product of the modifications to the instructional design through the use of a statistical test.

Based on the number of measurements made across time, as well as on the fact that we had two groups, a repeated measures test was selected to determine whether the mean scores obtained by the groups were or were not related to the treatment. Nevertheless, a number of conditions needed to be met before running such a test (Pituch & Stevens, 2016), namely:

1. Independence of the observations: Since the oral assessment involved interaction between participants (specifically in Task 2), we acknowledge that, just like in any other study that involves interaction, students might have influenced each other's performance.
2. Multivariate normality: Proved through a Shapiro-Wilk test.
3. Sphericity or circularity and homogeneity of covariance matrixes: Due to lost data from those participants who either joined the course late or missed one of the assessment procedures. The group size proportion changed from 1.3 (given that the 17 students from the EG and the 13 from the CG had taken three tests), to 2.0 (since only 10 of the students from the EG and 5 from the CG took all three tests), it was necessary to run Mauchly's sphericity test.

The Shapiro-Wilk test and the Q–Q plots showed the data distribution could be considered normal. Besides, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test show a p value greater than 0.05, thus proving the data meet the criteria of normality (see Table 4).

The data were also tested with the help of a Mauchly's test where a p value of 0.459 proved sphericity, one of the essential conditions to be met before executing a repeated measures test (Ho, 2006; Pituch & Stevens, 2016). When executing the repeated measures test, it was determined that, although there were significant differences in students' oral communicative competence throughout the implementation, those differences were not equivalent for the EG and CG. Consequently, an additional test was run in order to determine if the interaction of the between-subjects factor (the group where they were placed) and the within-subjects factor (the repeated measures) had been significant. To achieve this, the coding of the repeated measures test was modified on SPSS as follows:

Table 4. Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov [a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	*df*	Sig	Statistic	*df*	Sig
Pre-test	0.151	15	.200*	.965	15	.777
Control test	0.90	15	.200*	.953	15	.577
Post-intervention test	0.106	15	.200*	.969	15	.835

[a] Lilliefors significance correction.

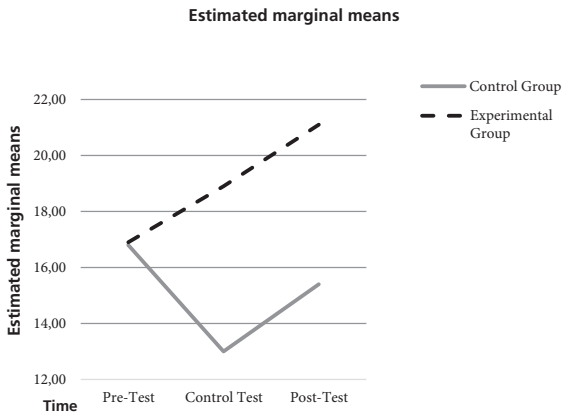
*This is a lower bound of the true significance.

```
DATASET ACTIVATE ConjuntoDatos1.
GLM PTccoral TCccoral PostTccoral BY group
/WSFACTOR= time 3 Polynomial
/METHOD= SSTYPE(3)
/PLOT=PROFILE(time*group)TYPE=LINE ERRORBAR=NO
MEANREFERENCE=NO YAXIS=AUTO
/EMMEANS=TABLES(time) COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(group*time) COMPARE (group)
COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)
/EMMEANS=TABLES(group*time) COMPARE (time)
COMPARE ADJ(BONFERRONI)
/PRINT=DESCRIPTIVE ETASQ OPOWER HOMOGENEITY
/CRITERIA= ALPHA(0.5)
/WSDESIGN= time
/DESIGN=group
```

Upon execution of the new command, it was determined that the differences between the communicative competence demonstrated by the groups in the pre-test were not statistically significant (p = 0.979). Nevertheless, the time-pair comparisons showed that the differences in students' communicative competence across time were statistically significant exclusively for the EG (p = 0.031) between the first and the final assessment moments. The same was not true for the CG (p = 0.255). The changes in mean scores across time are summarized in Figure 1.

Based on the results obtained and described in this section, it is possible to attribute the improvement in the EG's communicative competence between the first and the third oral assessment procedures to the intervention in which said group was provided with synchronous contextualized practice in the target language and oral assessment on a web conferencing tool. This was carried out in agreement with the modifications and alignment of the elements of the RASE model.

Figure 1. Mean Scores Obtained by Each Group Across Time



Conclusions

Assessing students' oral communicative competence online is not usually pursued within the institution where this study took place. However, in relation to the first research objective, we can assert that online assessment was feasible, mainly thanks to the use of a web conferencing platform students found easy to use, and the support of an experienced instructor. Thus, it has been proved that not only is online evaluation of students' oral performance commendable, but also successful when its execution is carefully planned. This study also found that it was possible for assessors to deliver instructions, and for students to

Time

perform communicative tasks aligned with the principles of oral assessment and communicative tests established by several English language teaching authors (Bakhsh, 2016; Brown, 2005; Council of Europe, 2001; Fulcher & Davidson, 2007).

Students who took the oral online assessment through the web conferencing tool (Zoom) did not experience any major inconveniences and were able to perform as they normally would in a face-to-face setting. One of the clear advantages of using this web conferencing platform, instead of having students meet their instructor in person within a limited timeframe, was the feasibility to align the elements of the RASE model and have the evaluation process become congruent with the online modality of the course. In line with the recommendations provided by Sandoval-Sánchez and Cruz-Ramos (2018), a second instructor or assistant can help with technical aspects as well as with the delivery of instructions, thus improving the quality of the experience for students. The assistant was always ready to help students with backup questions that might escape the main instructor when carrying out the oral assessment procedures on a web conferencing platform.

Regarding the second research objective, the study also proved that the EG's communicative competence improved steadily from the beginning to the end of the implementation, and this improvement was a product of the changes made to the instructional design of the English II course. This also helps highlight the importance of aligning resources, activities, support, and evaluation when dealing with a language course online. Moreover, we could argue that students who were enrolled in the EG were able to cope with new, and sometimes challenging, language points better than their CG counterparts during assessment.

It must be mentioned that we found some limitations of the study, such as having a small sample chosen non randomly, the possible existence of extraneous variables, and the lack of independent statistical analysis for each dimension of the communicative competence. Accordingly, we may suggest further research on the same topic but by including more groups of online English courses within the same institution or any other with similar characteristics; studying each dimension separately as well as the communicative competence as a whole; identifying those variables, besides the ones related to the instructional design, that may affect the intervention as well as the results.

We hope the present manuscript encourages teachers, online instructors, and institutions to embrace the capabilities of online language courses by providing online assessment options that are truly congruent with the principles of online instruction.

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About the Authors

María de los Milagros Cruz-Ramos holds a PhD in instructional technology. She is an English teacher and has participated as a moderator and instructional designer in online English courses for multiple institutions. Her main field of research is the use of technology in TEFL within varied learning environments.

Luz Edith Herrera-Díaz is a professor in the Language Center at Universidad Veracruzana, a counselor in the self-access center, and was coordinator of the MA in TEFL at the same university. She holds a PhD in language studies (Kent University, UK). Her research interests include language teaching-learning modes and contextualized educational innovation.

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Plurality of Voices in Reflecting Upon the Research Process: Trajectories of Collaboration in an Argentinian Setting

Pluralidad de voces en la reflexión sobre el proceso de investigación: trayectorias de colaboración en el contexto argentino

Melina Porto
Universidad Nacional de La Plata and CONICET, La Plata, Argentina

Anahí Pesci
Mariela Riva
Universidad Nacional de La Plata, La Plata, Argentina

This article describes the trajectories of collaboration experienced by three individuals in three different roles (informant, research assistant, and supervisor) in two research projects about English as a foreign language reading in a higher education context in Argentina. Data come from reflection logs and retrospective narratives written by them from 2009 to 2016 which were analyzed using content analysis, focusing on a continuum of collaboration. The article aligns with the critique of the discourse of "newer researcher" as a linear developmental trajectory as it illustrates the participants' fluid, critical, complex, and personally relevant pathways. Placed within the debate regarding the affordances, complexities and challenges of the measured university, this research contributes perspectives from a peripheral setting generally underrepresented in the literature.

Keywords: language education research, newer researcher, research process, simultaneous roles

Este artículo describe las trayectorias de colaboración de tres individuos con diferentes roles (informante, asistente de investigación y supervisor) en dos proyectos de investigación sobre la lectura en inglés como lengua extranjera en un contexto de educación superior de Argentina. Los datos incluyen sus diarios de reflexión y narrativas retrospectivas escritos durante 2009–2016, que fueron analizados usando análisis de contenido, con el foco en el continuo de colaboración de Macfarlane. El artículo se alinea con la crítica al discurso del "investigador novato" como una trayectoria de desarrollo lineal ya que el estudio ilustra los caminos fluidos, críticos, complejos y personalmente relevantes experimentados por los participantes. La investigación contribuye perspectivas de un contexto de la periferia.

Palabras clave: investigación en enseñanza de lenguas, investigador novato, proceso de investigación, roles simultáneos

Melina Porto https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9159-171X · Email: melinaporto@conicet.gov.ar
Anahí Pesci https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5941-5946 · Email: apesci@unaj.edu.ar
Mariela Riva https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7738-3335 · Email: somostranslarte@gmail.com

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Introduction

The following extract is a retrospective narrative written in 2012 by co-authors Anahí and Mariela in our roles as informants in a research study and later as research assistants. The excerpt illustrates our changing views about reading and the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) at a local university, or put differently, the scholarly conversations we engaged in during the 2009–2016 period. At the same time, the extract gives a flavor of the non-linear, critical, reflective, and multifaceted pathways that we experienced in our trajectories toward becoming researchers in a higher education setting.

> In our first approach to the texts, although we were conscious of the importance of the cultural aspects, we assumed the role of students, paying more attention to the content and its interpretation, and taking into account local, lexical, and linguistic aspects. Without realizing it, we attached importance to the fact of remembering. In our second approach to the texts, we stopped directing our attention to the linguistic content to start focusing on other factors, such as the approach from an intercultural perspective.
>
> This double perspective allows us to distance ourselves from our initial position as active individuals but mere informants in the research carried out by others, to situate ourselves now as researchers.

This extract is about informants, researchers, and their changing views of what EFL reading means in this setting. It resonates with literature that attributes a central role to the participants in the research process (Brew & Jewell, 2012), particularly in language education (Canagarajah, 1996; Li, 2007; Mearns, 2012), and that highlights the need to use alternative ways of talking about research and of communicating research findings in the scientific-academic domain, in this case in the field of English language teaching (ELT; Canagarajah, 2006, 2012). This article seeks to describe the trajectories of collaboration experienced by three individuals who fulfilled three different roles in two research projects, over an eight-year period, about EFL reading in a higher education context in Argentina. These roles are informant, research assistant, and supervisor.

After a general background of the research and a brief theoretical framework about the usefulness of contributing an article with a plurality of voices in the language education field, we introduce Macfarlane's (2017) recent continuum of different forms of collaboration to illustrate our case. Our content analysis indicates that three forms of collaboration surfaced, namely, collaboration as intellectual generosity, as mentoring, and as communication. We tie our findings to a critique of the discourse of "newer researcher" because our data indicate that we did not follow a linear developmental trajectory but rather experienced fluid, critical, complex, and personally relevant pathways that are unique to us. We argue that the critical trajectories revealed here were possible by the engagement in scholarly conversations during the process. An example of this scholarly conversation is the debate about what reading in a foreign language involves—illustrated in the initial vignette. We then locate our article within the debate regarding the affordances, complexities, and challenges of the measured university of current times, and we show that in our case, the experience of different forms of collaboration during this eight-year period led to a sense of agency. The specific value of the research reported here resides in the particular peripheral setting, generally underrepresented in the literature. We conclude with some implications.

Background Information About the Research Projects

Broadly speaking, the data on which this article is based come from two research projects undertaken between 2009 and 2016 about the cultural dimension of EFL reading in Argentina (Project 1: 2009–2012 and Project 2: 2013–2016). The theoretical framework follows a constructivist perspective on learning and a socio-

cultural conception of reading that takes into account intercultural perspectives. Both projects were funded by the Argentinian Ministry of Science and Technology and the National Research Council and were carried out in the School of Humanities and Sciences of Education at Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP, Argentina).

The general objective was to describe how the population under study in this context (college students—future English teachers and translators—at UNLP) understood the cultural content of literary narrative texts in EFL (see Porto & Byram, 2017). The Argentinian setting is in tune with the need expressed by TESOL professionals (Canagarajah, 1995; Vavrus, 2002) regarding the importance of the individual and the local in-classroom-based research efforts that describe how literacy in English is experienced in peripheral countries. Following Canagarajah (2002) and Canagarajah and Said (2011), Argentina can be seen as an example of a peripheral country in South America. Thus, this article echoes the compelling need pointed out in the literature to recover local aspects from specific cultural contexts and can be considered as "work which seeks *understanding* of the experience of people involved in education" (Byram, 2008, p. 91, his emphasis).

The informants were Argentine prospective teachers and translators of English, from 21 to 22 years of age at the beginning of the first project. Mariela and Anahí were part of this group of undergraduate students and Melina was the project supervisor. Students read three literary narrative texts in English about Christmas celebrations in different contexts, and they performed some tasks. For instance, they wrote a reading response (that is, a personal interpretation of the texts) and they also produced a visual representation whereby they portrayed each text visually (using drawings, charts, graphs, cartoons, etc.). They were then interviewed individually. Data were collected in the native language, Spanish, during 2009–2010. Overall, the main finding is that "the process of cultural understanding . . . is not composed of independent and discrete elements, processes, or stages" (Porto & Byram, 2017, p. 29) but is fluid and complex.

This article does not focus on these data. However, this background about the research projects is necessary at this point because the article shall offer reflections about the conceptions of reading that the informants had when the first project was launched in 2009, to reveal later how these views changed as they engaged in scholarly conversations about cultural understanding in foreign language reading during the eight-year period reported here.

Justification for the Need for, and Importance of, an Article With Plurality of Voices in Language Education Research

In the field of TESOL, Canagarajah (1996) states that

> the need for coherence in the report—achieved by the closure, the tight structure, and seamless writing—can hide the false starts, wrong moves, misleading tracks, and interpretive gambles that usually characterize the research process. There is a similar suppression of the gaps, contradictions, and conflicts in the data for the sake of textual coherence. The report thus gets considerably removed from the existential conditions of research. (p. 324)

While an analysis of why this happens is beyond our scope here, it is possible that "'the bureaucratization of writing [that is] the way in which a certain writing style is encouraged, perhaps even rewarded in the academy" (Kindt, 2016, p. 1086) has something to do with it. Canagarajah (1996) suggests the need to explore alternative, more critical ways of communicating research to the academic community. In this sense, one possibility resides in co-authored texts, that is, texts that "are jointly written by the researcher and the informants/subjects and, therefore, are considered collaborative reports. They attempt to dramatize the tensions between the perspectives of the researchers and subjects" (Canagarajah, 1996, p. 326). An alternative genre is the dialogic text,

which "consists of counterpoised dialogues between the researcher and informants/subjects. Although the text more authentically explores the conflicting voices of the subjects, resolving the ensuing interpretive tensions is the responsibility of readers" (Canagarajah, 1996, p. 327). Häusler et al. (2018) use "collective memory-work, a research framework with transformative aspirations that integrates narrative writing with group analysis and dissolves the boundaries between theory and method as well as researcher and research participants" (p. 282). We take Canagarajah's (1996) conclusion as our starting point when he states that

> it is necessary, therefore, to see reports co-authored by esol researcher/teachers and students. Rather than the researchers filtering the students' divergent positions through their own perspectives, it is important to let the students' views remain in tension (if necessary) with the researchers' positions. (p. 328)

This article is an example of this kind of report.

Furthermore, the focus on a plurality of voices that we propose in this article contributes to the ecological validity of the research (Cohen et al., 2018) given its descriptive and exploratory nature. From this perspective, our research, and this article, echo the advantages mentioned by Canagarajah and Said (2009):

> Rather than looking at communities and classrooms through professional spectacles, we see them for what they are as we design specific approaches to suit them . . . Such an ecological approach additionally has the advantage of keeping all the variables and contextual richness intact, as we teach or research English in diverse contexts. (pp. 169–170)

This article is conceptualized with this intention in mind, and it is, for its part, a hybrid between the genres mentioned before.

The plurality of voices distinguishes this article from others in language education research. For example, Li (2007) writes in the first person about a third party (a graduate student) and Canagarajah (2012) writes in the first person and offers different voices that come, however, from the same individual (Canagarajah as a teacher, as a researcher, etc.). In our case, we present the multiple voices of three participants involved in the research projects in different roles and capacities.

Collaboration as a Moral Continuum

Theoretically, we depart from Macfarlane's (2017) discussion of the current neoliberal university that cares about measurement, performativity, market drives, and individuality, and that places conflicting demands on collaborative work amongst researchers, oriented toward individual goals on the one hand and collective goals on the other. Peseta et al. (2017) describe the challenges involved in this way:

> The demand to count, measure, rank, quantify, evaluate and judge the work of universities (along with those who labour and study in them) haunts virtually all aspects of our work: from the quality of research, to targets for income generation, counts of patents, citations of articles and public testimonies of policy impact made visible and likeable online; from the quality of curriculum, to teaching with technology, responding to student feedback, watching the employment destinations and salaries of graduates as a comment on the value of their education; to whether a university is healthy, sustainable, sufficiently globalized or doing enough to position itself as the world leader in this or that discipline. (pp. 453–454)

Likewise, Sutton (2017) affirms that "performativity is central to the culture of measurement within contemporary universities" and concludes that "the soul of academic labour is becoming lost in performativity" (p. 625). Along similar lines, Bottrell and Manathunga (2019) conclude that this neoliberal ethos runs counter to "conceptions of universities as collegial institutions concerned with public and democratic purposes" (pp. 1–2).

Within this framework, Macfarlane (2017) argues that "collaboration is a modern mantra of the neo-liberal university and part of a discourse allied to research performativity quantitatively measured via co-authorship" (p. 472). He highlights the complex and contradictory nature of this mantra because "academic staff are exhorted to collaborate, particularly in respect to research activities, but their career and promotion prospects depend on evaluations of their individual achievements in developing an independent body of work and in obtaining research funding" (p. 472). He proposes a continuum of collaboration as a moral continuum containing two types of collaboration he calls "self-regarding" and "other-regarding." Self-regarding (or self-oriented) collaboration aims at personal and career benefits and comprise the following:

- collaboration-as-performativity to increase research output;
- collaboration-as-cronyism by means of practices "that reinforce the power of established networks"; and
- collaboration-as-parasitism involving the exploitation of junior researchers by seniors.

In turn, other-regarding (or other-oriented) collaboration focuses on knowledge as a common goal, academic duty and friendship in academic life, and interest in helping less experienced researchers and comprises these points below:

- collaboration-as-intellectual generosity involving the free sharing of ideas for the common good of scientific advance;
- collaboration-as-mentoring to foster the development of less experienced colleagues; and
- collaboration-as-communication to disseminate knowledge in scholarly platforms.

This classification is useful in the current debate regarding the affordances, complexities, and challenges of the measured university (Hancock et al., 2016; Macfarlane, 2017; Peseta et al., 2017; Sutton, 2017) since collaboration as intellectual generosity, as mentoring, and as communication seem naïve in the surge for performativity (Macfarlane, 2017).

This Research

Framed within participatory and narrative research and auto-ethnographic studies (Cohen et al., 2018), this study was designed and planned as a longitudinal investigation of the trajectories of the collaboration experienced by three individuals who fulfilled three different roles in two research projects over an eight-year period about EFL reading in a higher education context in Argentina. These roles are informant, research assistant, and supervisor. It is an example of self-study research aimed at examining and learning about one's practice (in teaching, research) to forge new opportunities based on a process of exploration, discovery, reflection, and critical analysis (Mitchell et al., 2005).

The research question is: What trajectories of collaboration do individuals experience as they take part in a longitudinal research undertaking in which they perform different roles?

Data come from reflection logs and retrospective narratives written by three research participants, the co-authors of this article, during 2009–2016 at a public national university in Argentina. Dr. Melina Porto, an experienced investigator in the field of foreign language education and professor in the English teaching/translation programme, was the research director. Anahí started taking part in this case study as an undergraduate student in the English teaching programme in 2009 and graduated in 2012. She was in her early twenties then. Mariela, who is blind, is a teacher of Spanish graduated from UNLP. She was in her late twenties when this case study began and was an advanced student in the English teaching/translation course at the time.

Anahí and Mariela were first involved as informants in 2009–2010 and wrote logs reflecting on the research. These reflection logs resembled the stream of consciousness approach characteristic

of learner diaries (Allwright & Bailey, 1991) with no specific guiding questions. They were both undergraduate students then. In early 2012, they produced a retrospective narrative of their experiences as informants who had provided data in 2009–2010 (following written instructions) and they also became research assistants. These narratives were written during 2011 until August 2012 (between one and two years after they had participated in the original project). They participated as research assistants from September 2012 to 2016 and also wrote reflection logs during this period. Melina kept reflection logs during the eight-year period as research supervisor. The instructions and questions that functioned as a guide for the retrospective narratives were:

- Write about your perceptions on how you conceptualized your participation in the project as informant that generated data. What matters is the process, your perceptions, the views that you have as insiders.
- Write, in Spanish, a stream of consciousness on what you remember about the 2009–2010 experience. These questions may serve as a guide, although it is not necessary that you limit yourselves to them: What do I remember about my participation in that project? How did I understand the tasks to be performed? Do I understand them in the same way today? What motivated me to participate? What aspects are negative and which ones could be positive about that experience?

They responded in Spanish and voluntarily translated their responses into English for the purpose of this article.

Data were analysed qualitatively focusing on content analysis (Cohen et al., 2018). Particular attention was given to the six forms of collaboration identified by Macfarlane (2017), namely collaboration as intellectual generosity, as mentoring, as communication, as performativity, as cronyism, and as parasitism. There were three layers of analysis. Following Cohen et al. (2018), the first layer comprised a holistic overview of all data sources to get a global sense of what was happening. The second layer of analysis was deductive and involved tracing evidence of Macfarlane's six forms of collaboration in the reflection logs and retrospective narratives and coding on this basis. The third and final phase was inductive or data-based, involving the identification of emerging themes, commonalities, and unique perspectives which would otherwise have remained unnoticed. Descriptive, narrative, and interpretive vignettes and multiple examples were used throughout the process to document the analysis and illustrate findings. Table 1 includes a summary of participants, research instruments, analysis, and timeline.

Table 1. Methodology: Participatory, Narrative, Auto-Ethnographic Research

	Melina	**Anahí**	**Mariela**
Age (at the beginning of study in 2009)	Early forties	Early twenties	Late twenties
Degrees	MA in ELT and PhD in Educational Sciences	Advanced student in English Teaching course (graduated 2012)	Teacher of Spanish. Advanced student in English Teaching/Translation programme

	Melina	Anahí	Mariela
Teaching experience	Professor in a Teaching/ Translation programme at a national university	First formal teaching experience in primary and secondary education in 2012	Experience as a private and on-line tutor of Spanish and English
Research experience	Experienced researcher at National Research Council	First trajectories during the projects described in this paper	
Roles	Supervisor	Informants (2009–2010) and research assistants (2011–2015)	
Research Instruments and Timeline			
Reflection logs (free style, spontaneous, no guiding questions, stream of consciousness approach)	Between 2009–2016 (as research supervisor)	During 2009–2010 (as informants) and 2013–2016 (as research assistants)	
Retrospective narratives (following guiding questions)		During 2011–2012 (based on experiences as informants in the first project)	
Data Analysis			
Layers of analysis	1. Holistic, impressionistic		
	2. Deductive using Macfarlane's continuum of collaboration		
	3. Data-based: emerging themes, commonalities, and unique perspectives		
Findings			
Four propositional statements combining the three layers of analysis			

Findings and Discussion

Following Cohen et al. (2018), findings are presented in propositional statements that capture the essence of the thematic analysis undertaken combining the second and third layers of analysis focusing on the forms of collaboration that were evidenced and on recurrent themes respectively. Data extracts appear verbatim, and clarifying information appears between brackets. The evidence for the points made is highlighted in the data extracts that serve as illustration.

Other-Regarding Forms of Collaboration Prevailed

The analysis did not reveal any of the three forms of self-regarding collaboration identified by Macfarlane (2017), namely performativity to increase research output, cronyism reinforcing the power of established networks, and parasitism involving the exploitation of junior researchers. It did show the other-regarding forms, namely collaboration as intellectual generosity ("sharing ideas freely with others for the advancement of science as a common good"), as mentorship ("working with less experienced colleagues to encourage and support their development") and as communication ("disseminating knowledge claims via a range of scholarly platforms"; Macfarlane, 2017, p. 477). Of these three, collaboration as mentorship was prevalent. In the supervisor's words:

> Anahí and Mariela were outstanding students in my course. As informants, they revealed critical and reflexive perspectives about reading, and interest in research. We prepared a collaborative paper for a local conference and I accompanied them to deliver their first talk in a

> university setting. After that, I invited them to join my research and they worked enthusiastically. I was never given these opportunities when I began my research career and I wished to change that. (Reflection log, Melina, 2014)

From the informants' perspective, this mentoring began initially with member checks. According to Bishop (1999), checking with the actual informants is the

> ideal scenario [because] sharing our work with our informants as often as is feasible and as interactively as possible will not only enrich our cultural understanding, involve us in triangulation as process, but also allow our readers to know what we did and why it worked out that way." (pp. 120–123)

Similarly, Freeman et al. (2007) say that "qualitative methodologists also encourage member checks [because] the practice of checking a researcher's interpretations and representations with participants prior to publication is valued" (pp. 26–28). Member checks were continuous during the eight-year period and became "an important step for helping students navigate the scholarly conversations in our discipline" (Leung et al., 2017, p. 217). It should be recalled that, at the beginning of this case study and when these member checks were first undertaken, Anahí and Mariela were undergraduate students, that is, totally unacquainted with current theories of foreign language reading.

For instance, an example of mentoring through such scholarly conversation is precisely the debate about what reading in a foreign language involves—illustrated in the initial vignette. This debate revolves around the need to go beyond remembering textual information with accuracy (to say that somebody has comprehended a text) toward being able to interpret linguistic and cultural elements appropriately in context taking into account personal interest (Porto & Byram, 2017). The next excerpt illustrates the initiation into this scholarly debate:

> In our first approach to the texts, although we were conscious of the importance of the cultural aspects, **we assumed the role of students**, paying more attention to the content and its interpretation, and *taking into account local lexical and linguistic aspects*. Without realizing it, we attached importance to the fact of remembering—or not—what we read in punctual aspects, *perhaps under the influence of our own learning of English, basically mnemonic*.
>
> On some occasions, we gave importance to the things that the text somehow marked as prominent, sometimes without exploring in greater depth the importance that such elements had in the light of our own interests, put at stake in our understanding of the texts, and even when we did not incorporate, later, those items into our reading hypotheses.
>
> (Retrospective narrative, Anahí and Mariela, 2012)

The text in italics indicates awareness of the excessive influence of the linguistic dimension to the detriment of the cultural during comprehension in this setting. At the same time, there is evidence (underlined) of an evolving understanding of reading that takes individual interpretations into account. It is important to mention that this evolution in conceptualization occurred as Anahí and Mariela visualized themselves as undergraduate students on this occasion, that is, not as proper participants of the research, which is indicated in bold.

The following extract also shows this understanding of the move from the linguistic toward the cultural during interpretation, which represents a turning point in the focus of attention, a distancing from the linguistic in order to consider other aspects such as the intercultural or the pragmatic:

> Even when we did spend some time on linguistic aspects, we no longer considered them as elements to be decoded with respect to their content, but rather we approached them on the basis of their pragmatic function, or their contribution to our understanding from this cultural perspective. (Retrospective narrative, Anahí and Mariela, 2012)

This change of focus from the linguistic toward the intercultural in comprehension forms part of a current scholarly conversation in the field of foreign language reading (Porto & Byram, 2017) and can be seen as a form of collaboration around mentorship.

Collaboration Became the Seed of the Researcher

In the following excerpt, there is a shift from a vision as students toward a perspective as researchers, which arose from the methodological decision to use member checks:

> In this sense, *it was also of some help to have the results of the research*, to which we had previously accessed [at the time of member checks in 2011], *at our disposal*. . . . To become part of the project as subjects [informants], *we were motivated by the desire to approach research, with that initial curiosity which is the mother of research work*. (Reflection log, Anahí, 2014)

In other words, it is possible to observe here a genuine and disinterested desire for research, away from the performative, instrumental, and individual drives characteristic of the measured university (Macfarlane, 2017; Peseta et al., 2017; Sutton, 2017). This engagement with research was sparked by the invitation to join as informants in 2009–2010. It is worth remembering that by the time the data were initially collected (2009–2010), Anahí and Mariela were still only half through their courses of study, which means that their role as undergraduate students was predominant.

Furthermore, Anahí and Mariela developed a great capacity to reflect and think critically. This reflection and critical analysis significantly contributed to the evaluation of the methodological decisions taken at that moment from perspectives emerging from their role as research assistants. The evidence is italicized in the following extract, which is again simultaneously an example of collaboration as mentorship:

> In this case *we were not only placed as "subjects"* [informants], *but rather we were incorporated to the research itself*, <u>being allowed to reflect on our own reading practices</u>.
> *In this sense, what contributed to a great extent were, on the one hand, the deferred interviews, which allowed us to think some concepts and reading strategies over, and on the other hand, the possibility to make comments after the activities and readings were over.* [*sic*]

They considered their participation in the 2009–2010 project as an opportunity to reflect on their own reading practices. Never during the research was it explicitly indicated that this reflection was valuable. They discovered its value on their own and the evidence is underlined. Moreover, they identified the research tool which made this possible, the deferred interviews and the comments after the gathering of data. The evidence appears in italics where a chain of evaluative terms can be identified ("*what contributed to a great extent*," "*which allowed us to*," "*the possibility to*").

In sum, collaboration as mentorship, as experienced by Anahí and Mariela in this study when they were undergraduate students, took the form of an initiation into scholarly conversations around current conceptualizations of foreign language reading. In turn, these conversations, complemented by Melina's invitation to engage as research assistants, sparked their interest in research and, by 2011, they were research assistants in a funded research project even though they were simultaneously undergraduate students. This is very rare in this Argentinian context because it breaks with the expected developmental pattern associated with the career as researcher that one can experience in this country (for example, to be a researcher the candidate must have at least an undergraduate degree and must be enrolled in a postgraduate programme). This scenario is related to the discourse of the newer researcher that we address next.

Critical Reflection and Personal Stories Dominated the Discourse of "Newer Researcher"

During the third layer of data analysis focusing on emerging themes, it was evident that, although Anahí and Mariela could certainly be considered "newer researchers," as the excerpt below illustrates, they both evaluated critically the advantages and disadvantages of one research instrument—the deferred interview—in this specific context of work and considered its suitability on the basis of the identities and roles in which they engaged along the research process. Criticality and reflexivity, characteristic of the research endeavour, are evidenced for instance in the chain of expressions in bold.

> However, the interviews, as they were carried out, also presented **a somewhat limiting aspect**, at least in our case. When transcribing our own interviews, **we realized that** our contributions **could have been much richer**. **We account for this drawback by** referring to something that has already been said, the fact that during our first approach to the texts, after which the interviews took place, we still adopted the role of students, **which somewhat placed us in an asymmetrical position with respect to** the educator/interviewer.
> (Retrospective narrative, Anahí and Mariela, 2012)

This critical reflexivity is key in a critical discourse of "newer researcher" as opposed to the developmental one focusing on progression in pre-determined career paths (Hancock et al., 2016). This consciousness and critical reflexivity permeated Anahí's and Mariela's roles as informants and research assistants, even when they were still undergraduate students as the opening vignette of this article also illustrates:

> This double perspective allows us to distance ourselves from our initial position as active individuals but mere informants in the research carried out by others, to situate ourselves now as researchers. (Retrospective narrative, Anahí and Mariela, 2012)

Overall, the critical reflexivity shown in this section accompanies the critique of the discourse of the "early career" or "newer researcher"

> based on an assumed progression from relevant undergraduate study to subsequent doctoral study and postdoctoral roles [by taking] account of the critical (rather than developmental) function of he [higher education] research [and] the different contexts within which research is undertaken in the academy. (Hancock et al., 2016, p. 283)

In terms of context, as mentioned initially, this research portrays the lived experiences of English literacy by Spanish speakers as well as their fluid and complex paths in becoming researchers in a peripheral country (Canagarajah, 2002; Canagarajah & Said, 2011). In terms of the discourse of the "newer researcher," Anahí and Mariela did not follow the linear and traditional career trajectory associated with it, that is, they began being undergraduate students and in the eight-year research process reported here, only one of them earned her degree and enrolled in a master's programme.

By contrast, this article captures their critical reflection trails, personal stories, and experiences in this process, or the "non-linear and often serendipitous 'pathways' that problematise the question of who is a researcher of HE" (Hancock et al., 2016, p. 290), showing that "the temporality and trajectories of HE researchers are more complex and considerably less linear than this discourse implies" (Hancock et al., 2016, p. 292). The following reflection log, written by Mariela in 2015, illustrates these pathways (evidenced in italics). Departing from what can be considered a limitation, her blindness opened up unthinkable expectations for personal development and engagement in research in this case. The significance of personal experience and individual stories is highlighted in bold.

> *I have never started any course of studies thinking of my blindness as an obstacle*, although it is also true that **I have never wanted** to study something **for which**

> **my blindness made me unsuitable** . . . By the time I graduated as a Literature teacher, I found out that *something had changed in my expectations*: I had started studying English, mostly on my own, and had decided to start the English translation course of studies. ***That was, I guess, a turning point in my life. Until then my only prospects had to do with a job as*** *a teacher or a private tutor and maybe* ***the possibility of becoming a writer...someday. Somehow, I believed that as a blind student/teacher,*** *these were the things I would be able to do. However,* ***my participation as an informant in this project made me look beyond those goals to consider going further****. I decided to participate in the project because I was curious to know how much I could learn from the experience, and maybe that curiosity shows an incipient tendency to do research. If so, I was not aware of such a tendency in me . . . and then there was no turning back. Once the process started, it just could not be stopped.*

These trails, personal stories, and experiences were significant in Anahí's and Mariela's growth as researchers partly because they were valued by Melina, their supervisor, and supported by her concrete actions. In her words:

> Our faculty did not have a Braille printer available for blind researchers and there was only one computer with the software she needed. I wrote several letters to the authorities and contacted the relevant office to get financial support. After two years of comings and goings, we got one computer for our research group. The printer, however, was never available during the eight-year period. (Reflection log, 2015)

Collaboration Instilled a Sense of Agency

The thematic analysis also revealed that Anahí's and Mariela's participation in this research in their roles as informants and research assistants, supported by Melina as their supervisor, motivated them to adopt an active and transforming role in their teaching practices. The notions of agency and discretionary judgement, which are required in every professional activity, particularly in the case of teaching, emerged here (Freidson, 2001; Tatto, 2007). With the comparison between the way in which they learnt English at school and during their first years at university, and the reading experience that they participated in during these research projects as a starting point, they reconsidered significant changes in their current teaching practices (italicized in the excerpt below). They mentioned concrete initiatives that they would try to implement in their teaching practices, such as the use of two research instruments, the immediate reflection log and the visual representation, in their own teaching.

> *We started to wonder about the possibility of transferring the reading tools that we approached during our work on the texts (immediate reflection log and visual representation) and take them into the classroom, in order to apply them in our own teaching practices.* This interest emerges when comparing our own initiation into the foreign language, where what probably took priority was the approach to the texts by memorizing lexis and structures, and the decoding of words, with this reading experience, where *we can observe that greater opportunities are given to approach the text from the reader's experience and particular perspective, aiming at a holistic understanding.* (Retrospective narrative, Anahí and Mariela, 2012)

All of this happened in the context of the process of their undergraduate studies at university: the context of an English teaching course at UNLP. In this sense, the experience described in this article acquires profound significance for teacher education and continuous professional development, in particular through the sense of agency that it instilled in the research assistants. This sense of agency is described by Brew (2010) in these terms:

> The capacity of individuals to inquire not only into their learning and teaching, but also into other aspects of academic practice, becomes critical to the change

> process . . . The scholarship of academic practice is academic development because when academics take responsibility for inquiring into aspects of their practice, they learn about their practice and they learn how they may be able to change it. (p. 113)

This sense of agency developed as they were able to put into practice, by means of their participation in these research projects, their theoretical knowledge about different aspects related to teaching acquired during their studies as undergraduate students. The following excerpt illustrates the scholarly conversations Anahí engaged in (italicized).

> In my case, *I believe that my education in the School contributed a lot to my change of perspective, too.* Partly, the development of the linguistic competence itself as we advanced in our studies *allowed me to take a different approach to the texts. I think that even though decoding is not a central aspect to reading, the ability to do the decoding more fluently frees us from having to pay attention to this level in order to focus on more global aspects.* In this sense, I am thinking about the roles of code breaker, meaning maker, text user, and text analyst as presented by Anstey and Bull (2006). *The subject called "Didactics" was, for me, fundamental to change my perspectives on language and the teaching of English, to understand, for example, the importance of lexis and routines in language; I also believe that Didactics helped me a lot to develop a sense of agency. For all this, I think that research maintains continuity with such academic learning rather than breaking away from it, as a possibility to continue in the same direction in new roles.* (Reflection log, 2016)

This sense of agency became real in a research context which encouraged the interconnection between research and continuous professional development through collaboration. In the supervisor's perspective:

> It was satisfying to see that participation in this research project led to awareness of key theoretical notions, familiarization with new research instruments in the field of reading and the initiative to engage in pedagogic innovation in the foreign language classroom. (Reflection log, Melina, 2016)

Conclusion and Implications

Here we have reflected upon the research process as we experienced it in two projects during an eight-year period in Argentina. Two of us, Anahí and Mariela, were initially informants and produced part of the data for analysis while later we became research assistants, guided by Melina, our supervisor.

The plurality of voices in this article highlights three fundamental aspects. First, it captures the recursiveness, complexity, temporality, non-linearity, and personal investment involved in becoming a HE researcher, which comprised critical reflection paths and personal stories and experiences over an eight-year process. Thus, the study aligns with the critique of the discourse of "newer researcher" as a linear developmental trajectory put forth by Hancock et al. (2016) in the debate regarding the affordances, complexities, and challenges of the measured university of these times (also Macfarlane, 2017; Peseta et al., 2017; Sutton, 2017). While our university does not escape global trends in performativity and accountability, this study subverts these trends and accommodates the non-linear, the personal as well as individual experience.

Second, the process cultivated scholarly conversations (Leung et al., 2017) about current issues in our discipline such as the cultural dimension of reading in a foreign language and, in this sense, it constitutes a step forward in Anahí's and Mariela's academic socialization by "assisting the transition to academia" (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 112). This article highlights the importance of "offering support for research at the level of process and creating opportunities for peer learning in a context in which peers are not discipline experts but equal participants in the [research] learning process" (Blaj-Ward, 2011, p. 705). The plurality of voices described here offers

testimony of the research paths that Anahí and Mariela took as research assistants, which were characterized by a combination of support and autonomy leading to self-efficacy, with the confidence that they "can successfully perform research tasks", consequently contributing to their feeling "more interested and motivated to conduct research" (Overall et al., 2011, p. 792).

Thirdly, the process also bears testimony to Anahí's and Mariela's emerging sense of agency and discretionary judgement as educators (Elliott, 2015), contributing in this way to their professional development and to the forging of an identity as educators marked by reflection, a critical spirit, and action (Elliott, 2015; Scott, 2014) and situated in an Argentinian setting that is simultaneously local and peripheral (Canagarajah, 2002).

This study has theoretical, ethical, and practical implications. Theoretically, Gibson et al. (2017) highlight that including students as co-enquirers in participatory research requires attention to matters of identity, agency, ownership, and labelling beyond the procedural level of carrying out a participatory investigation. The underlying conceptualizations of these notions have an impact on all research stages and processes as well as on stakeholders. Together with Häusler et al. (2018), they argue that "studies which aim for participants to act as co-enquirers are political by their nature" (Gibson et al., 2017, p. 110). Critical reflection on these dimensions is fraught with challenges and becomes essential. Ethically, this study illustrates the potential and challenges of participatory research in this local setting. For example, Anahí and Mariela experienced shifting identities that resisted fixed labelling such as "student as participant," "student as co-enquirer," "research assistant," "newer researcher." This labelling was problematic in terms of identity issues and how to name and address all the co-authors of this article at different moments in this longitudinal study. Naming and labelling stakeholders poses methodological challenges which are political by nature and challenge power issues and institutional structures (Häusler et al., 2018). Practically, these challenges have an impact on several dimensions, of which research reporting is an example. In this case, the drafting and redrafting of this article fostered deep questions about naming, representation, and labelling. Overall, as McGinn and Niemczyk (2013, p. 1) remark, there is a need for what can be called "research praxis development": "distinctive spaces for learning and teaching research . . . for research team members to acquire, practice, and enhance research knowledge and skills through participation and collaboration with others who have different skills, interests, and background experiences" (also Grundy & McGinn, 2009; McBurnie, 2011). This study illustrates how this space was enacted and how this praxis was developed in this local context, contributing to the call for more research in this area (McGinn & Niemczyk, 2013; Turner, 2010), underexplored in the South American region.

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About the Authors

Melina Porto, MA ELT (Essex University), PhD in Sciences of Education (Universidad Nacional de La Plata, UNLP) and postdoctoral degree in Humanities and Social Sciences (Universidad de Buenos Aires). She is a researcher at the National Research Council (CONICET), professor at UNLP, and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of East Anglia (2019–2024).

Anahí Pesci is an EFL teacher at secondary and higher education levels, graduated from UNLP.

Mariela Riva is a Spanish language teacher, graduated from UNLP. She has extensive experience in the fields of literature and translation.

PROFILE

Issues from Novice Teacher Researchers

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Disciplinary Power Lying Behind the Requisite of English Language Mastery in International Scholarships

Poder disciplinario que yace detrás del requisito de dominio del idioma inglés en becas internacionales

Alber Josué Forero-Mondragón
Álvaro Hernán Quintero-Polo
Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia

This article reports a study about how the discourse of standard English exercises disciplinary power in five international scholarships programs. This research interest arises from problematizing the discourse of standard English present in the requisite of proficiency certification through so-called valid tests. Adapting Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model, we analyzed a corpus of five scholarship calls for applications open from 2011 to 2014. Findings reveal that the discourse of standard English entangles with the discourses of globalization, education quality, and competitiveness and qualifications to serve as the path to the construction of the subjects' *scholarship applicants*. In this entanglement, school is set as a breeding ground whose disciplinary techniques (e.g., test training) objectivize people to satisfy multinational corporations' hiring processes.

Keywords: discourse of standard English, English language teaching, international scholarships, power, standardized testing

El presente artículo reporta un estudio sobre cómo se ejerce el poder disciplinario en cinco programas de becas internacionales. Dicho interés parte de una problematización del discurso del inglés estándar materializado en el requisito de dominio del inglés mediante certificaciones resultado de tomar *tests* válidos. Adaptando el modelo de análisis crítico del discurso de Fairclough, analizamos un corpus de cinco convocatorias abiertas entre 2011 y 2014. Los hallazgos indican que el discurso en mención se entrelaza con discursos como la globalización, la calidad en educación, y la competitividad y cualificaciones para construir los aspirantes. En dicho entrelazamiento, la escuela se configura como caldo de cultivo cuyas técnicas disciplinarias objetivan a las personas para satisfacer los procesos de contratación de corporaciones multinacionales.

Palabras clave: becas internacionales, el discurso del inglés estándar, enseñanza del inglés, exámenes estandarizados, poder

Alber Josué Forero-Mondragón https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1232-0832 · Email: ajforerom@correo.udistrital.edu.co
Álvaro Hernán Quintero-Polo https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0315-8802 · Email: aquintero@udistrital.edu.co

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Introduction

In one of his essays, *Literature and Totalitarianism*, Orwell (1941) cogently asserts that:

> The totalitarian state . . . cannot allow the individual any freedom what ever. When one mentions totalitarianism, one thinks immediately of Germany, Russia, Italy, but I think one must face the risk that this phenomenon is going to be world-wide. (para. 3)

This assertion seems a prediction from the 1940s, because Orwell warns us about the spread of totalitarianism around the world. With it, the individual's freedom to think and to act is restricted. Nowadays, thought and behavior control creates an ideology and always tries to rule our emotional and behavioral lives. This gives rise to an artificial world in which individuals have the criteria to compare themselves with the outside world through uniform patterns devised for massive control.

In this article, we extrapolate the Orwellian idea of thought and behavior control to the execution of disciplinary power by means of language. In line with this, we turn again to Orwell and the newspeak as a language created by the State that appears in his masterpiece *1984*, to point out that actors who hold control create a language to prevent critical creative thought.

We report here on a critical discourse study about the use of the discourse of standard English to exercise disciplinary power through English language testing practices. Our study focuses on the fact that applicants to some international scholarships must hold certified English proficiency through tests. The scholarships under examination are those offered by the alliance between the Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales (AIESEC) and Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior (ICETEX).

Research Problem

The research problem stems from the premise that the concession of AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships is determined by social orders (Fairclough, 2001). Such concession is mediated by the requisite of certified English proficiency as the result of profiling candidates by means of school discipline. Thus, the problem has a three-fold dimension: The first dimension, scholarships as exercise of disciplinary power in Colombian schooling, relates to the role that disciplinary power plays to reach the social ends attributed to school. In Colombia, disciplinary power has been exercised differently in accord with three pedagogical models that have permeated school, namely the Lancasterian school, the *Enseñanza simultánea* (simultaneous teaching), and the active school (Restrepo-Mejía as cited in Saldarriaga, 2003). From the pedagogical models in question, the second one deserves special attention. This is because awarding students for their performance becomes a strategy for school pupils to internalize their duties without being punished (Saldarriaga, 2003) and upgrade their virtues by emulating prodigious models that awaken the good (Restrepo-Mejía as cited in Saldarriaga, 2003). In this framework, school awards have taken different shapes such as honorable mentions, exams exemptions, and scholarships. Scholarships are used for honoring students who demonstrate meeting the social ends of schooling.

The second dimension, traces of discipline in ICETEX-mediated grants, calls for a contextualization about what ICETEX is and what it does. ICETEX is an agency of the Colombian education system whose aim is to promote access to and permanence in university programs of low-income students by means of offering financing mechanisms and administration of own and third-party resources, and scholarships from national and international supporting agencies (Law 1002, 2005). It is a common requisite for applicants—to be granted an international scholarship—to demonstrate intermediate or high English proficiency levels through tests based on the Common European Framework (CEFR). Those tests are known for promoting a standard variety of the English language in social practices such as education, work, and traveling (Educational Testing Service, n.d.; International English Language Testing System, n.d.; University of Michigan, n.d.). This feature makes them

become deemed as valid tests, constituting these tests' creators as the access point of the English language testing system. By access point, we refer to "systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organize large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today" (Giddens, 2013, p. 27). To illustrate this dimension, there are alliances mediated by ICETEX that offer scholarship programs for Colombians in diverse countries. It is paradoxical that, for instance, even though Peru is not officially an English-speaking country, the requisite of certified English proficiency is demanded in the scholarship programs. Those programs ask for mastery of the English language.

The third and last dimension is the requisite of certified English in AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships as a disciplinary component. It relates to the two previous dimensions and guides our attention to a troublesome statement of AIESEC scholarship programs that corroborates the requisite of certified English through valid tests: "The requisite of English is necessary even though the practice takes place in a Spanish-speaking country or another" (ICETEX & AIESEC, 2011; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2014, para. 20). AIESEC is a youngsters' non-profit organization led by young people from 126 countries; it is acknowledged by UNESCO and sponsored by multinational corporations worldwide (e.g., Apple, Nike, Electrolux, Accenture, and Nokia, among others; AIESEC, n.d.-c). It claims to advocate for peace and human potential development, to contribute to the development of associated countries and their people, and to commit to international cooperation (AIESEC, n.d.-c). In addition, its mission is to serve as an international platform and global learning environment for youngsters to discover and develop their leadership potential in order to impact positively on society (AIESEC, n.d.-c). This makes us infer that the goals of AIESEC and the access point in question intersect. Both promote economic and social practices such as working, studying, and traveling abroad. In this intersection, the access point certifies a person who can use standard language varieties for being competent in these practices.

One point that relates to the social and political agendas behind AIESEC–ICETEX scholarship program is made by Shohamy (2017) when she states that tests are powerful in the sense that "they can lead to differentiation among people and for judging them" (p. 444). In the case of AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships, language tests classify people so as to determine who is proficient in the standard English varieties under the benchmarks imposed (i.e., CEFR). This functioning of tests already portrays a social interest: fostering roles in society (e.g., so-called bilingual workers). By classifying people into their language proficiency beforehand, language tests already *objectivize* (Gruenfeld et al., 2008) test-takers at the access point. The problematization of the requisite in question occurs within a tensional social space (school) and its processes (schooling), more explicitly in its disciplinary practices and components.

The statement about the existence of a problem made so far, made us pose the question that guided the study reported on in this article: How does the discourse of standard English exercise disciplinary power in AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships concessions?

Theoretical Considerations

The theoretical considerations for this study stem from a discussion about the relationship between two constructs: *school as a disciplinary field* and the *English language curriculum as a disciplinary micro field*. One main argument of such relationship is that school is a field in which different discourses dispute and/or adhere to one another, forging disciplinary practices that aim to create useful and docile subjects (Foucault, 1975/1977, 1975/2002).

The former construct, school as a disciplinary field, from Bourdieu's (1989) field theory, leads us to conceive school as a social space where actors relate to each other mediated by forms of capital. In addition, the social actors' relationships and practices within the field of school can be of various types; for instance, hierarchical, that imply domination or submission, or horizontal, that imply equality. School as a social space has been constituted as

a field where objectification processes construct amenable human beings by means of disciplinary power. Students, teachers, principals, secretaries, coordinators, and security guards, among others, participate in the power relations of school (van der Horst & Narodowski, 1999). They are responsible for the embodiment of school power dynamics, yet hardly ever take part in their decisions. On the other hand, other social actors such as politicians, entrepreneurs, technocrats, religious leaders, and so on, influence the delineation of policies and enactment of laws that determine school demands. However, school social ends are not the result of a wide consensus.

Turning our attention to school discipline, we can say that it has abandoned the most coercive mechanisms, for instance, physical punishment, and has adopted subtler techniques to make schools objects of scientific disciplines and dividing practices (Foucault, 1988). Objectification refers to "an instrument of subjugation whereby the needs, interests, and experiences of those with less power are subordinated to those of the powerful, and this facilitates using others as means to an end" (Gruenfeld et al., 2008, p. 111). Thus, school disciplines students in order to achieve its social, economic, and political ends. In this perspective, Foucault's (1975/2002) idea of *means of correct training*—hierarchical observation, normalizing punishment, and examinations—constitute a guarantee of order and control.

Framed in the aforesaid school dynamics, AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships embody the discursive construction of the *good student*, someone who subsequently would become a good applicant and later, a good worker. This assertion is based on the fact that applicants to these scholarships must adjust to selection criteria, for example, grade point average, and academic background (i.e., having a major in offered areas; ICETEX, n.d.-a). As for the concern of this study, the required so-called valid English language tests (ICETEX, n.d.-a) are bred within *the disciplinary micro-field of English language curriculum*.

The second construct, the English language curriculum as a disciplinary micro-field, is based on our understanding of curriculum as a net of force relations (Bourdieu, 1995, as cited in Rincón-Villamil, 2010) that is set due to domination and subordination practices. In this light, (social) curriculum actors vested with major capital are dominant and, thereby, establish the norms of the field (orthodoxy). In turn, a group of dominated actors uses arguments to overthrow the dominants (heterodoxy), and another group will use a popular discourse with no major impact on the field (doxa; Rincón-Villamil, 2010). In Colombia, orthodoxy in the English language curriculum is represented within social actors such as publishing houses, international governmental organizations, and cultural institutes (e.g., the British Council). This is because these corporations set the *access point* (Giddens, 2013) of the English language testing system.

In turn, alternative but isolated efforts of research groups and teacher-researchers constitute heterodoxy. They have put emphasis on how language policies, cultures, policy-makers, and practitioners constitute power relations, which lead to resistance, subjugation, privilege, and alienation in the Colombian educational system (e.g., Escobar-Alméciga, 2013; Forero-Mondragón, 2017; Guerrero, 2010; Guerrero-Nieto & Quintero-Polo, 2009). Yet, their efforts do not echo as hard as the dominant actors do because they are constrained by dominant discourses *exclusion systems* (Foucault, 1981). Resultantly, heterodox discourses do not adhere easily to others in the English language curriculum disciplinary micro-field.

In the third level, the doxa is represented in the opinions of parents/caretakers, teachers, students, and so on, who welcome, apprehend, and reproduce the discourses from the orthodoxy. These opinions revolve around opportunities for social mobility and personal and professional growth that are generally associated with English learning (Guerrero, 2010; Spring, 2008). They are constructions of discursive representations that sell the wonders of English to access an imagined community of English speakers (Guerrero, 2010). Although inside the doxa there also exists resistance towards dominant discourses, dominant social actors' agendas are stronger owing to an imposed set of benchmarks and discourses.

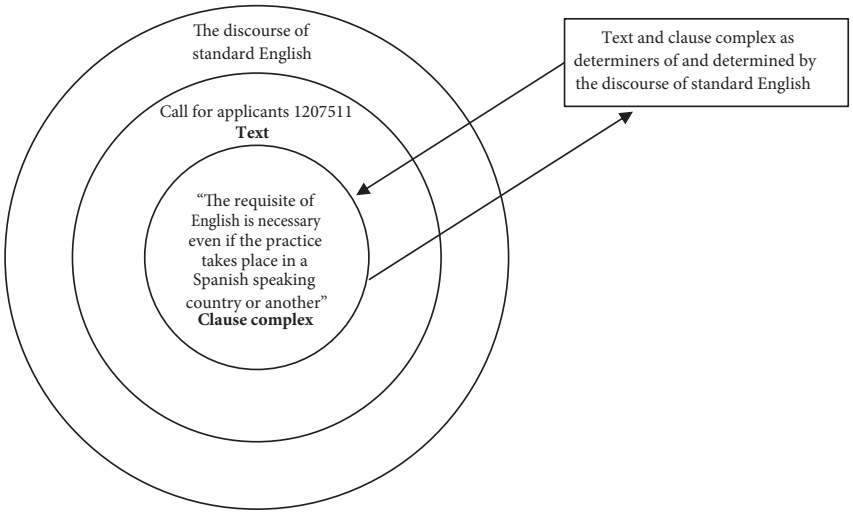
Regarding the concept of *standard English*, we focus on its twofold dimension: ideological (Milroy, 2001; Razfar, 2012) and discursive (Fairclough, 2001). As an ideology, standard English relates to language and a capitalist belief system. In this vein, standard English is functional since it fosters effective communication for economic purposes (Milroy, 2001). Similarly, as it unifies the interactions of people, it has been useful for the consolidation of political systems like nation-states at the expense of marginalized groups and their so-called dialects (Razfar, 2012). On the other hand, standard English as a discourse, that is, language as a social practice (Fairclough, 2001), implies that dominant groups such as bourgeois classes represent social reality aligning it with their interests by means of language. Both ideology and discourse relate to one another in the sense that the former uses the latter as a mediator in order to restrict access to discursive practices.

Resultantly, the discourse of standard English emerges from the assumption that standard English enjoys prestige for its uniformity (Milroy, 2001) concreted in "few differences in grammar between them" (Cambridge University Press, n.d., para. 1). Finally, this characterization is not exhaustive but allows us to identify the main social function of said discourse: ensuring the quality of English language teaching, learning, and assessment.

Method

Our study was developed following Fairclough's (2001) critical discourse analysis model. Said model is divided into three stages, namely: description, interpretation, and explanation. *Description* deals with the analysis of formal features of the text (Fairclough, 2001). By text, we refer to a product of discourse (Fairclough, 2001; Martín-Rojo, 1996) that in this study owns a linguistic nature. In the study reported here, description entailed two phases. First, we analyzed five texts (calls for applications) considering aspects such as their authors, target readers, and channels of distribution. Second, we analyzed a *clause complex* extracted from one of these calls. A clause complex is a "grammatical construction consisting of two or more (simplex) clauses" (Andersen & Holsting, 2018, The Clause Complex in IFG section, para. 1). Here the clause complex in question was deemed as a fragment of a text, that is, the call for applications labelled 1207511. Figure 1 presents the relationship among discourse, text, and clause complex in this study.

Figure 1. Relationship Among Discourse, Text, and Clause Complex in This Study



Note. Own elaboration.

We conducted the aforementioned descriptive analysis using a language approach devised by linguist Michael Halliday (1996): systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The reason behind this choice was that it permitted this critical discourse study to cast understanding on how language as a social practice (discourse) exercises disciplinary power. In this vein, we identified lexicogrammar in SFL terms as components that evidenced power exercise. These components were interpersonal relationships between authors and readers of the corpus (e.g., a hidden imperative mood, obligation modality, and impersonal construction); and the performance of processes among participants under certain circumstances (i.e., *transitivity*), for instance, relational processes of the attributive type (Flowerdew, 2013).

The analytical stage *interpretation* dealt with the inferences drawn from the first analytical stage as for the relationships among social actors in the clause complex. Interpreting these relationships required analyzing two features: social orders and interactional history (Fairclough, 2001). Both social orders and interactional history constituted our interpretive toolbox, which led us to wonder about what was not in black and white in the clause complex: the impersonal forms employed that hid the actors responsible for uttering the peremptory character of certified English in AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships. This situation called for a tracking of other texts in pursuit of wider understanding in this respect: the booklet *Basic Standards of Foreign Language Proficiency* (Henceforth, Booklet 22; Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN], 2006) and the article "Bases for a Bilingual and Competitive Nation" from the newsletter *Altablero*, Issue 37 (Henceforth, newsletter article; MEN, 2005). The former was chosen because it enforced so-called valid English certifications as part of the discourse of standard English across the Colombian educational system when ICETEX and AIESEC produced the clause complex (2011). The latter was selected as it justified the standardization of English language education in *Basic Standards of Competence*. Making these choices, we sought to characterize the representations of English as a gatekeeper to a globalized economy in which the social actors in the clause complex (i.e., applicants and offerors) participated either in the processes of production, distribution, or consumption (Fairclough, 2001) of the discourse of standard English.

The *explanatory* stage implied linking the practices of production, distribution, and consumption unveiled in the previous stage to their social and historical conditions (Fairclough, 2001). In linking both standard English discursive practices and conditions, we resorted to the theoretical considerations presented in the previous section. Accordingly, this analytical stage aimed to argue the social implications of the findings from the descriptive and interpretive analytical stages.

Findings

Our study aimed at shedding light on how the discourse of standard English exercised disciplinary power in five calls for applications of the alliance AIESEC–ICETEX from 2011 to 2014. Informed by a socio-constructivist ontology (Constantino, 2008) and an interpretive epistemology (Firmin, 2008), we analyzed these calls for applications adapting Fairclough's (2001) analytical model. In the following lines, we account for the most significant findings.

The Requisite of Certified English: Interpersonal Relations Without Persons

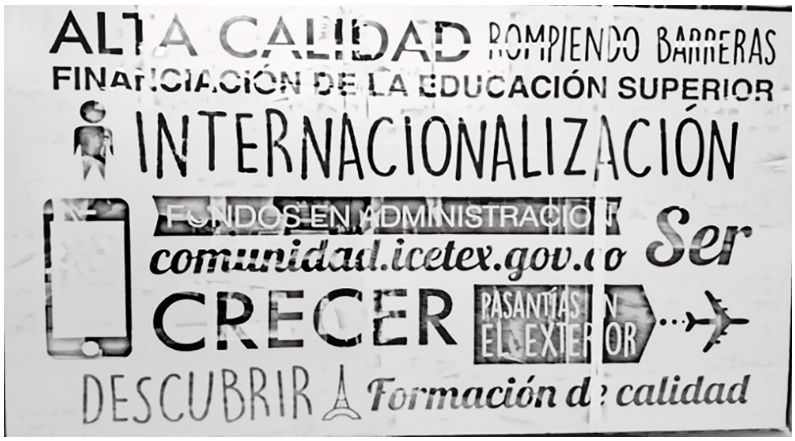
The first stage (i.e., description) was centered on analyzing the authorship, readership, and relation authorship–readership of the corpus. Its purpose was to describe the interpersonal relationships between the social actors embedded: offerors and applicants. For analyzing said interpersonal relationships, we drew from Halliday's SFL view on *tenor* and *transitivity*.

Regarding authorship of the corpus, we labeled ICETEX and AIESEC as first-hand authors; in other

words, those that embodied authorship in the first place for being the scholarships offerors. However, texts are cause and effect of other texts; therefore, identifying a definite list of authors was not our purpose. Examining the social mission of the first-hand authors, we noted that the Colombian state agency and the nonprofit organization shared some values and visions of the world. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate this assertion.

Figure 2 is a photo taken from a banner at one ICETEX office in Bogotá, Colombia. It contains terms such as breaking boundaries, high quality education, internships abroad, administration funds, higher education funding, and growth, and so on. As an agent of global education, ICETEX aims to spread a view of a globalized world where investing in education to develop human capital for economic growth (Spring, 2008) is a way to access better opportunities.

Figure 2. Aims of ICETEX



Note. Photo we took in an ICETEX office in 2020

Figure 3. Screenshot of AIESEC Facebook Post

Note. Taken from AIESEC (n.d.-a)

Figure 3 portrays a screenshot taken in October 2019 from AIESEC Colombia's Facebook post that seeks to promote AIESEC calls for applications. As evidenced in its content, AIESEC also fosters human development in a globalizing world, which responds to its social mission, that is, serving as a platform for young people to develop their potential in a global learning environment (AIESEC, n.d.-c). This post shows that AIESEC aims to be a gatekeeper to the global market. Multinational corporations are depicted as organizations that aid senior university students and professionals to develop their potential. Likewise, there is a cultural component that seems to attract applicants: the chance to be immersed in a different culture. This feature corresponds to globalization.

According to Spring (2008), the global market searches for immigrants willing to be part of brain circulation, in other words, going abroad and returning to their countries to talk about the benefits they gained when traveling and working overseas. In this light, AIESEC promotes a globalized world that allows people to upgrade their professional skills and be immersed in other cultures (AIESEC, n.d.-a). Consequently, the alliance ICETEX–AIESEC nurtured the global market by calling people to be interns and workers overseas. Congruently, when they allied from 2011 to 2014, their goal was a common ground. They opened five calls for applications labeled numerically on the website of ICETEX (see Table 1).

Table 1. AIESEC–ICETEX Calls for Applications

Year	Name of the call for applications
2011	1207511
2012	1200112
2013	1200213
2013	1200314
2014	1200414

Note. From ICETEX (n.d.-b)

The applicants were constructed as passive social actors because this corpus targeted people of certain profiles. For example, call 1200112 was directed to recent university alumni and senior students in university programs such as "language teaching or modern languages, administration, business, marketing and sales, industrial engineering, and education sciences" (ICETEX & AIESEC, 2012, our translation). People willing to participate in these calls also should have shared some values. Call 1200213 states that "the program is especially designed for youngsters with a *global vision* and projection who desire to discover and develop their potential to have a *positive impact* on society and, besides, have aptitudes and experience in the exercise of *leadership*" (ICETEX & AIESEC, 2013a, our translation and emphasis). Accordingly, values like global vision, development of potential to have a positive impact, and leadership had to be met by the applicants.

Applicants to these grants had to fulfill other requirements, for example holding certified English proficiency. In other words, their possibilities to be awarded depended on the compliance of preset profiles. Because of our research interest, we delved into how this passive role was subtly set in the requisite of English expressed in the clause complex *the requisite of English is necessary even if the practice takes place in a Spanish-speaking country or another* (ICETEX & AIESEC, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014).

Considering that the first-hand authors' objects intersected in the production of five calls for applications and the passive role readers of the calls for applicants, we focused ulterior analysis on a clause complex (i.e., the one requiring certified English proficiency). This analysis emphasized transitivity and the contextual parameter tenor according to SFL. Transitivity refers to language users' codification of their "experience of the processes of the external world, and of the internal world of [theirs]" (Halliday, 1973, p. 134). Therefore, transitivity entails "the different types of processes involved, their relations to the roles of the participants and how these processes, roles and circumstances relate to one another" (Flowerdew, 2013, p. 17). In SFL, six are the processes types that account for transitivity: relational, mental, material, existential, behavioral, and

verbal (Flowerdew, 2013). In order to account for the kind of process involved in the clause complex (i.e., *the requisite of English is necessary even if the practice takes place in a Spanish-speaking country or another*), it was necessary to identify its lexicogrammar elements.

The first element to describe was the number of clauses making up the clause complex. In this vein, this clause complex is originally made up of two clauses that are joined by a conjunction. Table 2 displays this.

Table 2. Clauses That Constitute the Clause Complex of Analysis

The requisite of English is necessary	even if	the practice takes place in a Spanish-speaking country or another.
Clause 1	**Conjunction**	**Clause 2**

Note. From ICETEX (n.d.-b, our translation)

From the previous taxonomy, we arrived at two conjectures. First, Clause 2 depends on Clause 1. In SFL terms, Clause 1 is superordinate and Clause 2, a subordinate one. Regarding semiotic implications, we inferred that the requisite of English (Clause 1) is compulsory regardless of the circumstances. Second, both nominal groups "the requisite" and "the practice" are carriers of attributes present in the adjectival groups "necessary," "Spanish-speaking," and "another." For this reason, the transitivity processes carried out in the clause complex are *relational* of the *attributive* type. By relational we refer to processes of existing and being (Flowerdew, 2013). In turn, attributive means the process of relation between carrier and attribute. In a bigger picture, Clause 1 attributes a condition of being to Clause 2 in the sense that the content of Clause 2 does not affect the compulsory nature of Clause 1, as suggested before.

As evidenced so far, the analysis on transitivity did not reveal signs of activeness regarding the applicants. In fact, candidates applying to these scholarships had to certify their English proficiency if they wanted to apply. The preset passiveness of the readers of the clause complex was more explicit when the contextual parameter tenor was examined. Tenor is linked with "the relations of the participants in the text" (Flowerdew, 2013, p. 12). These relations are mediated by lexicogrammar elements such as *mood*, *modality*, and *person*. The first of them is related to whether a clause is imperative or indicative; the second one, to modal verbs or phrases; the third, to first, second, or third person, either singular or plural. Table 3 illustrates tenor as for the clause complex in question.

Table 3. Tenor in the Clause Complex Under Analysis

Lexicogrammar item	Type
Mood	Indicative
Modality	Obligation
Person	Third person singular

Table 2 shows that the clause complex is a statement, which makes it indicative. However, in semiotic and practical terms the function of this statement transcends indication because it ends up mandating the requisite of English. Second, the clause complex does not include any modal verb of obligation. The adjective "necessary" accounts for that, though. Finally, the third person is represented in two nominal groups: "the requisite" and "the practice."

The textual analysis let us understand that the requisite of certified English is completely compulsory, which is an index of hidden intentions in the calls for applications. Likewise, the impersonal forms employed in the clause complex (e.g., the above-mentioned nominal groups) indicate that the social actors that participate in the social practice of AIESEC–ICETEX scholarship concessions are not relevant for meaning-making and then, are suppressed. What is the aim of this discursive

strategy? Why do not authors and readers, that is, offerors and applicants appear in *black and white*?

The Entangled Discourse of Standard English

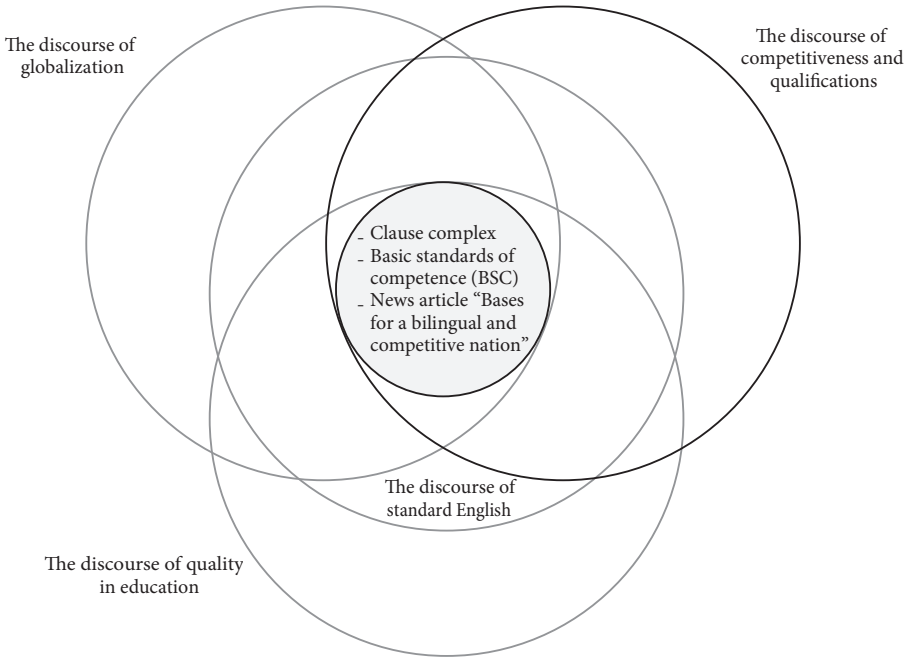
The prior textual analysis permitted us to realize that the relationship authors-readers in AIESEC–ICETEX calls for applications implies activeness and passiveness. First-hand authors (AIESEC and ICETEX) determined the role that readers (applicants) had to comply with: meeting requisites such as age, profession, global values, cities of residence, and certified English through so-called valid tests, this latter being our research concern. Nonetheless, that analytical stage fell short in unveiling the discursive production of the clause complex chosen for in-depth examination. Said analysis, which corresponds to the interpretive stage, would subsequently help shed light on the political, social, and economic agendas embedded in the requisite of English.

Interpreting the discursive production of the clause complex was relevant to characterize the representation of English as something testable, uniform, and functional for the global market (Fairclough, 2001; Milroy, 2001; Spring, 2008) that we label as the discourse of standard English. Moreover, the interpretive stage led us to understand the entanglement among this discourse and other discourses such as globalization, quality in education, and competitiveness and qualifications. Such inferences emerged from an exercise that consisted of setting intertextual relations between the clause complex and two other texts.

Tracing the inexorable and unilateral requisite of certified English in AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships, we established intertextual relations with two texts of a normative character, namely, the Booklet 22 (MEN, 2006) and the newsletter article (MEN, 2005). The reason why we selected these two texts is they derived from a Colombian state policy that circulated the discourse of standard English: The National Bilingual Program (MEN, 2006).

The interpretive stage cast light on the entangled nature of the discourse of standard English. Put simply, the analysis of the booklet and the news article evidenced that such a representation of reality, practices, and actors takes part in a discursive entanglement represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Discursive Entanglement Producing the Corpus



Note. Own elaboration.

Figure 4 presents the discourse of standard English as the cause and consequence of other discourses, that is, the discourse of globalization, the discourse of competitiveness and qualifications, and the discourse of quality in education. This entanglement enables the discourse of standard English to construct social realities in which students are passive actors both in the learning process and in the labor market (e.g., when they apply to AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships). Hereunder, fragments from Booklet 22 and the newsletter article will be used to illustrate our argumentation.

The Discourse of Globalization

The Colombian Ministry of Education conceived the National Bilingual Program as a measure to "reach citizens capable of communicating in English in order for them to able to insert the country in the processes of *universal communication*, *global economy*, and *cultural opening* with internationally comparable standards" (MEN, 2006, p. 6, our translation and emphasis). The phrases in italics let us gain understanding of the ends of the program and the role English language education should play: developing communicative competences in order to sell the idea of English as the key to access the wonders of the modern world (Guerrero, 2010). For the Ministry, learning English equals becoming bilingual: being a competent English user allows citizens to be part of global market practices such as knowledge economy, social mobility, and human capital development (Spring, 2008). In sum, the Ministry of Education privileges a view of bilingualism as a synonym of English learning given that English is the language of global commerce.

Yet, what varieties of English fit the aforementioned characterization? As discussed in the introductory section, so-called valid language tests (i.e., TOEFL, MET, and IELTS) evaluate standard English varieties, those that permit social mobility. This framework lets us infer that the discourse of globalization assigns to the discourse of standard English a purpose that justifies processes such as standardized testing and other reified forms of standard English (e.g., textbooks, materials, and standards). In other words, the discourse of globalization answers the *why* one should learn these uniform, prestigious, and functional language varieties (Milroy, 2001). A question emerges: How does the discourse of globalization ensure standardized language practices? A second discourse comes into play: the discourse of quality in education.

The Discourse of Quality in Education

Making sure standard English is learned and used in social spheres, including school and industry, is the role the discourse of quality in education plays. For achieving this, Booklet 22 adopted a set of "internationally comparable standards" (MEN, 2006, p. 6): The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment* (Council of Europe, 2001). Overall, the CEFR served the purpose of establishing a standardized conception of language that should favor communication based on an array of communicative competences (i.e., linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic) that are attained through a gradual learning process divided into levels of proficiency (MEN, 2006). How is this attainment validated?

The Ministry of Education started to implement CEFR-based testing in the educational system, that is, school (MEN, 2006), which took shape in statewide examinations. Such process began in 2005 when the Ministry asked university senior students (those with majors not related to languages) to take "an English test, within the framework of *Exámenes de calidad de la educación superior* [which was] aligned with the framework of reference and goal proposed" (MEN, 2005, "Educación superior y manejo del inglés" section, para. 3, our translation). In the case of senior students from language-related majors, they had to take the First Certificate in English (MEN, 2005).

The former arguments constitute the basis for the assertion that school is set up as a hotbed for inserting

Colombian students into the global market through the platform AIESEC. In this *school machinery* (Varela & Álvarez-Uría, 1991), certified standard English (B2 level, according to the CEFR) is one of the gatekeepers along with the compliance of other characteristics. Together, these requisites are manifestations of the discourse of quality in education as they construct the type of subjects the global economy expects: competent and qualified individuals. Precisely, this construction is due to the intervention of another discourse, that is, the one of competitiveness and qualifications.

The Discourse of Competitiveness and Qualifications

We have already argued that the discourse of standard English is a subsidiary of the discourses of globalization and quality in education, which does not mean the former is merely an effect of the other two. On the contrary, it is a two-way constitution, that is, the discourse of standard English also reinforces the representations of society the other two discourses circulate. In this light, being part of a set of requisites, certified proficiency in standardized English testing became a qualification that allowed AIESEC–ICETEX applicants to compete with others in order to obtain a scholarship. This subscribes to the discourse of competitiveness and qualifications.

English learning is seen as a result of the banking education model (Guerrero & Quintero, 2016). Students are conceived as containers that are filled with knowledge: "*many standards are repeated, strengthened* and *deepened* in different grades . . . in accordance with the cognitive level of students" (MEN, 2006, p. 16, our translation and emphasis). Accordingly, the Ministry of Education constructs students as passive actors, that is, consumers of imposed knowledge. Far from being a coincidence, the forging of passiveness in students, who could become applicants to AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships, is the fertile ground for materializing the discourse of competitiveness and qualifications.

The Discourse of Standard English and Disciplinary Power in AIESEC–ICETEX Scholarships: Language Does Things

AIESEC–ICETEX selected applicants who fulfilled the needs of the global market. Notwithstanding, we have not explained how this platform worked. The explanation to this is that AIESEC–ICETEX permitted the consolidation of hiring practices of corporations that sponsor AIESEC. This inference emerged from analyzing five testimonies from AIESEC Colombia alumni.[1] As follows, we will broach two voices of AIESEC former members asking the question "how is your life after AIESEC?" Their names were replaced by the nicknames A4 and A2.

> Being responsible for managing the young strategies of the *World Economic Forum* sounds extremely challenging but *after one has passed through an organization such as AIESEC, I feel I have enough capacities*. (A4, Interview, our translation and emphasis)

When the interviewee affirmed having enough capacities to manage a great task at work, a manifestation of the discourse of competitiveness and qualifications was evident in the word "capacities." In this sense, A4 deemed AIESEC as a gatekeeper of better professional opportunities. This testimony led us to identify two implicatures: (a) This individual must have met all the requisites demanded (see the corpus under analysis), including English proficiency; (b) this person enrolled in the World Economic Forum due to being selected in an AIESEC program. The former conjectures were ratified when we analyzed the voice of alumnus A2.

> Currently. I have just moved to Malaysia. I am working in a company called *Mindvalley* which is in Kuala Lumpur. For those people who do not know the organization, apart from *being a global partner of AIESEC*, it is a company

1 We found these testimonies under the label *Huellas alumni EP* on the YouTube channel AIESEC Alumni Colombia AAC (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu55aej6_RkDfYF-rrESb7Q).

> that works in the educational sector. (A2, Interview, our translation and emphasis)

Interestingly, A2 highlighted the partnership between AIESEC and sponsors, evidencing that for this alumnus, taking part of AIESEC meant a job opportunity in one of AIESEC's premium sponsors (i.e., Mindvalley). By premium sponsors, we refer to enterprises that can obtain a higher status and more privileges with AIESEC, as depicted by an excerpt taken from the webpage (Figure 5).

Figure 5. AIESEC Premium Sponsors Benefits

✓ **Opportunities are promoted**
Get the best candidates from all over the world by highlighting your opportunities in our search and increasing your candidates number.

✓ **Unique brand on AIESEC**
Build a strong Employer Brand in our platform by the special branding options enabled just for our Global Partners.

✓ **Featured in AIESEC media**
Gain recognition and affiliation with our partners group on our website, annual report and media channels.

✓ **Premium support**
Get customized support from your Account Man agers and build a strategy for reaching your recruitment goals more effectively.

Note. From AIESEC (n.d.-b)

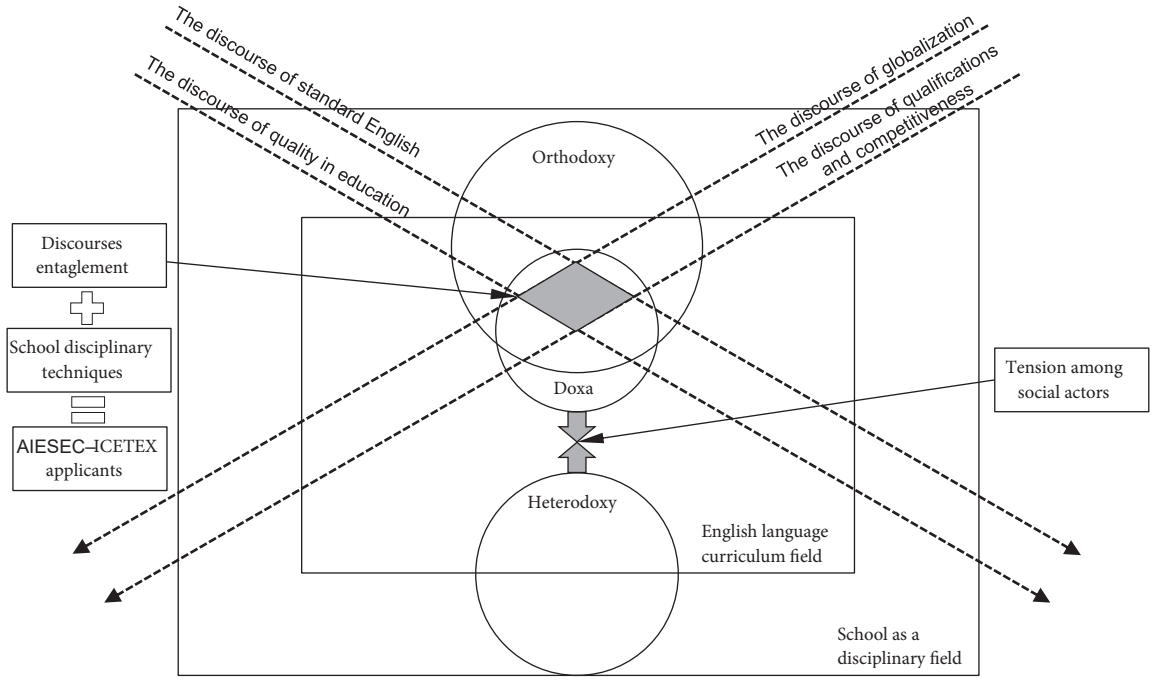
The testimonies and Figure 5 confirm that AIESEC is a labor platform that connects its members to work opportunities in international corporations. For this to happen, applicants must meet different requisites, English proficiency being the one of interest here. Put simply, AIESEC scholarships, including those co-offered with ICETEX, aim to attract high-quality professionals and senior university students for easing recruitment processes for its sponsors.

AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships concession had a discursive constituent that consisted of the entanglement of the discourses of globalization, quality in education, and competitiveness and qualifications. However, the selection of candidates did not only occur at the moment of applying. Rather, it was one of the last steps for materializing the foregoing discursive entanglement. Where did it all start?

As posited in the theoretical considerations section, school is a disciplinary field where tensional forces (social actors) struggle and/or adhere to one another in pursuit of the spread of their interests in the social spheres. In doing so, school disciplinary practices such as exams and honor-based discipline (i.e., honor rolls, payment exemptions, and grants) are techniques employed to construct docile and utile subjects that meet those interests. In this field, there are micro-fields; for example, the English language curriculum. Vested with its own tensions, this micro-field is governed by dominant social actors that constitute the orthodoxy; among these are CEFR-oriented publishing houses, testing enterprises, governmental agencies, and cultural institutes (e.g., the British Council and the U.S. Information Agency), and materials designers. Orthodoxy circulates the discourse of standard English through standardized forms of language teaching, learning, and assessment. These manifestations are contested by heterodox actors and consumed/reproduced by the doxa (Bourdieu, 1986). See this tensional relationship among social actors in Figure 6.

In Figure 6, the micro-field of English curriculum is crossed by four discourses, namely: the discourse of globalization, the discourse of competitiveness and qualifications, the discourse of quality in education, and the discourse of standard English. This affirmation departs from the fact that Booklet 22 universalize the communicative competences and their evaluation schoolwide. Nevertheless, these discourses do not spread their representations of social reality and social actors separately. On the contrary, they entangle one another, which makes them subsidiary but also a constituent of each other.

Figure 6. Disciplinary Discursive Entanglement at School



Note. Own elaboration.

Portrayed in the diamond in Figure 6, this discursive entanglement is where the discourse of standard English becomes powerful, that is, exercises disciplinary power. The discourse in question bounds the construction of high-quality workers for the capitalist society, which is typical of school (Saldarriaga, 2003). Put simply, the discourse of standard English reaches in school, more precisely in an English curriculum, the dissemination of a value-laden view of language (i.e., merely communicative) that is beneficial to international corporations thanks to global and local platforms such as AIESEC and ICETEX, respectively.

This discursive spread takes concrete shape by means of test-oriented teaching, learning, materials, assessment, and other resources that progressively train students in the escalated practice of standard English tests; not to mention the effects of this discourse on the design of statewide exams. On account of what is pinpointed above, for the discourse of standard English to construct candidates for AIESEC–ICETEX calls for applications, it had to implement English curriculum at school as a breeding ground through the exercise of disciplinary power. Consequently, unequal power relationships among orthodoxy and doxa derived into the perpetuation of social orders.

Conclusions

This critical discourse study aimed to shed light on how the discourse of standard English exercised disciplinary power in five scholarships granted by the alliance AIESEC–ICETEX from 2011 to 2014. As a result of a three-tiered analysis (adapted from Fairclough, 2001), the descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory stages findings are synthesized as follows: the discourse of standard English exercised disciplinary power in said scholarships by classifying human beings as competent and not competent users of standard English varieties through examinations, particularly, language tests

regarded as *valid* in the calls for applications. This classification, which was intended to select apt interns and practitioners for AIESEC partners, took a textual shape, namely, a clause complex requesting language proficiency levels through so-called valid tests. Yet, the discourse in question did not exercise power in the vacuum. Rather, it held an intersection with the discourses of globalization, quality in education, and competitiveness and qualifications. In this vein, the applicants to AIESEC–ICETEX scholarships had to fulfill a profile of ideal speakers (competent users of standard English varieties) that were qualified as such as a result of sitting language tests underpinned by *measurable indicators* (Colella & Díaz-Salazar, 2015), that is, the CEFR. With this in mind, we suggest following up, in further studies, on the role that English language teaching curriculum performs in such construction of language users because it is the field where their subjectivation processes occur mediated by language.

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About the Authors

Alber Josué Forero-Mondragón holds an MA in applied linguistics and a BA in English language teaching, both from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (Colombia). He teaches at Fundación Universitaria Compensar (Colombia). His academic interests are critical discourse studies and hip-hop pedagogies. He is a member of the research group ESTUPOLI.

Álvaro Hernán Quintero-Polo holds a doctorate in Education and an MA in applied linguistics. He is a full professor at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (Colombia). His areas of interest are language teacher education, critical discourse studies, and educational policies. He is co-director of the research group ESTUPOLI.

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Preservice EFL Teachers' Experiences in Their First Teaching Practicum: A Collaborative Autoethnography

Las experiencias de los profesores de inglés en formación en su primera práctica docente: una autoetnografía colaborativa

Kelli Johana Ariza-Quiñones
Lizzeth Dayana Hernández-Polo
Kelly Julie Lesmes-Lesmes
Elcy Lorena Molina-Ramírez
Universidad Surcolombiana, Neiva, Colombia

This paper reports a collaborative autoethnography on a first teaching practicum at Universidad Surcolombiana. The study aimed at how we, as novice researchers and preservice English as a foreign language teachers, make sense of our teaching experiences in our first teaching practicum using collaborative autoethnography as a research method. The data were collected by reflective journals and ethnographic observations. Results show the meaning that we give to our experiences, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, by recognizing and analyzing our sociocultural context. Additionally, we were immersed in a virtual learning environment where we had the opportunity to confront unforeseen changes imposed by the pandemic, familiarize ourselves with possible issues that teachers grapple with, and imagine new ways to be ourselves.

Keywords: collaborative autoethnography, teaching practicum, preservice EFL teachers, sociocultural perspectives

Este artículo reporta una autoetnografía colaborativa en una primera práctica docente en la Universidad Surcolombiana. El estudio es un análisis de como nosotras, como investigadoras y profesoras de inglés en formación, le damos sentido a nuestras experiencias docentes en nuestra primera práctica docente, y para ello utilizamos la autoetnografía colaborativa como método de investigación. Los datos fueron recolectados por medio de diarios reflexivos y observaciones. Los resultados muestran el significado que le damos a nuestras experiencias, antes y durante la pandemia de COVID-19, mientras reconocemos y analizamos nuestro contexto sociocultural. Además, estuvimos inmersas en un entorno de aprendizaje virtual, donde tuvimos la oportunidad de enfrentar cambios imprevistos impuestos por la pandemia, familiarizarnos con posibles problemas que los maestros enfrentan e imaginar nuevas formas de ser nosotros mismos.

Palabras clave: autoetnografía colaborativa, perspectivas socioculturales, práctica docente, profesores de inglés en formación

Kelli Johana Ariza-Quiñones https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3335-6957 · Email: u20161146270@usco.edu.co
Lizzeth Dayana Hernández-Polo https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3862-425X · Email: u20161146651@usco.edu.co
Kelly Julie Lesmes-Lesmes https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8777-7749 · Email: u20161144673@usco.edu.co
Elcy Lorena Molina-Ramírez https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8791-8479 · Email: u20161146101@usco.edu.co

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Introduction

In the Colombian teaching context, preservice English language teachers should do their teaching practicum in the last years of their degree according to the study plans designed by the teaching training programs. In some cases, the practicum is mandatory for those students who aspire to obtain their vocational qualifications. According to Nguyen (2014), in this phase, the preservice English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers have a chance to be in contact with a real teaching context, which helps them reinforce, expand, and improve what they learned at university. It means that in this process, preservice EFL teachers have the opportunity to develop the skills to achieve an integral formation as human beings and professionals.

Several studies about the teaching practicum have been conducted. We could find some specific features, such as the preservice EFL teachers' reflection process, where they are supposed to become critical of their practicum (Insuasty & Zambrano-Castillo, 2010). Another aspect is the "critical incidents" that teachers find and have to face in their preservice teaching process (Farrell, 2008). Also, we identified the worries and responsibilities preservice EFL teachers have at the moment of performing their teaching role, as well as the hopes and feelings of fear, enthusiasm, and even anger that arise while they design and deliver their lessons (Lucero & Roncancio-Castellanos, 2019). Other studies focus on preservice EFL teachers' voices, showing us that those voices would contribute to curriculum development within institutions (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018). The contributions made by these and other researchers have turned out to be very important to better understand the teaching practicum process and its participants. However, we created a proposal for carrying out a research study analyzing our experiences in our first teaching practicum through a collaborative autoethnography method.

The objective of this study was to interpret and make sense of the challenges that emerged from our expectations and motivations in our first teaching practicum and how we were forced to examine some particularities that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, we are not leaving behind our initial expectations and motivations, since this research could provide a useful perspective for other preservice EFL teachers who are expected to be in the same situation and who want to know a little about how to make this whole process meaningful and enriching.

Literature Review

Four constructs supported our research, namely: (a) teaching practicum context, (b) preservice teachers' connection between theory and practicum, (c) the sociocultural approach, and (d) agency development. They are described in the following paragraphs.

Teaching Practicum Context

Teaching practicum has been considered as the process every preservice teacher needs to undergo/engage in in an educational center (primary/high schools, universities, and so on). According to Roland and Beckford (2010), the teaching practicum is the application of pedagogy in a real context: the classroom. In other words, "the teaching practicum then constitutes an opportunity for pre-service teachers to be in contact with real context and to enrich it with social and cultural aspects they might incorporate into their teaching process" (Pinzón-Capador & Guerrero-Nieto, 2018, p. 72).

Some teachers have conducted studies related to the English teacher's practicum. According to Velasco (2019), the teaching practicum facilitates "a pre-service teacher's general understanding of the teaching profession and reflects on his/her identity and role as a teacher" (p. 117). This process is viewed more as an "exercise that involves examining the many facets of one's practice to serve as a guide for a thoughtful assessment" (Velasco, 2019, p. 118). Köksal and Genç (2019) argue that the teaching practicum also "has a fundamental mission as preparing the prospective

teachers for the world of teaching since those teacher candidates are mainly expected to be involved in a reciprocal interaction with the learners in the real classrooms during the practicum period" (p. 895). It makes us understand that the teaching practicum is an important aspect of the professional training of preservice teachers since it is here where they have initial contact with a real educational context.

Trent (2010) looks at the teaching practicum "as a crucial aspect of a teacher education program. During the practicum, teacher-interns obtain relevant classroom experience, translate theory to practice, expand their awareness about goal setting and reflect on teaching and learning philosophies" (Gebhard, 2009, as cited in Velasco, 2019, p. 118). Likewise, Okan (2002) claims that "the ability to teach can only be gained through experience. Courses do not prepare you for it. There is too much you have to find out yourself" (p. 176). Many of these scholars agree with the statement that the only way to become an English language teacher is to be in the classroom.

Preservice Teachers' Connection Between Theory and Practicum

During our professional training, we could notice that teacher education programs are more focused on theory. But, once in the practicum, we evidenced that it goes beyond the theory taught during the course. Sometimes, preservice EFL teachers experience difficulties at the moment of relating theories learned in universities to what happens in their teaching practicum (Meijer et al., 2002). For that reason, the aim of the teaching practicum is to provide preservice EFL teachers the opportunity to be conscious about practicing the theories, methods, and techniques that they acquired in parallel with the process of teacher education (Köksal & Genç, 2019). In other words, the preservice EFL teachers "need multiple opportunities to examine the theoretical knowledge they are exposed to in their professional development opportunities within the familiar context of their learning and teaching experiences" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 8).

The Sociocultural Approach

We consider that our behaviors, habits, and practices come together and develop from what is ordinary, common, shared, rooted in our close, every day, and familiar surroundings within our culture. In other words, we create personal behavior and lifestyle and adapt them to our surroundings with the other people to take part and get along in society. These patterns (attitudes, values, norms, rules, notions, perceptions, and representations) intervene and determine our way of thinking and acting; therefore, they must be considered as something fundamental when reflecting on how we learn, what we learn, why we learn, and how we teach today.

Johnson (2009) presents some strong arguments where she explains how sociocultural perspectives change the way L2 educators think about teacher learning, language, and language teaching. Furthermore, "learning takes place in a context and evolves through the interaction and participation of the participants in that context" (Richards, 2008, p. 6). Preservice teacher learning is not just about translating knowledge and theories into practice, but also about how the preservice teachers build new knowledge and theories through participation in social contexts. In this sense, the sociocultural perspective is very useful for analyzing and evidencing processes where meaning is generated.

Karimnia (2010) emphasizes that "when language is conceptualized as social practice, the focus of L2 teaching shifts toward helping L2 learners develop the capacity to interpret and generate meanings that are appropriate within the relevant languaculture"[1] (p. 222).

Agency Development

Agency is the preservice EFL teacher's process to move forward, looking to transform and improve his or her professional identity. As Giroux (2004) said, agency "becomes the site through which power is not

1 Agar (1994, as cited in Norris & Tsedendamba, 2015) states that "language users draw on all kinds of things besides grammar and vocabulary such as past knowledge, local and cultural information, habits and behaviours" (p. 205).

transcended but reworked, replayed, and restaged in productive ways" (p. 34). This means that preservice EFL teachers should look for the enrichment and improvement of their pedagogical work that may generate action which helps them to consolidate their professional role and performance.

Giroux (2004) also asserts that "the fundamental challenge facing educators within the current age of neoliberalism is to provide the conditions for students to address how knowledge is related to the power of both self-definition and social agency" (pp. 34–35). In short, if teachers develop a sense of agency, this may help them become emancipated from imposed agendas or teaching models and, thus, allow them to construct their own way of teaching and learning.

Method

This research was done under the characteristics of the qualitative approach following a collaborative autoethnography design. According to Castañeda-Trujillo (2020), "this research method permits a collective exploration of researcher subjectivity; it helps to reduce, to a certain extent, the power tensions that can happen while researching in collaboration" (p. 232). In this way, collaborative autoethnography increases and enriches the data and information from an individual interpretation to a collective interpretation. So, this process contributes to building a more in-depth understanding and learning of the self and others. Collaborative autoethnography "consolidates the sense of community since each researcher-participant shares personal accounts that become part of the social construction of the community" (Castañeda-Trujillo, 2020, p. 232). Collecting data through autoethnography allows the researcher to identify and make sense of the various experiences that emerge from the individual to the collective, which are valuable sources of learning. Autoethnography is a relatively personal process because it is based on the personal experiences of researchers. It is, likewise, a highly social process. Autoethnography cautiously looks at how researchers have interacted with different people within their sociocultural context and the way social forces have encouraged their lived experiences.

This study is specific to a concern that emerged in how we, as English language preservice teachers, make sense of our first teaching practicum experiences in our sociocultural context and aim to explore attitudes, perceptions, fears, and challenges surrounding our first teaching practicum.

Context

We were enrolled in an English language teaching BA program at a Colombian public university. The program consists of nine semesters and the last two are usually set aside for the teaching practicum. There is a first practicum (eighth semester) that lasts 16 weeks and where preservice teachers have an initial approach to the classroom experience. The second practicum (ninth semester) serves as consolidation and also lasts 16 weeks. For the purposes of our study, we will focus on the first teaching practicum.

In both practicums, preservice teachers constantly interact with a cooperating teacher and a supervisor, which are a vital component in the pedagogical practicum. The cooperating teacher is a "teacher teaching English at the school identified for practicum [and who] could be requested to assist the university supervisor in observing student teachers teach in classes and offering them comments and further guidance" (Al-Mekhlafi & Naji, 2013, p. 9). For preservice teachers, cooperating teachers are a meaningful and necessary element in the classes. Once we arrive at the classroom, we exchange places with the cooperating teacher since we must be completely immersed in the school context and assume our role as teachers. Even when the cooperating teacher and we exchange our positions, the cooperating teacher does not leave the classroom at any moment. They are always observing us to share recommendations, new teaching strategies, and classroom management techniques. On the other hand, "supervisors are expected to

provide their student teachers with a model of instruction, a source of support, feedback and evaluation" (Al-Mekhlafi & Naji, 2013, p. 8). During the teaching practicum, preservice teachers are constantly supervised by the cooperating teacher or the supervisor. Unlike the cooperating teacher, the supervisor regularly observes preservice teachers in their classes and meets with them at least once a week to give feedback on their lesson plans and observations. The supervisor should provide preservice teachers adequate feedback to help them improve their teaching skills. Since the supervisor is an English teacher of the English language teaching program, he or she will also help the preservice teacher improve his or her language proficiency.

For this unique and individual experience, the scenarios were in a public primary school and a private school (1st, 4th, and 5th grades), but also in a public secondary school (10th). In the beginning, we had to go to school six times a week to work with those grades for one or two hours, depending on the schedule of the English classes. As a result of the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we only had three weeks of face-to-face classes. Thus, we had to continue our teaching practicum virtually through synchronous platforms (platforms that simulate traditional face-to-face interaction, and which can be used to provide alternative learning environments for exchange of meaningful information in real time) such as Google Meet and Zoom, or asynchronous (platforms that have to do with the time one can access the information [real-time vs. delayed time]) such as WhatsApp. The period of the practicum was limited to 10 weeks due to the health emergency.

The Participants

We are four participants, three preservice EFL teachers (Elcy, Johana, and Kelly) who met the requirements of the English language teaching program for doing the first teaching practicum, and one student teacher (Lizzeth) in the seventh semester of the same program. Since she was not doing her first teaching practicum, she could not participate in all the data collection processes. For that reason, her role within this research was to analyze and interpret the data collected from reading the journals. The four of us were in our early twenties. Since three of us were about to share a similar experience as it would be our first teaching practicum, we decided to research the challenges, expectations, and insights that we should have in the teaching context to make sense of them from a sociocultural and autoethnography approach. In this study, we played the role of both participants and researchers since our research approach, collaborative autoethnography, allowed us to do so and to engage in self-reflection. As claimed by Castañeda-Trujillo (2020), "collaborative autoethnography is a research process where PELTs [preservice English-language teachers] will play a role as researchers, to understand their transition from being PELTs to become professional English-language teachers" (p. 221).

Data Collection Tools

To collect the data, we used journals and ethnography observations systematized in written field diaries. According to Richards and Lockhart (2004),

> a journal is a teacher's or a student teacher's written response to teaching events. Keeping a journal serves two purposes:
> (a) events and ideas are recorded for later reflection and
> (b) the process of writing itself helps trigger insights about teaching. (p. 7)

For this study, each of us kept a journal wherein we wrote entries at three points, approximately every two weeks (one prior to the practicum, one during the practicum, and one after having finished the practicum) which afterward were then analyzed collectively. Each entry had a prompt (see the Appendix) created by us, in which we wrote individual reflections about our perceptions, feelings, experiences, problems or difficulties, and relationships found within the context of the practicum where we were teaching.

We also used ethnography observation, which consists of three stages (Wolcott, 1994, as cited in Merriam,

2009, p. 201), namely: (a) description (What is going on here?), (b) analysis (the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them), and (c) interpretation (What does it all mean?). The first stage is related to the process of writing journals based on what is happening in our teaching context. The second stage is the process of collecting the journals, and the meetings we will have in each collection to share our experiences through platforms (Google Meet or WhatsApp) to find out common aspects among the data collected. The last stage was developed immediately with the previous one because while we were sharing the information, we also analyzed and highlighted relevant, useful, and common issues that would help us to draw the main findings.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2009),

> Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning. (pp. 175–176)

The approach for this research study is the collaborative autoethnography utilizing a systematic approach to qualitative research methods. "The process involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (Merriam, 2009, p. 205). We focused on the following three stages:

Reviewing data includes "reading text data, analyzing archival materials, graphic information, and physical artifacts" (Chang et al., 2013, p. 102). In this study, we read, reread the journals, and jotted down insights, comments, emerging patterns, and ideas for further work.

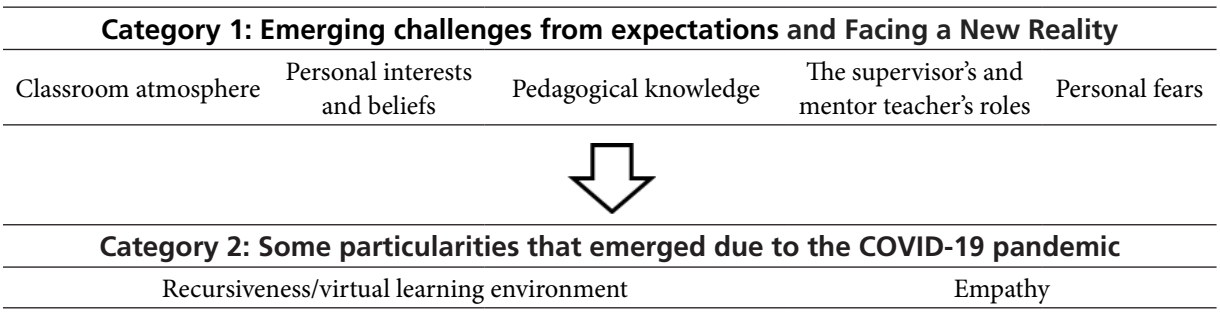
Segmenting, categorizing, and regrouping data involves "constructing a preliminary list of topics emerging from the reviewing data and using the topics as the initial codes" (Chang et al., 2013, p. 104). In this stage, we identified some more relevant topics among our experiences and made a preliminary regrouping of data.

Finding themes and reconnecting with data occurs by identifying the main themes to categorize them and explain how data support and illustrate those themes (Chang et al., 2013). Here, we were able to establish common patterns of two main categories with some subcategories (see Figure 1).

Findings

The reflections were collected, and the appropriate analysis was made to establish common patterns among the participants, in which two categories were identified based on the reflective journals, ethnographic observations, field diaries and conversations obtained. Figure 1 illustrates the main findings of this study.

Figure 1. Categories and Subcategories



Category 1: Emerging Challenges From Expectations and Facing a New Reality

This category resulted from our concerns prior to experiencing the teaching practicum. Thus, the excerpts used in the following subcategories are mainly drawn from Entry 1 of our journals where we wanted to get a sense of the expectations we all had regarding what can be considered our first teaching experience.

Classroom Atmosphere

Within this category, we used our individual experiences and knowledge to describe aspects related to our expectations in our first teaching practicum. Having control of the classroom was our main concern before the teaching practicum, which indicates that the preservice teachers' beliefs in this regard are too narrow. We used to think about classroom management as the process of taking control of the class and over our students, that we would be able to give the class without any interruptions. Some examples of it are Johana's concern that she would not "be able to take control of the class and, at the same time, catch students' attention." Elcy also expressed such worry: "It will be very difficult for me to manage the students." However, as we mentioned above, this can be seen as a narrow belief if we accept Brophy's (1996) definition of classroom management as the "actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction" (p. 5). It means that classroom management is not merely to keep control and have rules to maintain order in the schoolroom but also to incorporate the relationship/rapport with the students to create a pleasant environment/atmosphere for the learning process.

Many beliefs about teaching are pre-built from our experiences, or in Johana's and Elcy's cases built from others' perspectives. From a sociocultural standpoint, previous experiences bear great significance in the ways our beliefs evolve and change since we are always immersed in some sort of context, interacting with and participating in it. The aspects of the sociocultural context influence our way of thinking and acting. For instance, drawing from previous experiences and from the opinion of others, Johana and Elcy wrote the following:

> I had heard from other preservice teachers that the majority of students from secondary are more difficult to work with. (Johana, Entry 1)[2]
>
> As it has been always known, in the public sector there are many students inside one classroom (35 or more). (Elcy, Entry 1)

As former students in public schools, we have witnessed the difficulties of being a teacher in the public sector where, among others, there is the issue of overcrowded classrooms. Besides, as students in an EFL BA program, we have heard from other preservice and in-service EFL teachers as regards their experiences during their teaching process and some extra information that made us reconsider if our decision of becoming a teacher was appropriate.

During the short time that we had face-to-face classes, we understood that, as teachers, we had to create and develop strategies to catch and maintain the attention and interest of our students in our classes. Here, we recognized that our perceptions about "classroom management" were unfounded and too narrow as to what other preservice teachers told us, that it is not based only on having control and order of the classroom, but it goes further. In Entry 3 of her journal Johana mentioned:

> Classroom management is not merely to give students the class rules and that care about their behavior. It should also take into account their individual needs, likes, and ideas, to take advantage of them, to improve and increase their comfort and participation in classes.

2 After the excerpts, we will add in parentheses the exact entry from which each excerpt is taken. Thus, Entry 1 is prior to the practicum, Entry 2 is during the practicum, and Entry 3 after the practicum.

Likewise, as teachers, we understood that as part of this context (classroom atmosphere), we enter a constant phase of convincing and negotiating knowledge. We seek to obtain information about our students' experiences and prior knowledge to create bridges of dialogue and understanding as part of the teaching process and starting point in shared learning.

Personal Interests and Beliefs

Other aspects that became visible were the interests focused on the search to transform the self and the other; interests oriented towards mutual strengthening and individual skills to consolidate our personal and professional identities, as evidenced in our journals. In Entry 1 of the journal (before the practicum) Elcy mentioned:

> I want to focus on helping to make each student a little better than they are in each one of my classes. I want that the time they will spend in my classes to be time spent becoming better persons or citizens.

Kelly said "I will try to give my best, to research and bring to the classroom meaningful activities for them, where they can develop all their skills almost without realizing it." Prior to the practicum, we all agreed that we did not only want to transform our students with our work but also to build new skills to help us in our identity-building process, both in the personal and the professional dimensions, as highlighted by Johana: "I will be able to gain knowledge not only about how to teach English to teens and/or to improve my skills." Zambrano (2002, as cited in Floriano, 2015) affirms that "learning becomes the starting point, and the fundamental concept is the search for such transformation" (para. 2, our translation). Due to our professional training, we realized the need to be a more sensitive and empathetic teacher with students; teachers who care about teaching content and look for ways to influence each of the students positively. In the teaching practicum, we share beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of identity as individuals impacting the students' learning through the classroom atmosphere, the types of methodologies, and the strategies we promote in our classes. We believe that teachers are essential in providing students with a meaningful learning environment, an environment where the teacher is not at the center and students passively receive content and knowledge, as was usually the case in our educational experiences (at school and at university). In this measure, we highlight that education involves the act of knowing and not the mere transmission of theory. It is a process characterized by the horizontality of teacher–student relationships where together they learn, seek, and build knowledge. The most important thing is that we see students' formative stage as a personal transformation process that helps both (students and teachers) build their principles for social projection. In Entry 1 of her journal, Kelly emphasized the impact that the teacher can have on the students' lives: "I have always thought that primary school teachers have a very important role in children's learning process. They are the ones who create the solid foundations for the rest of life." This corresponds to Freire and Horton's (1990) notion:

> The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves. (p. 181)

This means that teachers, in their role as guides, supporters, and mediators of knowledge and context, seek to provide their students with the essential foundations so that they assume their role as main actors in the learning process. Thus, through the learning process, students develop and reinvent knowledge, develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and autonomy that allows them to be strong and critical beings in any situation.

Pedagogical Knowledge

How do we know if theory can be put into practice? As preservice EFL teachers, we feel a recurring fear when facing the teaching practicum because we do not feel fully prepared to deal with the reality of putting into practice what we have learned during our professional training. In the university, our professors taught us certain theories, contents, and themes that we must apply once we are in our teaching practicum, but once there, we encountered the individualities of our students, which represented for us not just a source of anxiety and doubts, but also a challenge to overcome. In our journals, we mentioned a concern about the adaptation of the pedagogical knowledge into the context we were going to be immersed in. For instance, in Entry 1 of her journal, Elcy said: "I hope that all that knowledge works for me within the new context in which I am going to be immersed." Likewise, Johana's expectation was about putting into practice what she had learned in the university, and Kelly's concern was "not knowing how to do things."

It is at this point where we found a gap between what we had learned and the realities of a classroom context. Our professors prepared us as English language teachers mainly through the exposition of the themes in the curriculum and the introduction of techniques and teaching methods. However, the teaching practicum helped us see that educational contexts vary, and that teaching should be adapted to the distinct classroom realities, something which was not explicitly taught in our former courses. So, we are left with the question: How do we link all the theory and content learned during our training to the reality/context of each student?

The Supervisor's and Cooperating Teacher's Roles

One of the fundamental components of the pedagogical practicum is the cooperating teacher and the supervisor. We were aware of the importance of these people in our pedagogical practicum. During the data analysis, we agreed that the relationship between the cooperating teacher and the preservice EFL teacher should be one of communication, collaboration, and permanent support.

On the other hand, the supervisor is a big source of knowledge due to his or her teaching experience. The view of the supervisor as an "expert" and the preservice teacher as a "novice" may not be conducive to a fully productive and mutually beneficial relationship. However, we expected supervisors and cooperating teachers to provide us with all their experience in teaching. They would point out aspects such as classroom management or designing and conducting a class and, after every class observation, give us feedback that would enrich and helped us to improve in different aspects. One example of it is Elcy's expectation:

> I expect that my supervisor and my cooperating teacher nurture me with all the experience that they have teaching and to learn from them many techniques and strategies for designing an appropriate lesson plan, conducting the lesson, or how to deal with problems arising in class. (Entry 1)

The expectations are very high concerning the supervisor's and the cooperating teacher's roles. In one of the meetings in which important aspects such as challenges and expectations regarding teaching practicum were discussed, we mentioned that we did not want them only to review the lesson plans because, for us, having their support and guidance is vitally important in this new path that will mark our professional training.

Personal Fears

In this subcategory, Johana and Elcy have three personal fears in common. The first was the fear of being judged by the cooperating teacher who observed our lessons. It was a new experience for us to be supervised by another teacher who would evaluate the way we conducted the lessons or revealed our language knowledge.

Thus, we became anxious about planning the lessons and about the way we interacted with the students.

The other aspect was related to the knowledge of the language that the cooperating teacher might have. Elcy and Johana placed emphasis on the English level of the cooperating teacher (beginner, intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced) since, according to them, it would have a great impact on the development of the teaching practicum and their performance as teachers. Johana and Elcy also feared the corrections they could receive from the mentor teacher while they were carrying out the lessons. They thought that the way such corrections are delivered may somehow damage their image in front of their students: These may lose the respect towards the preservice teachers or doubt their abilities. We agreed that such insecurities stemmed from our previous educational experiences, where most of the times, the teacher was seen as an authoritative figure and the depositary of all the knowledge; students, in these conditions, are not expected to make mistakes.

The last fear is related to our students, as, prior to the practicum, there is the uncertainty about their behavior, their learning process, and how the students are going to receive us. Johana stated:

> I have to confess that I feel nervous because of the grades I am going to teach and how I will be and how I will create and feed the rapport with my students [or] if I will be able to teach/explain a topic and the students will . . . understand it. (Entry 1)

Elcy also expressed such worry: "It will be difficult for me to manage students because of their ages, their different learning styles, their English level, their behavior." But, in Kelly's case, her fear is related to dealing with the different students' realities. We were willing to put into practice all the theories and concepts we had learned. The concern arose when we faced not only the context of the teaching practicum but also with the different situations that emerged from the individualities of our students. We were immersed in a context where our personalities and realities became invisible from our teaching process since our students were the main actor in classes.

Category 2: Some Particularities That Emerged Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

This category was developed while we were immersed in the practicum. As such, the reflections that we share here are mainly drawn from Entries 2 and 3 in our journals. We briefly describe the unexpected challenges brought about by the pandemic and how we managed to respond to them.

Recursiveness/Virtual Learning Environment

In Colombia, as in other parts of the world, online lessons have emerged as an alternative to face-to-face lessons due to the restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, education changed dramatically, with the notable rise of online learning, whereby teaching is conducted remotely and on digital platforms. The following question emerged within this new modality: Were we, as preservice EFL teachers and students, really prepared to face this challenge?

To answer bluntly, this unexpected situation caught us unprepared. The technology courses at our university were not enough to help us fill in the learning gaps so that we could effectively impart online lessons, amid all the limitations and inequalities in students' lives that the situation has made even more evident. According to Sosa-Penayo (2020), "confinement for health issues undoubtedly exposes the large gaps not overcome in the different societies despite the scientific and technological advances of humanity in recent decades" (p. 1, our translation). This global emergency brings out the result of many years of social inequality among Colombian families. A fact that did not go unnoticed by us since in the context in which we were immersed, a significant gap between students from privileged and

disadvantaged environments was visible: where the students without the necessary tools or conditions for a quality online education struggled to participate in digital learning. One example of it is Elcy's experience:

> I conducted classes by WhatsApp and I felt helpless and frustrated during my first classes because even though my students were very excited to receive the classes, they could not attend due to lack of resources. (Entry 2)

Apart from that, another concern was that students were not having direct face-to-face contact with their teachers; they did not receive feedback about their lessons during their learning process as they were used to.

Consequently, we used our individual experiences in our first teaching practicum context to describe how recursiveness has become an essential part of the current situation. Due to the new educational context, we had to reinvent ourselves, train and reflect on our work to think of new methodologies, strategies, dynamics, and engage in a reflective analysis on how we would adapt learning and link it with the needs, interests, and particularities of each of our students in such a way that their educational process was not interrupted. These aspects are noticeable in our journals. For instance, Johana mentioned that she had to be more recursive and look for new tools and activities. Moreover, she had to change her way of teaching, to plan new strategies for online classes, and Kelly said that this very particular situation has made her become more recursive and increasingly look for new ideas and tools to implement in her teaching process. For that reason, we started using a variety of different digital tools and programs. But we also designed teaching materials, videos, and guides for those students who could not connect to virtual classes.

Empathy

The changes imposed by the pandemic also made us reflect deeply on the role we had to play in this new context. From the outset, we were aware that it is vital not to leave aside the human dimension of being a teacher and the importance of building rapport with our students. It means that we saw our students as people, and set a relationship based on trust, respect, understanding, listening, and dialogue. We recognized each student as a different being, and not as someone inferior. Within this new context, we strengthened our empathy towards our students and became more aware of their realities and needs. We were worried about those students who could not attend the online classes, so we offered alternatives by designing additional materials for those students. These new experiences made us get out of our comfort zone and brought us enrichment and improvement. We also became more creative and recursive teachers. "Emotions are integral, influential factors in all human beings. They are not only personal dispositions, but also social or cultural constructions, influenced by interpersonal relationships and systems of social values" (Zembylas, 2004, as cited in García-Sánchez et al., 2013, p. 117). In other words, preservice EFL teachers' attitudes and/or behaviors can vary by keeping in contact with people who are around us: cooperating teachers, supervisors, students, parents, in short, society at large where the role of teachers is under scrutiny.

Conclusions and Implications

This study revealed that we encountered numerous new challenges that emerged from our expectations related to our pedagogical knowledge, interests and personal beliefs, classroom management, aspirations, fears, and vulnerabilities about our first teaching practicum. In addition to this, we strived to find a "professional identity as an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation" (Rasheed, 2017, p. 42) of our relationships built within and out of the teaching contexts.

The teaching practicum was the fundamental space for us to contextualize and implement what we had learned (theory and content) in our teacher training courses. We noticed that those courses failed to take into account the individualities and realities of the students. Although it was a big challenge for us, we were able to handle the situation

by recognizing students' individualities, analyzing their needs, understanding their facilities, and formulating goals and objectives for their learning process.

The process of collaborative autoethnography, in which we shared significant events from the individual to the collective, helped us to understand the teaching practicum and ourselves in a different way, to be more aware of how our experiences become a set of common understandings, to share textual interpretations that give meaning to our experiences, and to create our own perspectives on the context in which the exchange of knowledge took place. But also, to ask ourselves questions and to understand the actions, behaviors, and demands that emerged in our role, in our classes, and in students within the teaching practicum. Hearing and reading the experiences from us was a stimulating, liberating process, and full of new knowledge. We could listen to different points of view and the strategies used by each of us, which were useful for our performance as teachers.

Finally, we were immersed in a virtual learning environment, where we had the opportunity to confront unforeseen changes imposed by the pandemic, familiarize ourselves with possible issues that teachers grapple with, and imagine new ways to be ourselves. We could also provide spaces and generate a creative and innovative impact for learning, and to think of new possibilities of linking the pedagogical curriculum to different contexts where the construction of learning is possible. Besides, it made us reflect, improve our creativity, become more resourceful, and to put ourselves in our students' shoes by designing the classes and activities in an easy and understandable way while considering the technological problems our students faced.

In this research, some concerns arise about how different personal, experiential, and contextual factors may influence preservice EFL teachers in teaching practicum spaces. Based on the findings, we concluded that, as preservice EFL teachers, we could find ourselves in the process of self-reflection about different pedagogical issues and looking for alternatives to apply them in our teaching practicum. One important implication for the field of education is the need for preservice EFL teachers to be allowed to carry out their own research initiatives regarding the teaching practicum. Their voices may help consolidate the practicum as a space of reflection and learning.

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About the Authors

Kelli Johana Ariza-Quiñones, Lizzeth Dayana Hernández-Polo, Kelly Julie Lesmes-Lesmes, and **Elcy Lorena Molina-Ramírez** hold a BA from the English Language Teaching Program at Universidad Surcolombiana (Colombia).

Appendix: Prompts for Entries of the Journal

As we know, the teaching practicum is a space immersed in continuous changes that arise from the different situations of daily life that are evidenced by the relationships or links created within this context. As part of our English as a foreign language teacher training, we have to do two teaching practicums in the last two semesters of the degree. We knew that we were going to face the first one, and due to the anxiety, excitement, and nervousness that it caused us, we asked ourselves some questions that later became prompts that allowed us to collect the first data of our experience.

Prior to the teaching practicum

As a pre-service teacher, write about the expectations and motivations you have about your first teaching practicum before it starts.

During the teaching practicum

Considering those weeks of their teaching practicum. What learning or interpretation did the teaching context (classroom and its actors) provide for you?

After the teaching practicum

Based on your experience gained by the first teaching practicum, did your expectations change? Or in what ways were your motivations affected or enriched?

P R O F I L E

Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations

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Framing English as a Medium of Instruction Within the Iberian-American Spanish-Speaking Education Contexts

El inglés como medio de instrucción en contextos educativos de habla hispana en Iberoamérica

Wilder Yesid Escobar-Alméciga
Universidad El Bosque, Bogotá, Colombia

Education in Spain and Latin America has been experiencing an ever-increasing use of English as a medium of instruction at all levels and across curricula. Bringing the vast research-literature into a reflective dialogue is paramount to advancing the discipline and to refining English teaching practices. As such, this literature review systematically situates English-as-a-medium-of-instruction literature related to higher education within the Iberian-American school contexts where Spanish was the students' first language. Thus, the paper asserts that while research that addresses methodological approaches, processes, procedures, and their effects in instruction is significant, there is still a pressing need for framing English-as-a-medium-of-instruction research within the reciprocal relationship existing among communication, classroom culture, social values, the classroom climate for learning, and ultimately, the students' learning.

Keywords: bilingual education, English as a foreign language, English as a medium of instruction, learning climate

La educación en España y Latinoamérica ha venido experimentando un aumento en el uso del inglés como medio de instrucción. Así, resulta primordial llevar la investigación existente a un diálogo reflexivo para avanzar y perfeccionar las prácticas de enseñanza del inglés. Este artículo de revisión sitúa sistemáticamente la literatura alrededor de la instrucción en inglés de la educación superior dentro de los contextos escolares iberoamericanos donde el español era el primer idioma de los estudiantes. Se encontró que, si bien la investigación que aborda los enfoques metodológicos, procesos, procedimientos y sus efectos en la instrucción del inglés es significativa, todavía se requiere enmarcar la investigación dentro de la relación recíproca entre comunicación, cultura de aula, valores sociales, el clima del aprendizaje y, por último, el aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: educación bilingüe, inglés como lengua extranjera, inglés como medio de instrucción, clima de aprendizaje

Wilder Yesid Escobar-Alméciga https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5082-6236 · Email: escobarwilder@unbosque.edu.co

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Introduction

While the way in which communication is configured influences the degree to which individuals have opportunities to engage in particular aspects of social life and participation, knowledge, in turn, regulates the extent to which an individual or a community can become empowered to actively take part in the construction and reconstruction of the immediate and the broader social systems (de Mejía, 2002). Similarly, knowledge is co-constructed and can only be evidenced through social interaction with others (Fairclough, 2011; Gee, 2011; Kress, 2010, 2011; Norris, 2004, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). In the field of child development, for instance, and in Vygotsky's (1978) words, "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (p. 88). He asserts that children can accomplish far more in collective action or through the guidance of others than by themselves, locating "learning" more in the social realm than in people's individual, isolated, and internal psyche.

Accordingly, the literature review sheds light on two broad aspects relevant to English as a medium of instruction (EMI). The literature examines research on academic instruction via English in the Spanish-speaking higher education (HE) classroom contexts. More specifically, it discusses the ways in which scholarship has addressed the relationship between the multimodal nature of communication and the English language teaching practice in the EMI classroom in pursuit of learning. As such, it supports two main arguments. First, it reveals that the design and evaluation of interactive environments in the EMI classroom represent a significant gap in the literature. Second, it corroborates that comprehending more profoundly the transformative power that interactive, reflexive, participative, collaborative, and productive social environments have on learning is paramount to improving adult linguistic development and their learning of contents (Booker, 2008; McMahon et al., 2009; Mercer, 2004).

The organization of this literature review is mainly guided by geographical considerations taking as a point of departure those Spanish-speaking contexts which are farther away (Spain) and progressively moving inward into the Colombian context, passing through EMI literature from Latin America and the Caribbean. That is, a geographical area that Cabrera-Albert and Castro-González (1997) called the Iberian-American EMI context. They contend that since Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Iberian Peninsula in Europe share significant social, cultural, and linguistic characteristics, they should be discussed in light of one another and referred to as one context when it comes to EMI. As such, they acknowledged the need that the Iberian-American context has for a coherent, articulated, and better-defined English language teaching project carried out in cooperation with the countries therein using research as a basis for EMI designs and implementations.

EMI Literature From the Spanish Context

Spanish literature on EMI concurs that teaching approaches which combine the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) and the teaching of subject areas in HE is spreading rapidly throughout European countries (Julius & Madrid-Fernández, 2017; Malicka et al., 2019; Muñoz-Luna, 2014; Otero de Juan & García-Laborda, 2014; Vidal & Jarvis, 2020). One explanation for this proliferation is commonly associated with educational policy demands which, in turn, seek to respond to the economic micro and macro environments (Muñoz-Luna, 2014; Otero de Juan & García-Laborda, 2014; Vidal & Jarvis, 2020). The scholars conclude that access to participation in academic communities and in the broader socioeconomic environment largely depends on the extent to which one has a high command of the English language.

Scholars have traced the evolutionary trajectory of EFL teaching that resulted in the use of EMI. Muñoz-Luna (2014), for instance, explained that this approach

to teaching emerged because of a paradigm shift in terms of the way both the target language and teaching of contents were traditionally conceived. Muñoz-Luna claims that, initially, language teaching favored structuralist approaches where language could be broken down into smaller units for the purpose of teaching and learning. As such, this approach heavily relied on language modeling and sentence drilling. Progressively, pragmatics made their way into the field, highlighting context as an essential consideration in EFL teaching and learning. Finally, more sociocultural and constructivist explanations of learning framed the initiative of EMI as an approach that would focus on communication and social interaction rather than on language accuracy. As such, Muñoz-Luna identified the need for specialized training that would enable educators to create communicative environments conducive to learning. Most importantly, she advocates for research on affective, motivational, and social aspects of EMI designs and implementations for HE.

Despite the popularity that EMI has gained on the continent and echoing the existing global literature (Brutt-Griffler, 2017; Macaro et al., 2018), Spanish research attests to the scarcity of literature on this educational phenomenon, particularly in regard to HE (Julius & Madrid-Fernández, 2017; Malicka et al., 2019; Muñoz-Luna, 2014; Otero de Juan & García-Laborda, 2014; Vidal & Jarvis, 2020). More precisely, the Spanish literature exhibited a genuine concern for inquiring into contextual specificities and into ways in which language could be organized and deployed in the classroom in pursuit of the successful teaching and learning of both the target language and the subject area when these two aspects are simultaneously pursued (Julius & Madrid-Fernández, 2017; Malicka et al., 2019; Muñoz-Luna, 2014; Otero de Juan & García-Laborda, 2014; Vidal & Jarvis, 2020).

Consequently, understanding learners' individual traits, contextual specificities, and the role that particular linguistic features play in EMI is paramount to creating inclusive EMI classrooms where students can participate, reflect upon their process, and learn in conditions of equality. Julius and Madrid-Fernández (2017), for instance, collected the perceptions that students and professors had about the type of learning taking place in an EMI instructional design. The study proposed that students typically enrolled in an EMI course or program have different English proficiency levels due to the varied experiences that they have had speaking English: some had more opportunities to use English in social and naturally-occurring interactions like stays abroad or summer immersion programs. As a result, the program offered uneven opportunities for students to access contents, to participate, and to learn. The study indicated that serving students with different backgrounds in EFL and EMI can lead to inequalities and marginalization of those who do not enjoy the benefits of extracurricular English exposure. In turn, such disparities affect students' levels of motivation, investment, and engagement in the class which ultimately affects student learning.

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the importance of understanding the perceptions of students and professors. Vidal and Jarvis (2020), however, claimed that the problem does not only reside in the dearth of literature regarding the double task of teaching English and the subject area simultaneously in HE, but that also the existing research has mainly focused on gathering opinions and perceptions about the teaching and learning processes in EMI classrooms. They argue that more empirical research is needed in order to inform and improve the teaching practice within EMI school contexts. Therefore, they conducted an empirical qualitative study that analyzed 195 essays written by students from an undergraduate EMI program at a university in Spain. They discussed the results of three years of schooling via EMI in terms of English writing proficiency, essay quality, and lexical diversity using Oxford's Placement Test. The study reported a significant improvement in the learners' L2 writing proficiency and an increase in essay quality, but the

authors argued that lexical diversity did not show any sign of improvement. In addition, they delineated some of the shortcomings of EMI courses and programs. To begin with, they explained that EMI undermines language identity and language domain. That is, while attention is given to a second language, the first language and culture may be neglected. Additionally, the study calls into question the capacity that Spanish universities have to appropriately and successfully address subject areas in the target language. Finally, the study suggests that English-medium lectures are not necessarily conducive to developing the abilities in the second language or in the subject area. Bearing this in mind, one can see the study underlines the need for rethinking EMI designs and implementations so as to provide opportunities for students to fully participate, collaborate, and interact in class activities in the interest of learning while developing the target language.

Drawing on the literature that discusses the quest of teaching both language and subject areas in the European context, it could be said that the integration of EFL and specific contents as a teaching approach has experienced rapid growth over the past decade. Such growth calls for empirical research that, beyond gathering people's perceptions and overestimating standardized tests results as a measuring stick for research, inquires profoundly into the social, interactional, affective, motivational, and intellectual conditions EMI creates for the teaching and learning environments.

EMI Literature in the Latin-American Context

The research from the Latin-American context addressing the pedagogical approach of integrating the teaching of EFL and a subject area exhibited some commonalities with the research literature from Spain outlined above. First of all, the Spanish and Latin-American literature mainly addresses EMI in contexts where Spanish is spoken as a first language. The literature from both contexts assigns the popularity that EMI has been gaining as to the desire that institutions and countries have to internationalize education and instill competences in students that would equip them to become competitive professionals globally (Arias de la Cruz et al., 2019; Crawford et al., 2013; de la Barra et al., 2018; Despagne, 2019; Lara-Herrera et al., 2016; López & Puebla, 2014; Navas-Brenes, 2010; Rivera & Mazak, 2017; Vargas-Vásquez et al., 2016). Additionally, the literature from Latin America reiterates the dearth of research on EMI and the need for specialized professional development addressed in the Spanish literature discussed above (Arias de la Cruz et al., 2019; Crawford et al., 2013; de la Barra et al., 2018; Despagne, 2019; Lara-Herrera et al., 2016; López & Puebla, 2014; Navas-Brenes, 2010; Rivera & Mazak, 2017; Vargas-Vásquez et al., 2016). It also exhibited the tendency of researchers to inquire into the perceptions of stakeholders about the implementation of EMI (Despagne, 2019; Lara-Herrera et al., 2016; Rivera & Mazak, 2017; Vargas-Vásquez et al., 2016) rather than conducting empirical studies directly focused on instruction and learning.

Studies on perceptions, however, offer a glimpse into the ways people experience such approaches and provide a point of departure for more empirical research to be conducted in direct observation of the phenomena at hand. Lara-Herrera et al. (2016), for instance, explored the perceptions of English teachers who, as students, went through an EMI program model and who, later in life, became EMI teachers themselves without further training. Particularly, the study gathered and analyzed teachers' perceptions about the implementation of EMI at the university level in Mexico. Despite the fact that, as students, the teachers had been educated through the EMI teaching model, they expressed how they did not feel fully prepared in terms of EMI pedagogical competences to be left in charge of designing and teaching EMI courses. As such, they claimed that EMI implementations require educators to undergo specific and ongoing professional development that facilitates the development of competences for successful instruction.

Not completely unrelated to this issue is that teachers, in Lara-Herrera et al.'s (2016) study, also expressed a heartfelt concern about their level of command of the English language in respect to the level needed to successfully impart subject contents in English. That is, subjects like mathematics or science have specialized discourses and communicative genres with which EFL teachers may not be completely familiar and this could potentially hinder the teaching of subject-specific contents as well as the teaching of the language. The same holds true for the cases where non-language professors of subject areas teach their disciplines via English while lacking the pedagogical competences to teach in the language. Consequently, the implementation of effective EMI courses requires full support from the educational institutions and their leadership. This support may be represented via sponsoring teachers' ongoing professional development, providing appropriate teaching resources, and giving their teachers sufficient class preparation time and the right conditions to do their jobs properly.

In a similar manner, Despagne (2019) examined EFL teachers' perspectives on the role of English in students' education in two private universities in Mexico. Echoing the bulk of the literature, the author found that English was perceived by teachers as the language of international communication essential for international business and commerce, and a gateway to accessing academic and professional opportunities. The study also examined the perceived linguistic superiority implicit in teachers' responses. Despagne argued that when teachers described the English language with adjectives like "easy," "clear," and "straight," they expressed an ideology wherein English enjoyed a higher status than Spanish. The author warned about teachers' responsibility to analyze and be sensitive to the way values are instilled in EMI contexts and exhorted educators to adopt practices and attitudes that foster equality and linguistic ecology in EMI settings.

Also addressing equality-related issues, Rivera and Mazak (2017) examined students' attitudes toward translanguaging in the classroom of an undergraduate psychology program at a university in Puerto Rico. They investigated students' language views on their instructor's translingual pedagogy and found that language choices and language behavior in the classroom are heavily influenced by the broader political environment and by the class members' attitudes towards the languages available to them. Rivera and Mazak assert that English and Spanish have traditionally been treated as separate entities with little opportunity to meet and coexist in interaction and harmony, one with the other, especially bearing in mind the particular characteristics of the Puerto Rican context. The languages that a person speaks, they contended, are a part of one linguistic repertoire. However, negative attitudes can engender prejudice against languages and those who speak them and, in turn, restrict learning possibilities for some while privileging others. As such, the researchers attest to the need of rethinking the concept of education into something that transcends well beyond the simple acquisition of facts or the plain learning of English. Hence, translanguaging represents a way of instilling positive attitudes toward minority languages in the classroom and of getting students involved in class activity. Rivera and Mazak found that students had a positive attitude toward translanguaging pedagogical practices mainly due to the affirmative attitude teachers displayed in the class and the flexibility they offered in terms of language use.

In addition to the attitudes towards languages that teachers value and promote in the classroom, there are specific roles with particular characteristics that teachers are expected to adopt and enact in the EMI classroom. As such, Vargas-Vásquez et al. (2016) inquired about the extent to which three instructors who were going through their student-teaching practice positioned themselves and took on the role of teachers in a task-based undergraduate course. The researchers concluded that these student-teachers played an essential role sequencing the tasks and motivating the learners. Vargas-Vásquez et al. argued that, even when the objective is to

decentralize the role of the teacher, the teacher is still at the core of EMI programs given that it is the teacher who establishes the parameters and sets the tone for the class. In doing so, they recommend ongoing research on the teacher's role within EMI classes and their attitudes toward the languages that students speak. Additionally, this piece highlights the researchers' tendency to focus on the teacher's actions evidenced in the literature thus far. That is, EMI-related research focuses mainly on what the teacher does, what he or she is expected to do, the way he or she does things, or what they could potentially do—instructional procedures (see Arias de la Cruz et al., 2019; de la Barra et al., 2018; López & Puebla, 2014; Navas-Brenes, 2010). However, research aimed at explaining learning as an effect of communication as it pertains to interaction in EMI has been conducted to a much lesser extent.

EMI research in Latin America has also endeavored to increase language awareness and students' self-reflection upon their learning process (de la Barra et al., 2018; Vargas-Vásquez et al., 2016). For example, de la Barra et al. (2018) examined the design and implementation of two rubrics following the principles of content and language integrated learning in second-year students at a university in Chile to assess oral skills in terms of grammar and lexis. The study suggests that through this implementation, students' language awareness increased and fostered the acquisition of grammatical and lexical competences. This implementation also made students aware of class expectations and requirements, which was paramount to their success.

In regard to form-related aspects of language in EMI, Crawford et al. (2013) looked into the writing processes of two university students in an EMI program in Mexico. Initially they sought to examine the development of rhetorical features in the students' writing production. However, their research process drifted to explorations of identity-related aspects evidenced in the analysis. They identified differentiating aspects between Spanish and English writing structures and found that despite the students' identification as English writers, their writing in English exhibited the Spanish writing structure and style at best and the structure of conversations in Spanish at worst. They also observed that, as time passed, such issues decreased. Thus, the researchers concluded that academic writing in EFL is a literacy process which needs to be nurtured long-term before it displays any sign of development.

Similarly, López and Puebla (2014) offered a critical reflection on reading processes in English in HE in Argentina using principles from Vygotsky's work as an analytical lens. The researchers designed and implemented cycles of didactic units about gender and as these didactic units unfolded, they looked into aspects like the zone of proximal development and mediation. The researchers maintained that reading in EFL is a social practice that nurtures the development of higher order thinking skills and the appropriation of discipline-specific knowledge. They claimed that reading relies on semiotic practices where sociocultural referents and the reader engage in an ongoing exchange that mediates interpretation. As such, a pedagogical design for reading that was contextualized, mediated, and collaborative did not only facilitate language development and knowledge construction, but it also instilled in students confidence, responsibility, autonomy, and commitment to one another and their immediate academic community.

Language development and the construction and appropriation of knowledge is, unquestionably, a social endeavor shaped by historical, cultural, social, emotional, and intellectual referents. Hence, it is a collective social practice for which mutual collaboration and support are paramount to its success (Vygotsky, 1978). Navas-Brenes (2010), for instance, created a sample lesson for an EMI university course in Costa Rica. This study presented a language lesson using authentic materials based on the principles of content-based instruction. He asserted that teaching content-based courses requires a high level of creativity on behalf of the teacher, collaboration

from colleagues, and support from all the stakeholders, primarily, from the institution.

In short, the EMI-related literature in the Latin-American context generally coincides with the literature from Spain. The EMI research in Latin America also focuses on instructional procedures disregarding research on the learning and communication processes in the EMI classroom. In addition, it introduces an important debate regarding the attitudes towards the languages that students speak and toward classroom practices of language use. In doing so, the scholars promote a reflection on the role that EMI professors play in creating the conditions for equality, collaboration, and participation, which are paramount to student success.

EMI Literature in the Colombian Context

The Colombian literature regarding the use of English for classroom instruction in HE where Spanish is spoken as a first language resembles scholarship from the broader Iberian-American context in four main ways. First, the research agrees that the main reasons for the popular adoption of the EMI approach are associated with educational policies at the micro and macro levels that seek to internationalize HE for academic participation, competences for global economies, and opportunities for students to access international participation (Corrales et al., 2016; García, 2013; Serna-Dimas & Ruíz-Castellanos, 2014). Second, research on perceptions regarding EMI continues to be widespread in the Colombian context (Corrales & Maloof, 2011; Corrales et al., 2016; García, 2013; Sánchez-Solarte et al., 2017). Third, the Colombian literature also exhibits the tendency of researchers to focus on the procedural aspects of instruction by assessing the effect of didactic implementations (Bautista-Barón, 2013; Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; Guapacha-Chamorro & Benavidez-Paz, 2017; Palacio et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Bonces, 2011; Sánchez-Narváez & Chavarro-Vargas, 2017) while disregarding much-needed research on the way learning occurs or fails to occur as a result of the quality of communication in the EMI classroom. Finally, Colombian literature also attests to the lack of research on EMI in HE in Spanish-speaking contexts (Bautista-Barón, 2013; Corrales & Maloof, 2011; Corrales et al., 2016; García, 2013; Gómez-Flórez et al., 2011; Granados-Beltrán, 2018; Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; Guapacha-Chamorro & Benavidez-Paz, 2017; Ortega, 2019; Palacio et al., 2016; Sánchez-Narváez & Chavarro-Vargas, 2017; Sánchez-Solarte et al., 2017; Serna-Dimas & Ruíz-Castellanos, 2014; Uribe-Enciso, 2012; Viáfara-González & López, 2011). Beyond echoing some of the issues present in the broader Iberian-American context, the Colombian literature also engages in debates regarding more abstract themes like the roles that different interaction-related elements play in the development of the target language and the acquisition of contents as well as the shaping of learning environments.

In reference to the research on perceptions and attitudes regarding EMI implementations in Colombia, for instance, García (2013) discusses a literature review that contributed to the longstanding debate regarding the ideologies surrounding native and non-native speakers of English and their place in English language teaching. He discussed students' and teachers' attitudes toward English as an international language and the presence of standard and non-standard varieties of English in school. In his work, the author challenged the notion that the ownership of the English language should be strictly assigned to the native speakers of dominant varieties. Rather, the article advocates for the idea of the legitimate speaker of English regardless of their nationality or whether they are native or non-native speakers of the language. In the literature that García reviewed, he found a tendency in which students and teachers show a higher regard for "standard" English. Such ideologies have direct implications for teaching as they inevitably draw teacher's attention away from communication and toward prescriptivism and form-focused instruction that favor the development of

accuracy over the negotiation of meaning. In doing so, these beliefs also establish unattainable phonology and fluency-related objectives for learners of EFL in HE. Consequently, his work calls for a more profound reflection on EFL and the teaching practices to be held in Colombia considering the specificities of the learners and the bilingual interactional environment they inhabit.

Similarly, Sánchez-Solarte et al. (2017) surveyed 130 students from 10 different undergraduate programs, inquiring about their positions on the English courses they had to take as a part of their program course load. Upholding the view that a balance between communication and academic success needs to be achieved in English language teaching, the authors endorsed a post-method approach where three basic elements were at the core—particularity, practicality, and possibility. Particularity referred to the need of bringing into consideration the specific traits that characterize the students, the context, and the situations into the instructional designs and implementations. Practicality was concerned with the extent to which theory informs the teaching practice. Finally, possibility had to do with the opportunities a class affords students to bring their knowledge, culture, and identities into the teaching and learning processes so as to enrich their experience. The aforementioned principles, however, pose great challenges for the type of education that promotes standard English, linguistic accuracy, or lectures, since they leave little room for individuality, negotiation, participation, and the co-construction of knowledge.

Furthermore, in the quest for understanding the extent to which EMI supports language development and the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge, Corrales and Maloof (2011) conducted a qualitative study on a university course in medicine taught in English, finding that the use of authentic materials, the implementation of highly-contextualized activities, and ample possibilities for students to bring their knowledge into the teaching and learning processes nurtured the development of language and content knowledge in the class. Additionally, this EMI course offered students the opportunity to perform—rather than only to acquire informational facts—the knowledge they acquired through their interactions in class. However, Corrales and Maloof argued that while these methodology-related factors fostered learning, it really came down to the type of social environment educators could create for the class regardless of the classroom methodology used. That is, while EMI classrooms can have designs that favor communication, thus positively shaping the learning environment, there are other EMI designs, like lectures, that leave little room for teachers to create a communicative classroom environment. Thus, educators need to make it their main objective to create a communicative classroom environment where students feel safe, welcome, valued, challenged, and included.

Even more directly related to matters of interaction and collaboration among EMI students as aspects that drive learning, Serna-Dimas and Ruíz-Castellanos (2014) designed activities aimed to develop language competences in a course from the physical therapy undergraduate program. The research accounted for the collaboration among two professors in the design and implementation of the activities and the interaction patterns that the students exhibited as they carried out the class tasks. Despite the fact that the researchers' interest was mainly concerned with interaction, the theory that framed the study pivoted around second language acquisition, Krashen's (1982) input and Swain's (1985) output hypothesis, and the English for specific purposes model. More peripherally, the theory framing the study also included cooperative learning and differentiated instruction. Unfortunately, theory regarding interaction or communication was not included or operationalized to a great extent. Serna-Dimas and Ruíz-Castellanos discovered that interaction and participation can be promoted to the extent to which these aspects will be considered in the design process of EMI classes. In the case of this particular group, the professors exhibited a flexible approach that allowed students to ask questions,

make comments, and monitor their own language use. As such, the researchers recommended that instructional designs be constantly evaluated, reflected upon, and adjusted to meet students' needs and to continuously improve learning outcomes. Similarly, they advised that special attention should be paid to social dynamics as the class should offer equal opportunity for participation and high-quality activities that result in the type of interaction that leads to learning.

Also addressing issues of equality and social justice, Ortega (2019) reported on a classroom experience where the professor used translanguaging for instruction. Framed between theories of plurilingualism and translanguaging, the researcher examined the way students' linguistic and cultural knowledge was valued and involved in class activity. In regard to plurilingualism, he asserted that education in Colombia still needs to come to appreciate the linguistic and sociocultural diversity in the classroom. It needs to create instructional designs that set students' backgrounds, cultures, knowledge, and identities as the stage for teaching focusing on developing the competences that would equip students to understand and transform their social realities. As for translanguaging, the author explained that instructional design should aim at presenting and interacting with material in ways that foster the learning of languages and concepts. Additionally, these designs should also seek to strengthen the target language through social collaboration.

Interaction-related EMI literature in HE in Colombia has also discussed, incidentally, ways in which learning can be well-served by multimodal approaches to teaching. Although not explicitly framed within multimodality, Gualdron and Castillo (2018), for instance, explored the outcomes of an EMI methodology based on theatrical plays implemented in an undergraduate course at a public university. As a result, they proposed that this methodology lowered students' inhibitions stimulating the use of the target language and cognitive processing. The theoretical underpinnings established comprehensible connections between the communicative properties of language and those involved in theater. Both practices, they asserted, rely on culture referents for meaning negotiation. They argued that using theater in EMI empowered and motived students and facilitated cooperative and collaborative work among them. Additionally, theater required students to practice the four language skills that are usually evaluated in tests. As such, they laid the theoretical platform on four main theories. Namely, (a) Krashen's five-part hypothesis focusing particularly on the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis; (b) constructivism which puts interaction at the core of the learning process; (c) motivation which determines levels of engagement and investment; and (d) authentic environments referring to the extent to which the class can resemble actual social contexts and realities.

While these theories framed the study in a comprehensible manner, theories within the field of social semiotics and multimodal communication would substantiate the explanations on "performance" as an integrated mode of communication which plays a central role in interaction and cognition (Kress, 2010; Norris, 2004, 2014). Alternatively, theories regarding the role of movement in cognitive mediation and knowledge construction could also provide solid bases upon which this approach can be grounded and its outcomes explained (Boyd et al., 2018; Franks & Jewitt, 2001; Goldin-Meadow, 2000; Hostetter & Alibali, 2008; Roth, 2001).

Adding a new way in which multimodal communication was indirectly addressed in the EMI literature in the Colombian context, Viáfara-González and López (2011) discussed a longitudinal qualitative study that collected data on the teaching experience of two professors who used portfolios in their EMI university courses. The use of portfolios was initially intended to enhance the development of communicative competence, and theory was used to explain and discuss portfolios as a pedagogical tool. This approach, integrating portfolios

into the EMI classroom, promoted the debate about learning-assessment from both perspectives: process and product. As for the process, the use of portfolios invited students' creativity, culture, identities, and discipline-specific knowledge into the construction of an artefact (the product) which, to an extent, served to provide evidence for students' learning. The professors were mainly concerned with encouraging self-reflection among the students about what they learned, how they learned it, and the factors that contributed to such learning. The researchers found that the use of portfolios diversified the ways in which students were assessed and increased student involvement and autonomy. The construction of portfolios opened up a world of opportunities for students to resort to additional modes of communication like images, color, design, writing, drawing, and so forth, thus promoting collaborative work among them. Framing studies of this sort within social semiotics and multimodal communication would contribute to the discussion about the relationship between multimodal communication and learning in collaborative endeavors.

The multimodal nature of communication has also been contemplated in EMI literature in terms of verbal and nonverbal communication. Such is the case of Uribe-Enciso (2012), who stressed the importance that verbal and nonverbal discursive mechanisms play in interaction and learning. She investigated the way students in an EMI class used clues and strategies for turn taking and turn yielding and incorporated backchannels to maintain the flow of discussions. The researcher made distinctions regarding the transactional and interactional skills involved in class communication and argued that, in both cases, verbal and nonverbal communicative actions served to construct empathy and to convey friendliness. Initially, student discussions exhibited a lack of command of the pragmatic use of such verbal and nonverbal mechanisms. However, after eight three-hour sessions, the students began to become aware of these elements and to incorporate them into their discussion practices. Uribe-Enciso concluded that students with higher levels of proficiency in English acquired the pragmatic use of backchannels more quickly. The researcher assigned this effect to the fact that more proficient English speakers have more linguistic and paralinguistic resources to draw on when resolving such communicative situations. She also asserted that promoting discussion in the classroom fosters the development of linguistic as well as pragmatic abilities and that learning to use the language is more valuable than learning about the language.

Another example of how multimodality is indirectly addressed in the EMI literature is found in the work by Sánchez-Narváez and Chavarro-Vargas (2017), who looked into communicative behavior in a blended course offered to EFL teachers as a component of their professional development. The objective was to assess the extent to which information and communication technologies shaped the communicative behavior of the content-subject teachers who participated in the course. The researchers declared that blended learning increased the learners' oral production. Additionally, communicative behavior exhibited an enormous amount of body language, self-monitoring, lexical diversity, and communication in language chunks. Despite the fact that this study is not rooted in theories of multimodality, it can be argued that blended courses draw on a wealth of semiotic resources, an array of appealing layouts, and a vast scope of opportunities to use multiple modes of communication. Such characteristics, when efficiently deployed, contribute to the teaching and learning processes in the blended environment. Indirectly, the researchers acknowledged the multimodal, culturally-governed, and yet emergent nature of communication and its relationship to learning.

In addition to acknowledging the multimodal properties of communication, the EMI-related literature from the Colombian context was also concerned with creating learning environments that promote natural interaction. Gómez-Flórez et al. (2011), for instance, inquired

about the effect that content-based instruction could potentially have on the development of language skills. To such an end, they designed a study for a molecular microbiology class at a public university. They concluded that content-based instruction improved the students' speaking and oral comprehension skills. As such, the researchers highly recommended the implementation of content-based instruction as it helps students to use language for communicative purposes and creates environments that resemble naturally-occurring communication more closely.

Assessing the learning outcomes from such particular learning environments through standardized testing would fall short in accounting for the context-specific learning that took place. In that regard, Palacio et al. (2016) account for the experience that a group of professors underwent for the design, validation, and application of a language test to be implemented in their specific EMI classroom. The study discussed the test item by item providing descriptive statistics, correlational analysis, validity analysis, and reliability estimates. Making comprehensible differentiations between standard testing and classroom testing, the researchers found that designing and validating a tailor-made test for the group of students they were working with enhanced the teaching practice and motivated reflection among professors regarding actions they can take to contextualize their evaluation procedures. Palacio et al. argued that exams should require answers that are relevant and context-dependent.

However, designing context-specific exams, and creating the type of collaborative and productive environments that the EMI literature promotes demands a wealth of resources and support from the institution that grants access to such resources. Bautista-Barón (2013), for instance, conducted action research at a police training institute in Colombia. She designed reading workshops based on the cognitive language learning approach (CALLA) intended to increase reading proficiency in English and learners' autonomy. The study was concerned with identifying the extent to which a productive learning environment could potentially be created in the EMI class. As a result of her investigation, Bautista-Barón claimed that one of the greatest obstacles for teaching an EMI course successfully was not having access to the appropriate resources like audiovisual materials and web pages with access to listening, reading, grammar, lexis, online dictionaries, and online pedagogical games. The author found that by investing in the creation of these reading workshops, she was able to familiarize students with new reading strategies and instill in them abilities to self-monitor and self-evaluate their process which, in turn, increased students' reading comprehension.

Similarly, Guapacha-Chamorro and Benavidez-Paz (2017) designed workshops to develop learning strategies among students based on CALLA and task-based language teaching (TBLT). This was implemented in a group of 33 preservice teachers at a university. Implicit instruction on language learning strategies increased the students' ability to reflect upon and manage their own learning. This study reports that students strengthened their speaking skill and diversified their vocabulary.

To sum up, the EMI-related literature also showed a general concern for instilling autonomy in students so that they would be capable of self-managing their own learning. It also stressed the importance of creating environments that are productive, interactive, and safe as well as which provide equal opportunities for all students to learn. Scholars maintain that these objectives can be achieved to the extent that all stakeholders support the cause and offer professional development and resources. Additionally, the EMI-related literature emphasizes the dearth of pertinent research on teaching and learning processes in the EMI classroom. While EMI-related research has been conducted to an extent, it exhibits researchers' tendency to focus on instructional procedures. Research on the learning processes in EMI environments has been conducted to a much lesser degree. Even more scarce, but equally needed is research addressing the relationship

between interaction and learning in the EMI framed within a social semiotics perspective.

With this in mind, and considering the scarcity of research on EMI in the Colombian as well as in the broader Iberian-American contexts (Macaro et al., 2018; McDougald, 2015), the pressing need for research on EMI is clearly evidenced in national and international contexts. Such research should broadly inquire into whether instruction in English promotes or inhibits full participation and the type of communication that leads to the development of proficiencies in both the subject areas and EFL (Anderson et al., 2015; Fandiño-Parra, 2013; McDougald, 2015).

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About the Author

Wilder Yesid Escobar-Alméciga is the chair of Licenciatura en Bilingüismo at Universidad El Bosque. He holds a master's degree in Applied Linguistics to TEFL and a PhD in Foreign and Second Language Education (State University of New York, USA). His research addresses social issues through the analysis of communication in English as a foreign language education.

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A Synthesis of EFL Research in Chilean High Schools: Research Shortage or Research Opportunities?

Una síntesis de la investigación del inglés como lengua extranjera en la enseñanza media chilena: ¿escasez de investigación u oportunidades de investigación?

Claudio Jaramillo-Yanquepe
University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

This article is a configurative literature review that aims to synthesize available research on English as a foreign language education, undertaken specifically in Chilean high-school settings. Drawing on a pre-COVID-19 research corpus, I identified a limited number of concordant accounts ($n = 23$) published during the last decade. I used a critical interpretive synthesis methodology which yielded three research fields ranging from didactics to socio-structural problematics. The synthesis shows that the research addresses curricular aspects devoid of socio-political and historical contexts, emphasizing primarily teachers' teaching tensions and challenges. Finally, I discuss the English as a foreign language research limitations and implications for the Chilean context, for which I suggest some innovations to broaden future inquiry critically.

Keywords: Chilean high school, critical interpretive synthesis, English as a foreign language, EFL research

Este artículo es una revisión configurativa que apunta a sintetizar la literatura sobre la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera específicamente en contextos de enseñanza media en Chile. A partir de un corpus pre-COVID-19, identifiqué un número acotado de estudios conexos ($n = 23$) publicados durante la última década. Utilicé el método de síntesis interpretativa crítica la cual reveló tres campos de investigación que abarcan temas desde la didáctica hasta problemáticas socio-estructurales. La síntesis interpretativa crítica demuestra que la investigación se centra preponderantemente en áreas curriculares ligadas a las tensiones y desafíos del docente y su enseñanza. Finalmente, discuto las implicancias y limitaciones en la investigación en inglés como lengua extranjera en el contexto chileno, para las cuales sugiero algunas innovaciones con el fin de ampliarla críticamente.

Palabras clave: educación secundaria chilena, inglés como lengua extranjera, investigación en ILE, síntesis interpretativa crítica

Claudio Jaramillo-Yanquepe https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8520-7104 · Email: Claudio.jaramillo@mail.utoronto.ca

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Introduction

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017) reports that "[educational] research activity is incipient in Chile" (p. 48). This observation is consistent with English as a foreign language (EFL) education research. Barahona (2016) and Lizasoain (2017) point out that, overall, research is scant. Indeed, EFL inquiry, particularly in high school settings, is even more limited. High-school EFL education has so far been largely overlooked, thus, needing more critical and in-depth inquiry.

Interestingly, this high school research shortage is particularly relevant because it signposts unexplored areas requiring critical examination that are fundamental for teacher education programmes, curriculum, and policy. Additionally, researching these areas entails unpacking a wider debate among researchers and school communities. In this article, I suggest that a critical synthesis of the current research findings of high-school EFL classroom life can help set focalized informed parameters to characterize and discuss fundamental aspects of its complex reality. These parameters may bring directionality to such inquiry and future pedagogy-oriented attempts to explore how we understand these classrooms, what happens in them, what their outcomes are, how they are investigated, and how they serve as reference for future teacher training. I also argue that we need to examine current research boundaries. They can compel inquiry initiatives to expand and crystalize additional areas beyond the prevailing linguistics-oriented paradigms.

Given the lack of more comprehensive EFL research in high-school classrooms, high-stakes statistical information from standardized testing, such as SIMCE Inglés,[1] has been the primary source of data (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2018). These data have been gathered during three time periods, 2010, 2012, and 2014. Since 2017, the source has been replaced by the National English Language Study.[2] As placeholders, both tests' purpose has been to serve curricular navigation and other educational support initiatives based on the results collected from Grade-11 students across Chile. In general, their results have provided us with fragmentary descriptions of students' low linguistic attainment. Even though being system-level assessment instruments (Creswell, 2016) with an ample sampling, there remain several aspects of the EFL classroom life about which relatively little is known.

Aims

In this article, I synthesize the available EFL studies undertaken in high school settings using a critical interpretive synthesis (CIS; Gough et al., 2012). Further research in this area would help position high schools as a pivot for inquiry to shape further explorations. I hope with this CIS to help depict more thoroughly what happens in Chilean high-school EFL classrooms. The aims of this article are:

1. to map the broader English language education research landscape in Chile.
2. to generate a critical interpretive synthesis of the evidence obtained from high-school research accounts.

Method

Syntheses are useful in various ways. They can account for how knowledge is generated and how much we know, thus providing foundations for engaging in new research endeavours (Depraetere

1 SIMCE stands for *System Measurement of Quality of Education*. This is a nation-scale standardized test administered in Chilean schools since 1988. Its English battery was first administered in 2010.

2 National English Language Study (*Estudio Nacional de Inglés*) is a purposive representative test that replaced the SIMCE Inglés as of 2017.

et al., 2020; Flemming, 2010; Gough et al., 2012; Hannes & Macaitis, 2012). Gough et al. (2012) also note that reviews expand broader discussions "with explicit assumptions and leveraging many studies rather than debates about individual studies" (p. 12). In this study, the mosaic metaphor is essential to understand and visualize the nature of a synthesis. I undertook a configurative review approach, which "can be likened to the patterns in a mosaic, in which the findings from each study are slotted together to form a coherent whole" (Gough et al., 2012, p. 51), using as method a CIS (Depraetere et al., 2020; Flemming, 2010).

The CIS is an approach that "draws on traditional systematic review methodology whilst incorporating a qualitative tradition of enquiry [and that] enables the generation of theory with strong explanatory power" (Flemming, 2010, p. 202). As my primary method, the synthesis of qualitative, mixed, and quantitative evidence becomes compatible regardless of their distinct epistemological origins. The CIS develops output from the evidence collected into a synthesizing argument (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005; Flemming, 2010). Schick-Makaroff et al. (2016) review the main approaches to research synthesis to combine research findings. This meta-analysis approach is critical in that it explicitly allows an interpretative process, providing new directions in research in a way primary authors have not previously considered (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005; Flemming, 2010; Schick-Makaroff et al., 2016).

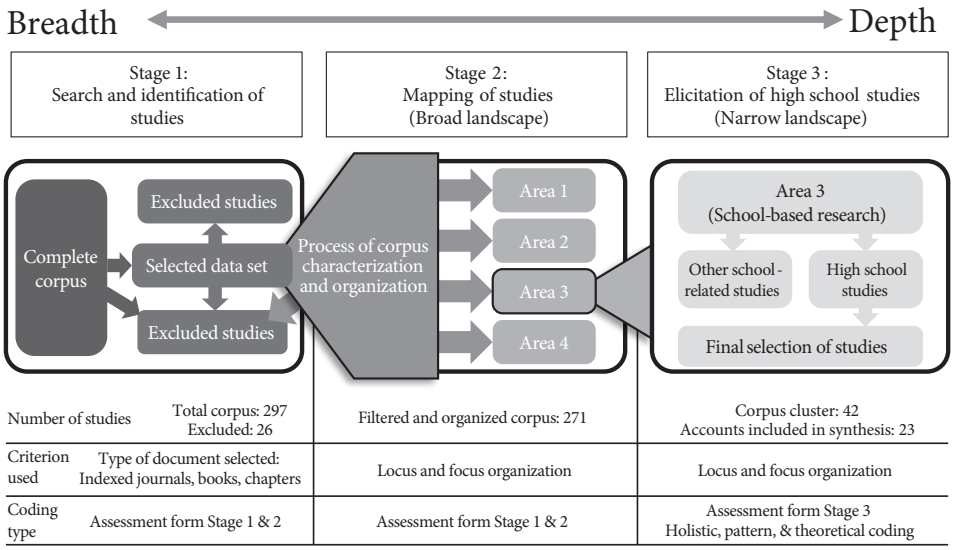
Accordingly, a critical paradigm underpins this review. I situate this article on the premise that facts can never be isolated from their ideological inscriptions and sociohistorical conditions in which they take place (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Kincheloe et al., 2018; Lincoln et al., 2011). Also, I intend to signal critical aspects of research as a form to understand—and enact—power relations (Kincheloe et al., 2018; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). I approach facts within a value-laden context. Therefore, such facts are read, interpreted, and discussed using this critical scope.

This synthesis is also exploratory in nature. I have reviewed the literature extensively to identify relevant sources—no previous synthesis reports, of any type, on English language teaching (ELT) research education existing in the Chilean context. The findings and the discussion are presented in a narrative format (Hoon, 2013) rather than as a statistical aggregative report (Garg et al., 2008). Although simple descriptive statistical figures will be used to portray some of the findings, this qualitative discussion is centred on the studies' synthesis implications. In this report, I use the terms *secondary school* and *high school* indistinctively.

Stages of the Corpus Construction Process

The corpus analyzed is the result of a two-year review and systematization of literature I conducted as part of my doctoral dissertation. I proceeded in three stages: first, the identification of studies; second, the mapping of research areas in the corpus; and third, the organization of high-school studies to perform a closer examination. I provide a two-layered characterization based on the studies collected: breadth (in a broad research landscape in less detail) and depth (in a narrow landscape in higher detail). The process of data collection, and the stages of organization and analysis are depicted in Figure 1, which I will explain in the subsequent sections.

Figure 1. Process of Collection, Organization, and Selection of High School Based Studies



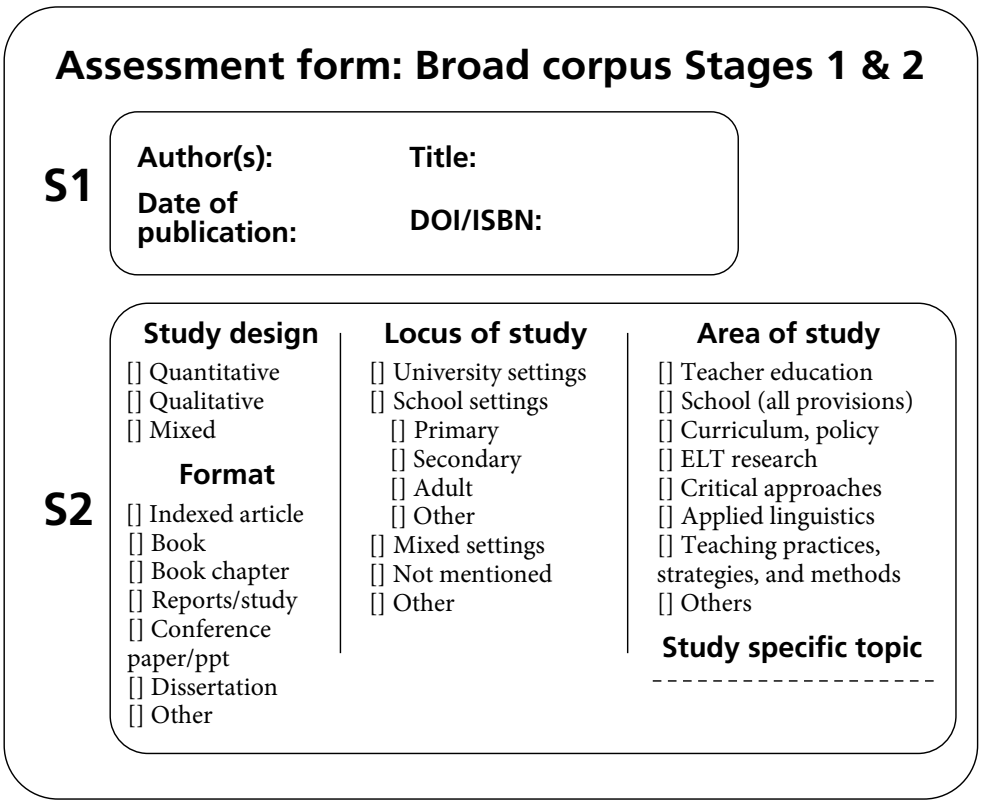
Stage 1: Search and Identification of Data

The first stage consisted of a purposive and flexible search and identification of studies conducted in English language education at all levels and settings within the Chilean context published until November 2020. WOS, ERIC, EBSCO, SciELO, and Scopus databases were consulted. Additionally, I complemented the search with examinations of journal websites, online repositories, and other academic websites through which researchers disseminate their academic work (e.g., Academia, ResearchGate). Once the broader corpus was finally constructed, I started with its appraisal.

Additionally, I conducted a comprehensive review of the various academic formats identified, including all types of sources and documents available, that is, articles, books, studies, reports, and conference papers available in online repositories. The refined criterion I applied to this corpus was the revision of the documents' purposes. This revision resulted in selecting only empirical accounts over more informal documents, such as EFL magazines, reports, and other studies in which research methodologies were not explicit. As a result, three academic formats were considered: Indexed articles, books, and chapter contributions in edited books. By indexed articles, I refer to an analysis of short extension inquiry based on empirical evidence related to an educational problem that is searchable in available databases (Corvalán & Ruffinelli, 2007; Dochartaigh, 2012). In the case of books, only those reporting complete research accounts were selected (e.g., Glas, 2013).

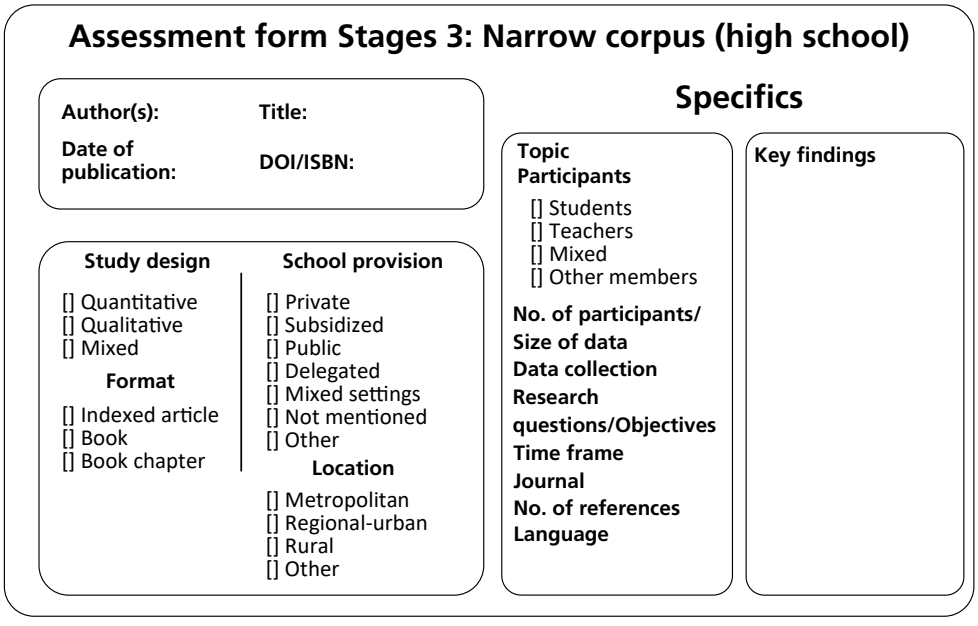
Stage 2: Mapping the Broader Research Landscape

The second stage of this corpus construction consisted of mapping the collected documents, recording their date and area of study. At this stage, I did not intend to elicit important details or theoretical nuances, but simply to identify their general information to outline clusters of similar studies. I defined the initial sampling criterion by adapting Hawker et al.'s (2002) analytical framework, which I display in Figure 2. I pre-defined categories that later resulted in the definition of the broader areas of research interest. The initial strategy to set a preliminary order was the publication year. The chronological organization enormously facilitated the snowball search to trace further references. The assessment form was used to characterize the studies. This organization quickly yielded a more refined delineation of boundaries among the different EFL research areas. Table 2, which is provided later in this paper, offers detailed results.



Note. Adapted from Hawker et al.'s (2002) analytical framework.

Figure 3. Assessment Form Stage 3



Stage 3: The Narrow Research Landscape Construction

Once I organized the broad landscape clusters, the school studies cluster was thoroughly reviewed. The number of micro corpus studies found ($n = 42$) was more straightforward to arrange, given its lower quantity than other larger clusters. In this stage, the identification of the focal studies required a third criterion to identify their locus. The studies locus allowed identifying three settings: primary, secondary, and mixed educational settings. After compartmentalizing the total number of high-school studies, a similar process was used to organize the broader landscape: chronological organization and the analysis of structural components. In Figure 3, I present the criteria used. Additionally, the analysis in this stage required several rounds of coding, including holistic, pattern, and theoretical coding (Saldaña, 2009) to review the studies' findings.

Limitations

Some limitations encountered in the organization of studies were the oftentimes blurriness in the formalities, such as misleading titles, unclear abstracts, and an opaque research design missing relevant specification about the context and participants. Thorough examination of concepts was required in some articles describing "teachers' beliefs" or "applied linguistics" to determine the study's locus (not always explicit, e.g., either in schools or universities). Once the study's setting was determined, the second filter (the focus) was applied. This focus consisted of discriminating studies based on their inquiry focus, that is, whether they reported sheer language analysis, or the analysis of a pedagogical situation embedded into a high school setting. In these cases, the latter case was selected for Stage 3.

Findings

This section will follow the same structure as the three stages, that is, from the broader to the narrower landscapes' findings. I will consider the stages' organization to present the findings, that is, stage one, the general search results; stage two, the thematic mapping of studies; and stage three, the characterization of high school research.

The Broader Landscape

The final scrutinized corpus resulted in 272 documents. Of the total 298 documents that were found (which included all kinds of publications), only 26 were discarded because they did not comply with the primary selection criterion (i.e., type of publication). Additionally, their sources and purpose differed significantly with research accounts and format, such as PowerPoint presentations, book reviews, editorials, essays, ELT magazine articles, agency reports, and dissertations.

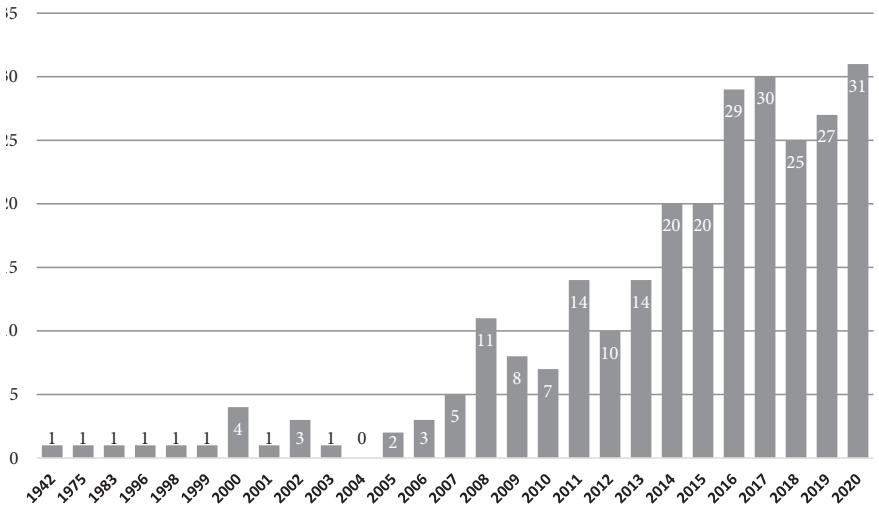
The spread shown in Figure 4 is the outcome of Stages 1 (the search) and 2 (the mapping). The spread shows the available online published English language research collected, ranging from 1942 to 2020. The numbers included in the bars represent the number of indexed publications, books, and book chapters. The findings show a gradually increasing production of scientific work in the field. This growth in publication coincides with other macro reports on research in Latin America, which also show a similar systematic expansion (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2019).

Although the EFL Chilean research production is not extensive in terms of quantity, it has sustained a steady growth. The most preferred publication formats identified are the article, followed by the edited book chapter contribution, and finally, books. The average number of publications is 10 per year. In Table 1, I present the publication preference distribution.

Table 1. Format Preference in Publications

Type	Books	Chapters	Articles	Final corpus
n	7	25	240	272
%	2.6	9.2	88.2	100.0

Figure 4. Spread of the Analysed EFL Research 1942–2020



Eight thematic areas were identified in the corpus. In Table 2, I have mapped a broad summary of Stage 2 assessment, which consisted of categorizing areas with a focus on research interest and a thematic emphasis description. These areas served to configure the map of the nature of inquiry in the broadest Chilean ELT field. For this paper's purpose, I only focus on the cluster related to high schools. I present this broader data set to underpin some claims later in this paper. However, I would like to draw attention to some of the points found at this synthesis stage. It is important to note that over 65% of the research has been conducted within the boundaries of teacher education programmes at universities, including Area 1, *ELT teacher education*, 2, *teaching methodology*, and 4, *applied linguistics*. In the case of the applied linguistic area, 89.5% of the inquiry was undertaken in undergraduate programmes. These results frame the inquiry agenda in the Chilean context as teacher-education centred. These results frame many of the findings I discuss in the following sections concerning the high school studies.

Table 2. Summary of Pivotal EFL Research Interests

Research area of interest	Broader themes and emphases	Frequency	%
1. EFL teacher education	Teacher-student's beliefs, cognitions, practicum stage, teacher education practices, professional identity development in teacher education programmes.	105	38.6
2. Teaching methodology	Language teaching strategies, group dynamics, teaching methods, activities and practices, types of tasks, assessment.	59	21.7
3. School (all provisions)	Pedagogical focus on motivation, teaching methodology, strategies and educational beliefs, socioeconomic conditions.	42	15.4
4. Applied linguistics	The learning of some linguistic items within the context of teacher education, language form, and focus learning.	39	14.3
5. Curriculum and language policy	A heterogeneous topic that comprehends material design, standards, syllabus design, the state of EFL in Chile, and other legally related issues, implementation, discussion or evaluation of initiatives in EFL education.	10	3.7
6. Critical approaches	Exploration of neoliberalism impact on the identities and roles teachers fulfill in the Chilean society.	8	2.9

Research area of interest	Broader themes and emphases	Frequency	%
7. Other humanistic approaches (Sociolinguistics in education, pedagogy)	Cultural aspects of EFL provision and other sociolinguistic aspects.	6	2.2
8. ELT research	New aspect in the local EFL milieu, and with a clear focus on action research as the main discussion topic.	3	1.1
		272	100.0

The Narrow Landscape: EFL High-School Studies

One of the readily observable characteristics of the general EFL school research—with primary, mixed levels, and secondary considered all together—is its limited number. The school cluster is divided into three subareas: primary education ($n = 16$, 38.1%), high school education ($n = 23$, 54.8%) and mixed accounts ($n = 3$, 7.1%). The mixed accounts' findings were not always distinctive in relation to either the type of school (e.g., public–private) or the (sometimes mixed) teaching level (primary, secondary, university, and language institute). As such, these findings were discarded. In Figure 5, I contrast the available broad landscape and the EFL high school proportions per year.

The nature of EFL research conducted in high-school settings differs in many aspects. This variability involved a more detailed analysis of its thematic variability, contexts, choice of methods, procedures, and theoretical framing. In Table 3, I display the Stage 3 final corpus of high school studies search. Together they provide findings that help us visualize the little variability of foci, regardless of their diverse nature, centred mostly on teachers, teaching, and to a lesser extent, on the students. Most of these studies relate to action-oriented and decision-making challenges that teachers regularly face in their classrooms, addressed from their perspectives.

The research traditions are well balanced among the EFL high-school studies, as presented in Table 4. Several reflections emerge from this panoptic review of the research on secondary school realities. I have summarised the studies following the research traditions to reach a holistic synthesis of the research findings. I begin this report addressing the mixed methods tradition ($n = 5$), followed by quantitative ($n = 7$), and I conclude with the qualitative ($n = 7$) contributions, which include non-empirical works ($n = 2$) that do not make explicit their orientation, yet they can be allocated in this group. Then, I continue with a critical synthesis of findings.

Figure 5. Stacked Contrast Between EFL Broader and School Research Accumulation

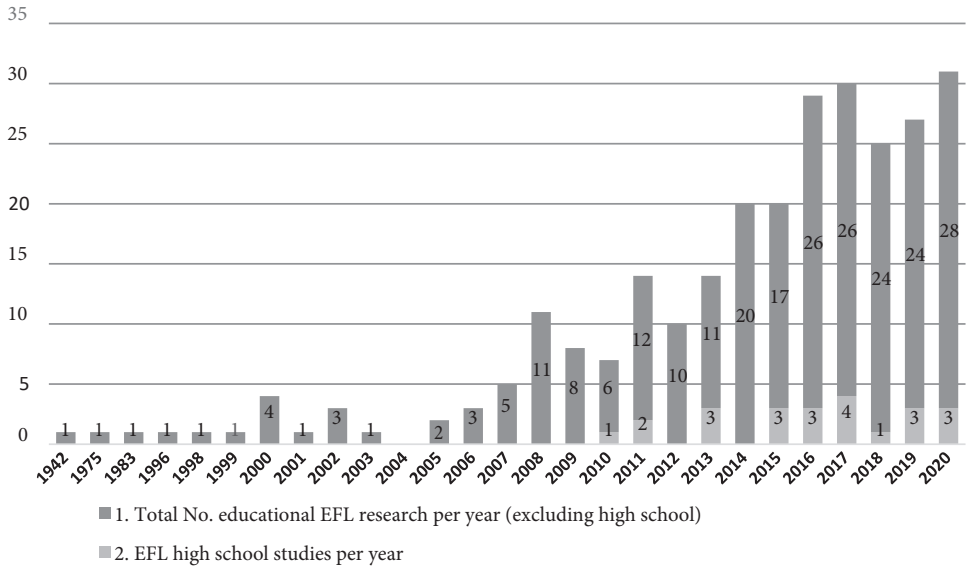


Table 3. Summary of Chilean High School EFL Research

Author(s)	Year	Title of publication	Approach	Type of publication	Central topic	Journal/ Editorial & language
Díaz et al.	2010	A snapshot of a group of English teachers' conceptions about English teaching and learning in Chilean public education	Mixed	Article	Teachers' cognition	*Folios* (Spanish)
Díaz et al.	2011	Comparing teaching styles and personality types of EFL instructors in the public and private sectors	Does not report	Article	Teaching styles	*Profile* (English)
Díaz	2011	Exploring knowledge of English-speaking strategies in 8th and 12th graders	Quant.	Article	Students' knowledge of speaking strategies	*Profile* (English)
Correa et al.	2013	The impact of explicit feedback on EFL high school students engaged in writing tasks	Qual.	Article	Teachers' feedback provision in writing tasks	*Profile* (English)
Glas	2013	Teaching English in Chile, a study of teacher perceptions of their professional identity, student motivation and pertinent learning contents	Mixed	Book	Teacher identity explorations in EFL classrooms	Peter Lang (English)
Kormos & Kiddle	2013	The role of socioeconomic factors in motivation to learn English as a foreign language: The case of Chile	Quant.	Article	English language learning motivations	*System* (English)
Gómez & Pérez	2015	Chilean 12th graders' attitudes towards English as a foreign language	Quant.	Article	Students' attitudes to English learning	*Colombian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (English)
Díaz et al.	2015	A case study on EFL teachers' beliefs about the teaching and learning of English in public education	Qual.	Article	Teachers' beliefs	*Porta Linguarum* (English)

Author(s)	Year	Title of publication	Approach	Type of publication	Central topic	Journal/ Editorial & language
Glas	2016	Opening up 'spaces for manoeuvre': English teacher perspectives on learner motivation	Qual.	Article	Teachers' perspectives on students' motivation	*Research Papers on Education* (English)
Sato & Viveros	2016	Interaction or collaboration? Group dynamics in the foreign language classroom	Qual.	Chapter	Forms of interaction moves and collaborative patterns in peer interaction	John Benjamins (English)
De la Barra van Treek	2016	Cooperative learning in English language classes in four subsidized schools in Santiago	Mixed	Article	Variables affecting classroom management and teaching	*Pensamiento Educativo* (Spanish)
Pereira & Ramos	2016	Design of textbooks for teaching English: A curriculum proposal	Does not report	Article	Textbook design	*Colombian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (Spanish)
Saavedra & Brauchy	2017	The use of digital video making projects to enhance motivation in the English foreign language teaching high school classroom	Qual.	Article	Use of video projects tasks to enhance motivation	*The LEC Journal* (English)
Correa et al.	2017	Relationship between group seating arrangement in the classroom and student participation in speaking activities in EFL classes at a secondary school in Chile	Qual.	Article	Sitting arrangement during speaking activities	*Folios* (English)
Walczak et al.	2017	Which factors affect English language attainment? A study of school students in Chile. Impact of Cambridge English exams and English language learning programmes in a variety of contexts	Quant.	Article	Factors affecting language attainment in the SIMCE 2014	*Research Notes* (English)

Author(s)	Year	Title of publication	Approach	Type of publication	Central topic	Journal/ Editorial & language
Jorquera et al.	2017	High school students' affective reaction to English speaking activities	Qual.	Article	Exploration of attitudes in speaking activities	*HOW* (English)
Cárcamo	2018	Types of listening comprehension promoted in the Chilean EFL textbook Global English	Qual.	Article	Listening comprehension activities in textbooks	*Colombian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (English)
Farías & Radu	2019	From looking north to participating globally as empowered users of the language: International posture in Chilean learners of English	Mixed	Chapter	Students' postures about English	Eduel (English)
Walper	2019	An exploration of Chilean EFL teachers' interactional practices in feedback provision	Quant.	Chapter	Interactional practices during feedback provision	Cambridge Scholar Publishing (English)
De la Barra & Carbone	2020	Bridging inequality: Cooperative learning through literature in two vulnerable schools in Santiago	Qual.	Article	Cooperative learning through the use of literature	*Profile* (English)
Cárcamo	2020	Readability and types of questions in Chilean EFL high school textbooks	Quant.	Article	Readability inconsistencies in high school textbooks	*TESOL Journal* (English)
Cancino & Díaz	2020	Exploring the code-switching behaviours of Chilean EFL high school teachers: A function-focused approach	Quant.	Article	Teachers' code-switching	*Profile* (English)
Sato & Oyadenel	2020	"I think that is a better way to teach but …": EFL teachers' conflicting beliefs about grammar teaching	Mixed	Article	Teachers' beliefs on grammar teaching	*System* (English)

Table 4. Methodology Preferences per Research Domain in EFL High School Studies

Methodology	Number of publications	%	Methodological design choices	Language
Quantitative	9	39.1	Experimental and quasi experimental Psychometric scale measures (Likert, surveys) Correlational measures Descriptive statistics Non-participant observation	English 100%
Qualitative	7	30.4	Descriptive and interpretive approaches Action research Case studies Interviews Document analysis	English 100%
Mixed	5	21.7	Psychometric scale measures (Likert, surveys) Correlational measures Descriptive statistics Interviews Class observations	English 60% (n = 3) Spanish 40% (n = 2)
Non-empirical	2	8.1	Descriptive document analysis (with qualitative orientation)	English 50% (n = 1) Spanish 50% (n = 1)
Total	23	100		

First, the mixed-methods studies have been relatively continual across time. Their findings are diverse, holistic, and speak primarily about how EFL pedagogy is implemented. They provide evidence on teaching conditions in high-school settings and the relations between practices and the beliefs that inform those practices. A recurrent theme in nearly all the studies examined is the dissonance between teachers' practices, belief systems, and discourses. In these reports, teachers' identities are reported as constant-struggling selves that strive within constrained spaces—schools and classrooms—ruled by tensions and contradictions and inconsistencies. These studies have provided evidence drawing on teachers' discourses, beliefs, and practices (De la Barra van Treek, 2016; Díaz et al., 2010; Díaz et al., 2012; Glas, 2013; Sato & Oyanedel, 2020). Additionally, these studies consistently suggest the gap between school reality and teacher training as an unattended issue (Díaz et al., 2012; Sato & Oyadenel, 2020). They report how teacher training programmes do not link the schools with their sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts. These contradictions have also been reported elsewhere in teacher education settings and policy analysis studies (see Lizasoain, 2017; and Martin & Rosas-Maldonado, 2019, for further discussions). Certainly, this misalignment is an important issue for future research.

The Chilean quantitative studies stand out in their large sampling techniques in relation to the other approaches. They have been relevant for generating more and farther-reaching synchronous portraits of the Chilean high school EFL population. High-school EFL quantitative inquiry is generally bounded to the pedagogical outcomes and linguistic performance in the English class. To some degree, these studies also map classrooms and schools demographically, that is, who those people

are. An interesting aspect of these studies is that most of them are focused exclusively on the students.

The quantitative findings, and subsequent discussions, establish a strong correspondence between an EFL pedagogy and the surrounding immediacy of the socioeconomic and sociocultural spaces in which students learn English (Kormos & Kiddle, 2013). For instance, Walczak et al. (2017) report that the socioeconomic background is a "strong predictor of language attainment" (p. 64), raising concerns to look at classrooms and their challenges embedded in particular socioeconomic conditions (e.g., private and public settings) and geographical (e.g., urban and rural) contexts. Nevertheless, these studies' contributions are descriptive in their nature. The impracticality of complementary narrative inquiry prevents us from understanding the causality of such characterizations. Other studies in this approach focus on pedagogical dynamics (Díaz et al., 2011; Walper, 2019) and linguistic factors (Cancino & Díaz, 2020; Cárcamo, 2020).

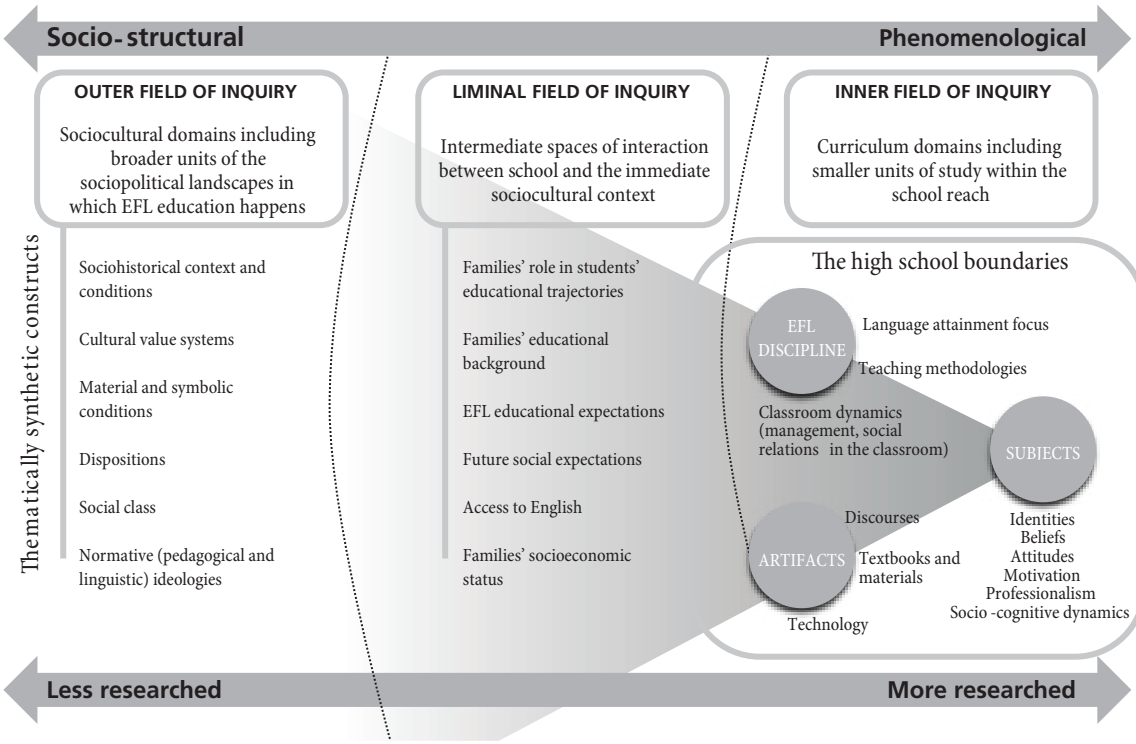
Qualitative inquiry has zeroed in the tensions among the high school system and the members' professional relationships and a comprehensive gaze on the particularities of the contexts, focusing on interaction between teachers and students. These studies also examine the pedagogical relations among the development of teaching skills, the mediating instruments (e.g., textbooks), and the socio-cognitive foundations of these groups' interactions. Some of these works provide compelling findings. For example, in Díaz et al. (2012), teachers' identity tensions are explored. Teachers are reported as dealing with the tensions between being either educators or linguists as separate components of their professional identities. In a similar tone, and in more depth, Glas (2013) provides an analysis of the professional views of teachers who experience tensions and negotiate with their social spaces, beliefs, disciplinary knowledge, socioeconomic conditions, and material support, which create a sensation of powerlessness. As in the mixed methods studies, teachers are similarly described as holding inconsistencies between their discursive repertoires, pedagogical actions, and beliefs. An overriding characteristic reported is that communicative language teaching underpinnings dominate their teaching discourses but not their teaching practices (De la Barra van Treek, 2016; Díaz et al., 2010, Díaz et al., 2015). These inconsistencies are suggested to be contextually and personally constrained.

CIS Outcomes: Mapping Fields of Inquiry

The map of inquiry fields, shown in Figure 6, results from the thematically synthetic constructs emerging from the research findings' codification nodes and their connections. Subsequently, the synthetic constructs and the studies' interpretation were combined, producing specific topics that led towards larger theoretical clusters. The three distinct fields of inquiry identified were (a) the outer, (b) the liminal, and (c) the inner. The conceptualization I used emerged from the data during the analysis, that is, I have not used predefined conceptualization to interpret or classify the data. These three fields are configured within a continuum that ranges from themes rooted in structural-functional views to more phenomenological perspectives of EFL education. Their boundaries are well-defined. For example, teachers' classroom management research findings are rarely associated with social dynamics or issues of power dynamics in the classrooms but to practical methodological concerns.

First, the *outer field* considers aspects of the sociopolitical world (Lo Bianco, 2008). This inquiry field is the least represented, and it consists of all the broader sociopolitical research areas that inscribe the normative, cultural, ideological, and social parameters, determining value systems and material and symbolic conditions in relation to EFL education. The findings reported in this field, as in Farías and Radu (2019) and Walczak et al. (2017), point to the correspondence between social class and language attainment opportunities and the sets of values that sustain the relations with English as a world dominant language. Nevertheless, EFL education is generally presented as detached from its sociohistorical conditions.

Figure 6. Fields of Inquiry Map in High School EFL Education



Next is the *liminal field* of inquiry. This field encompasses those intermediate spaces in which relationships between the broader sociopolitical landscape and the school members operate. This field includes the connections between youth learning experiences and their immediate sociocultural environments (e.g., students' family sociocultural backgrounds). One key concept in this field (and also mentioned in the other two fields studies) is *access*, which seems to be a recurrent metonymy that needs careful unpacking and cautious exploration.

A better understanding may lead to deeper comprehension of issues related to discourses that justify and sustain segregation, inequality, vulnerability, and learning attainment failure (De la Barra & Carbone, 2020; Glas, 2008; Gómez & Pérez, 2015; Kormos & Kiddle, 2013; Walczak et al., 2017). English enjoys high social value, which sustains English as a desired "tool" across all the socioeconomic groups in our society (Glas, 2008). Consequently, the "access to better opportunities" that the English language grants is reported as being construal in a way that shapes identity, world visions, and expected (socio)economic paths (Glas, 2008; Kormos & Kiddle, 2013; Kruglanski & Higgins, 2007; Matear, 2008).

The third and last field of inquiry, the *inner field*, includes three clusters: EFL discipline, teacher cognition, and artifacts. They narrow the focus on the instrumental aspect of teaching, that is, teaching methods and strategies, classroom management, use of materials, quality of teaching delivery, and students' engagement (Correa et al., 2017; Saavedra & Brauchy, 2017; Walper, 2019). They also incorporate various aspects of dynamics involving interaction, negotiation, decision making, resistance, and change (Farías & Radu, 2019; Gómez & Pérez, 2015). At the core of this field, there is a clear focus on subjects, particularly on the teachers. Issues revolve around characterizing their cognitions: who these teachers are, how they think, how they perform,

and what instruments they implement to reach their aims (Cárcamo, 2020; Díaz et al., 2010; Walper, 2019). As a secondary subject, we can find some discrete descriptions about students, mostly characterized and reported through psychometric scales, as in Gómez and Pérez (2015).

In relation to the formal aspects of high-school research, the CIS, and in particular three fields' sum of evidence, signals prosperous directions regarding new research methods, design and opportunities to be revisited, hoping that they may trigger further critical research on issues relevant to the schools. The overall characterization shows that:

1. Research on high-school EFL education is recent (2010–2020) and scant.
2. Studies vary widely in depth, scope, complexity, and reflection.
3. Research about EFL education undertaken in high school is teacher-centred.
4. Research design is consistently balanced among the three traditions (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed).
5. The contextualization of the studies is oftentimes unclear and brief.
6. None of the studies reviewed uses participatory methods or polyvocal designs.

The final outcomes of this critical interpretive synthesis of the Chilean high-school EFL research in the synthesis below, contains the interpretative portion, and as such, I provide the new configuration of the findings in the studies discussed, which suggest that:

1. The conditions and dispositions in EFL education have changed very little in ten years.
2. The communities' socioeconomic conditions are a powerful force that profoundly constrains teachers' decisions, students' *fate*, and the school structures in terms of control and power-share. Teachers struggle with these underlying socioeconomic forces, which seem to cause their disassociation between their practices, beliefs, and discourses, thus affecting their imaginaries and pedagogical expectations.
3. EFL teachers are little prepared to understand and contest socioeconomic condition forces. Consequently, they readily resort to behaviorist teaching methods as a form of control, and seemingly, as professional validation mechanisms.
4. A factor underlying part of this dissonance is the lack of updated disciplinary knowledge, still rooted in the earlier stages of the communicative approach merged with elements of grammar-centred/translation teaching.
5. Secondary students' perceptions are characterized as contradictory. Students' motivation is generally low, yet their attitude towards EFL education is positive and favorable. Although they acknowledge the relevance of the English language in their future careers and lives, they exert little effort in learning. This may be the result of an (EFL) educational system that struggles with inconsistencies.
6. Supporting materials for the EFL class, in particular textbooks, need better alignment with the diverse educational realities and needs of the country.

In the following section, I will discuss some considerations I deem relevant in relation to these synthesis findings and the Chilean EFL contextual particularities to finally conclude with a reflection.

Discussion

This CIS set out to examine the overall Chilean ELT research advancement, focusing on high school studies. The overall ELT research has steadily increased from 2000 to 2020, unlike high school studies, which have seen meagre growth. The CIS also shows that several essential areas in high-school EFL education remain unexplored in this respect.

The EFL high schools research pivots primarily around teachers' perspectives and teaching dynamics.

When the focus is placed on students, this pivots around their dispositions, attitudes, and motivation. Accordingly, the analyzed research corpus results converge on the curriculum implementation, although not necessarily connected to the national curriculum itself, which remains unscrutinized. Given the teacher-bound nature of the available research, addressing the curricular policy may help understand the multiple dissonances surrounding pedagogical practices, particularly addressing the identitary and sociopolitical dimension of EFL education and its ultimate purposes for the Chilean society. These angles may also help expand our understandings of the EFL educational complexities in radical ways beyond the interests of practices grounded on verbocentrism, that is, a restricted approach centred on language proficiency as the dominant curricular goal.

Understanding high school-based research, as a powerful belief-shaping instrument, could help outline the exercise of educators' pedagogical hermeneutics. What information do future teachers receive for their professional development? Is it only informed by the international experience? What is the role of local research? The relevance of empirical evidence from local school settings is utterly necessary to appraise and critique curricular development decisions, policies, and above all, better teacher education program alignments with the local educational system. Sato and Loewen (2019) argue that EFL pedagogy may benefit significantly from research. High-school teachers' needs primarily revolve around (urgent) pragmatic and complex questions deeply rooted in knowledge repertoires that need constant updating (Bellei et al., 2020; Herrada et al., 2012; Joram, 2007; Manzi et al., 2011). Thus, a situated knowledge-oriented EFL discipline, enacted through local inquiry-based practices, may gradually propel critical approaches to understanding and transforming their educational landscapes. The question is then how such features could be effectively articulated *collaboratively*. Thus, the importance of imagining gradual forms of collaborative inquiry-based practices.

The value of CISS is that they illuminate future initiatives to better align research with local needs. Indeed, all these new directions may contribute to rethinking EFL research and pedagogy in high schools, particularly considering the COVID-19 pandemic hiatus. Revisiting EFL education in high schools in light of covidian times will yield new perspectives on researching the prevailing construals. Some of them involve what key factors mean for EFL education, such as successful relationships in the classroom, teaching practices, learning experiences, the influence of the abysmal socioeconomic gap between social classes, and technology access. Most likely, these dimensions will need further revisiting considering the covidian conditions. This CIS also points at a pending task, questioning the currently implemented EFL curricula and their impact on the communities.

Regarding EFL practices in research, they are still profoundly entrenched in the binary relationship between researcher and researched. This limitation is another opportunity to better understand EFL research repertoires by selecting non-traditional research methods to further integrate voices. For instance, using polyvocal and collaborative inquiry research methods (e.g., duoethnography, bricolage, collaborative research) is a possibility to strengthen critical ELT pedagogy in a move towards more equal and sustainable research practices.

Furthermore, incorporating critical and intersectional frameworks such as decolonial, racial and feminist approaches, to name but a few, would also enrich our interpretations of the context. By adding to this equation the geographical location and the diversity of sociocultural contexts across Chile, EFL educational research may also take an enriching turn involving minorities, racialized and Indigenous communities, and rural educational communities. Such views grant a fertile landscape to embed criticality and social justice as part of the EFL research agenda to counter prevailing positivist logic, challenge colonizing epistemologies, and neoliberal capi-

talist interests in educational research (Casassus, 2010; Giroux, 2001; Habermas, 1968/1971; Quijano, 2007; de Sousa Santos, 2016).

Conclusions: Not Seeing the Forest for the Trees?

If you want to research us, you can go home. If you have come to accompany us, if you think our struggle is also your struggle, we have plenty of things to talk about. (Glesne, 2007, p. 171)

In this article, I have mapped, synthesized, and discussed indexed EFL high-school research. Critically framed research remains utterly necessary to defy the rigid patterns in the current research cannons in various ways, such as exploring those classrooms beyond the logic of the language-attainment-only paradigm. A social turn in our EFL high school research—and pedagogy—would involve revisiting our secondary classrooms' overt and latent structures of power, inequality, marginalization, ideological underpinnings, and forms of oppression. How will these characteristics in high schools evolve as a result of the pandemic? Perhaps, and hopefully, new meaningful possibilities of linking school and academia may emerge.

Finally, taking stock of critically comprehensive research in high schools may allow us to understand that sheer teacher-centred research may only contribute to a more restrictive understanding of the spaces we are trying to improve. Classrooms are complex social systems that are not only occupied by teachers. Naturally, I do not wish to convey the idea of excluding teachers from the picture; on the contrary, I have argued that the teachers' portrayal in the research accounts addressed in this article is somewhat incomplete. The larger picture is missing; there is more to it, and there is more beyond the instrumental aspects of verbocentric goals. Moreover, broader educational changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic are rendering new dimensions to undertake research. Therefore, amplifying research alternatives and extending participatory opportunities to other members with equal prominence and voice can stimulate us to explore the forest and not just focus on the trees.

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About the Author

Claudio Jaramillo-Yanquepe is a PhD candidate at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, OISE, University of Toronto (Canada). He has been a teacher educator for 15 years. He holds an MA in TEFL and has participated in EFL curriculum design in the Ministry of Education in Chile.

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English Language Preservice Teachers' Identity Construction Within Academic and Other Communities

La construcción de identidad de los futuros docentes de inglés dentro de las comunidades académicas y otras comunidades

Julia Posada-Ortiz
Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia

This article reports on a doctoral research that sought to unveil the identities present in the communities to which four English as a foreign language preservice teachers belong. The study was carried out with a decolonial perspective that included an interepistemic dialogue among narrative inquiry, narrative pedagogy, and the indigenous research paradigm. The main instrument of data collection was autobiographies. The participants and the researcher analysed data jointly. The findings indicate that the preservice teachers' identity construction is mutable and not essentialised. Mutable as it changes over time and not essentialised since it involves social, cultural, and personal dimensions.

Keywords: communities, identity, preservice teacher education, professional identity

Este artículo reporta una investigación de doctorado que buscaba identificar las identidades presentes en las comunidades a las que pertenece un grupo de futuros docentes de inglés. El estudio tiene una perspectiva descolonial que promueve un diálogo interepistémico entre la indagación narrativa, la pedagogía narrativa y el paradigma de la investigación indígena. El principal instrumento de recopilación de datos fue la autobiografía. Los hallazgos indican que la construcción de la identidad de los futuros docentes de inglés es mutable y no esencializada. Mutable ya que cambia con el tiempo y no esencializada ya que involucra dimensiones sociales, culturales y personales.

Palabras clave: comunidades, identidad, formación docente inicial, identidad profesional

Julia Posada-Ortiz https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8919-5286 · Email: jzposadao@udistrital.edu.co

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Introduction

Language teacher identities (LTIs) have gained considerable attention during the last decades (Barkhuizen, 2017; Miller, 2009; Torres-Rocha, 2019; Varghese et al., 2005). According to Norton (2013), identity must be understood in relational terms, a concept that suggests that individual teachers need to join the communities to which they desire to belong (Barkhuizen, 2017). In this sense, LTIs are "struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued by self and by others" (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 7).

The purpose of this article is to show the identities present in the communities to which four English as a foreign language (EFL) preservice teachers belong and how these identities contribute to the construction of their professional identity. I would also like to point that, rather than problematizing the issue of identity that would give way to a doctoral thesis on its own, what I intend in this article is to acknowledge the identities that emerged in the joint analysis that was carried out with the participants that I will call research collaborators. The results of this research might contribute toward enhancing the knowledge of identity construction from a situated perspective.

Within the modern concepts of community, namely, communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), target communities (Higgins, 2012), and imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), the EFL preservice teachers are constructed as apprentices, native speakers vs. non-native speakers. According to Norton (2013), English language learners might resist or accept identities that are presented and sometimes imposed on them, an idea that also applies to EFL preservice teachers. In doing so, these dominant discourses

> construct essentializing discursive "borders" of who individuals "are," and "can" and/or "should" be or become, both in terms of the ownership, learning, use, and instruction of English in ELT, and of community membership in the context in which the ELT is constructed and located. (Yazan & Rudolph, 2018, p. 7)

According to Yazan and Rudolph (2018), we can imagine that essentialisation leaves little room for the EFL preservice teachers' identity construction. However, this would mean ignoring individuals' agency in their learning and decision-making process. The research collaborators of this study presented different identities within the constellation of communities they belong to: a constellation of communities inside and outside scholarship and in which they negotiate different identities.

Due to the characteristics of the research process, the research collaborators presented the identities associated with their daily life and practices. This is the reason why we found identities not only connected to their academic life, but also to other communities, such as their family and interest groups.

In what comes next, I will describe how preservice teachers' identities construction has been studied recently and the commonalities and differences between those studies and the one I carried out.

EFL Preservice Teachers' Identity Construction

Identity construction is the process through which a person comes to define who they are. A key element of identity construction is identification, that is, the extent to which a person internalizes a given identity or part of it as a self-concept (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016).

The EFL preservice teachers' identity construction has been studied in Latin America and Colombia from a local perspective. This perspective has shown the confluence of four different factors. Firstly, the EFL preservice teachers' previous experiences as learners, identification with teachers they admire and whom they want to emulate, construction, de-construction, and re-construction of their projected identities according to the experiences they live day by day, as well as a commitment to grow personally and professionally (Quintero-Polo, 2016; Torres-Cepeda & Ramos-Holguín, 2019). Secondly, social interactions

and experiences within their learning environments that involve professional and personal dimensions (Salinas & Ayala, 2018). Thirdly, overcoming imposed marginalising conditions (Quintero & Guerrero, 2018); negotiations that involve emotions such as love, desire, imagination, and fluidity (Sarasa, 2016; Sarasa & Porta, 2018; Valencia, 2017). Finally, Archanjo et al. (2019) and Viáfara (2016) found that in the construction of their identities, the EFL preservice teachers still struggle to achieve native speaker proficiency.

The studies mentioned above share some similarities to the ones carried out by Timmerman (2009) and Izadinia (2015). According to Timmerman, preservice teachers' identities construction is a longstanding process to develop a professional identity in which role models—especially the secondary school teachers' role—are a key factor due to the vivid memories the preservice teachers have about them. Izadinia found an interplay between mentoring relationships and the development of the professional identity of preservice teachers. Timmerman's and Izadinia's recognition of role models is related to the identifications and disidentifications mentioned by Torres-Cepeda and Ramos-Holguín (2019). Although these studies have focused on identity construction, these views have been constructed from the researchers' perspective and do not acknowledge the identities the preservice teachers identify by themselves as does this study.

The description of the identity construction of the English language preservice teachers made by the scholars mentioned above shows that these studies are moving beyond dichotomies such as master/apprentice, opening the room for an emergent body of literature drawing on socio-cultural studies, and postcolonial, postmodern, and poststructuralist theories in approaching identity (Méndez & Clavijo-Olarte, 2017; Yazan & Rudolph, 2018).

The EFL preservice teachers' identities, present in the communities described by the research collaborators of this study, also move beyond the essential and monolithic identities that the modern view of community envisions for them. The EFL preservice teachers who collaborated on this project belong to a constellation of communities that drive them to undertake agentic initiatives through which they "exert control over [their learning and decision-making processes] and give direction to the course of [their life]" (Huang & Benson, 2013, p. 13).

The research collaborators identified their families, primary and high schools, the university, and transmedia communities, among others, as their main communities. Within these communities, they present different identities through which they develop a sense of self over time that represents what they would like to become, and are afraid of becoming, as well as the attributes they believe they ought to possess. In a nutshell, their possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Context and Research Collaborators

This study was carried out with four students from a public university in Bogotá (Colombia); they are part of an English language teacher education programme that is characterised by a critical pedagogy approach and that has a strong focus on developing the research skills of the EFL preservice teachers (Posada-Ortiz & Garzón-Duarte, 2014). The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 25 years and at the time the data were collected they were in the sixth semester of the programme.

According to the decolonial turn (Grosfoguel, 2011; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, among others), names and concepts matter (Ortiz-Ocaña & Arias-López, 2019); therefore, the participants in this project are called "research collaborators" because they were people with whom I worked throughout the research process and we all were accountable. This is also the reason why, instead of a data collection process and analysis, I will refer to an interaction to exchange and generate knowledge since I carried out a research process *with* the EFL preservice teachers and not *about*

them. I worked with Luna, Marcela, Santiago, and Camilo,[1] who volunteered to take part in this study.

Type of Study

This study is framed within qualitative research. It was designed with a decolonial perspective that includes an interepistemic dialogue (Parra & Gutiérrez, 2018) among narrative pedagogy (NP), narrative inquiry (NI), and the indigenous research paradigm (IRP). Although NP, NI, and the IRP seek to decenter the ways research is conducted by privileging the participants' voices, the first two approaches are framed within the Western qualitative paradigm and the latter incorporates ancestral traditions (Kaltmeier, 2012). These three approaches were used taking into account their intersections and resonances, one of them being the use of narratives to understand how people make sense of their life, place, and history, and how they give shape and meaning to their experiences and life in the interplay with others (Barkhuizen et al., 2013; Goodson & Gill, 2011; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Moreover, they promote the co-construction of knowledge, dialogue, and respect (Posada-Ortiz, 2021). Therefore, NP, NI, and the IRP were useful to understand the identities present in the different communities the preservice teachers belong to from their own perspective and aided the design of the research methodology.

Thus, the interepistemic dialogue allows an expansion of Western qualitative research by incorporating the indigenous epistemology that stands on the principles of holism, equalizing asymmetry, and flux (Kovach, 2018). Holism refers to the connection of the universe around us as human beings, including the spiritual energies. Asymmetry entails negotiation that emulates the balance the universe creates through interconnectivity and coexistence. Equalizing asymmetry minimizes the dual superiority/inferiority relationship and individualism in concepts such as property ownership that characterizes Western research. Flux is about the evidence of the two former principles in our daily lives, which are in constant flux, that is, they come in cycles and follow repetitive patterns. We applied these principles as we agreed on where to carry out the sessions to write our autobiographies and where to publish them. We analysed data together thus letting go of the privileged role of the researcher. This is how we met at a yoga centre, a place that let us approach the project not only as an academic endeavour but also as an encounter in which we learned who we were, are, and want to become. We decided to post the autobiographies in blogs and we agreed on poetic representation as a means to show data.

NP, NI, and the IRP rely on narratives to understand how people make sense of their experiences and, for that reason, narratives are key to understanding identity construction (Barkhuizen, 2011). The main instrument of data collection was the EFL preservice autobiographies because, according to Larrosa (1995), the use of autobiographies in initial teacher education is a pedagogical practice that allows producing and mediating certain subjectivation forms, in which the one who reflects, modifies, and analyses their own experience is the one who writes it. We also used the transcriptions of the sessions that I describe in what comes next.

Interaction to Exchange and Generate Knowledge

The data were collected in five sessions. Each session followed a protocol as a way to show respect towards the research collaborators since everyone knows what they are expected to do. These sessions consisted of a mindfulness exercise, writing about a topic jointly selected, reading aloud the written document, and a session of questions (if there were any) focused on those aspects we had listened to and wanted to know more about in-depth.

The sessions were organized in talking circles (Chilisa, 2012), which is an ancestral tradition that

1 Pseudonyms used to protect the participants' identity.

consists of sitting in a circle to listen to each other without any interruptions; this is why while reading, nobody could be interrupted and the questions came afterwards. This practice allows listening profoundly, which implies active involvement and attention and reciprocity between hearing and being heard as well as seeing and being seen (Santos, 2018). It also allows creating a stimulating environment in which democratic and equal participation diminishes power relations and allows the co-construction of knowledge, similar to what happens when dialogic gatherings are used as a centred-person methodology (Barros-del-Rio et al., 2021). The sessions and autobiographies were carried out in English at the request of Camilo, Luna, Marcela, and Santiago. After each session, we shared some refreshments and left with the commitment to write and modify our autobiographies according to what we had done in the sessions.

Co-Construction of Knowledge

The co-construction of knowledge started when the research collaborators asked me to teach them how to analyse data. I provided them with a chart divided into four columns. In the first column, they had to write their own names; in the second, the communities and identities they had identified in the transcripts and autobiographies; in the third, they had to write the excerpt related to those communities and identities; and, finally, in the fourth column—labelled "comments"—they had to explain what they had written in column two. Each research collaborator analysed their own autobiography and I asked for some clarifications when I did not understand the comments.

Once we identified the communities and identities, we used them as the topics to re-present data by resorting to poetic re-presentation. Leavy (2009) and Richardson (2001) state that when we use poetic re-presentation, we should resort to excerpts from the narratives that we have, transcribing verbatim what the participants say. Thus, this offers the researcher an opportunity to write with the research collaborators and challenge the academic discourse that names, categorizes, and constructs colonized selves (Leavy, 2009).

In this study, we took excerpts from the autobiographies and sessions in which we had identified the communities and identities. I would like to make clear that by the time poetic re-presentation began, Marcela and Santiago had already started to work, so they did not write the poems with me. So I asked for their permission to complement the poems on their behalf and they accepted. Thus, these poems exhibit a dialogic character (Bakhtin, 1984) since they contain Marcela's and Santiago's voices and my perspective. Camilo and Luna, on the other hand, wrote their own poems following the guidelines by Leavy (2009) and Richardson (2001). Each collection of poems received the same name the research collaborators gave to their blogs. Each poem is identified in this paper with Roman numerals (Poem I, Poem II, etc.).

Poetic re-presentation contributes to the preservice teachers' identity construction "as it involves reflective self-construction" (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 140) while selecting and refining the excerpts taken directly from their autobiographies and words from the transcripts (Leavy, 2009).

The communities identified by the research collaborators can be grouped into kinship and interest/academic driven communities. Within the first group, Luna, Marcela, and Santiago identified their families, and in the second group, Camilo, Marcela, and Santiago described their interest communities. These interest communities are transmedia communities, which I define as

> a group of digital media technologies and practices around which young people organize their life as members or not members of communities. These technologies include YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, mobile devices, and video games among others. The practices are related to informal learning, participation, consumption, production, and collaboration in the production of

> knowledge as well as the configuration of old and new communities in social networks. (Posada-Ortiz, 2020)

The primary and secondary schools, the teacher education programme, and the placement school were signaled by Luna, Marcela, Santiago, and Camilo as their academic communities. Within these communities they presented the identities I describe below.

Results

The construction of identity within the communities the preservice teachers belong to were grouped into three main categories: (a) Becoming a Language Teacher Is Linked to my Family and Origin, (b) Exercising Agency in Transmedia Communities, and (c) Developing a Reflective Professional Language Teacher Role.

Becoming a Language Teacher Is Linked to my Family and Origin

Most scholars who have studied the LTI construction process have concluded that it begins due to an interest in the English language or as a result of rewarding experiences with English in the teachers' educational settings (Archanjo et al., 2019; Sarasa, 2016; Torres-Cepeda & Ramos-Holguín, 2019). Although there are similarities in the findings of this study with these assertions, it was also found that the research collaborators expressed that their interest in becoming language teachers began in their families (their kinship communities) and not necessarily in connection with the language but with larger areas—such as interest in human sciences—or by the desire to change family traditions, as happened with Marcela and Luna.

Poem 1 portrays Marcela's identity construction process as a journey, in which her mother inspires her relatives to move to Bogotá.

> I
>
> You may wonder why I chose this path
> I will start from the very beginning
> When my mother left her hometown.

Marcela was born in Bogotá and feels she belongs to two cultures, the *llanera* and *rola*[2] ones, and that she has characteristics of both. This makes Marcela interested in these two cultures and, at the same time, in other cultures. She describes her identity as "regional," meaning:

> My identity is not determined by geography or ethnicity; rather, I'm pointing to the fact that my identity is influenced by a mixture of two cultures and even by my perceptions of foreign ones. My perception of identity is not static; in contrast, I explicitly say that it can change according to my experiences. (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 2)

Marcela feels that having the characteristics of a *rola* and a *llanera*, and because she is a language learner, her identity goes beyond the territory and that her "regional identity" is more of a mixture of different cultures, thus showing her bicultural identity, which entails both a local and global identity that "gives [her] a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture" (Arnett, 2002, p. 777). Marcela is also constructing a glocal professional identity, which refers to a "teacher whose identity is not attached to a particular place but to the world" (Quintero & Guerrero, 2018, p. 91).

Marcela spoke of a contrasting identity that opposes the normalized choice in her family of careers related to numbers. She, as her father before her and unlike the other members of the family, leans toward the social sciences.

As for Luna, she grew up in a family without a father figure but with a strong female presence. She thinks that she can be instrumental in making the women in her family break away from their self-assigned roles (which, perhaps, stem from societal expectations) such as having to care for everybody, even at their own

2 The term *rola* is used in Colombia to refer to someone from Bogotá. *Llanera*, on the other hand, is for someone from the eastern part of the country.

expense. Luna sees that her mother and grandmother have assumed that role:

> For example, my grandmother is always worried about everyone, except for herself, and it also happens to me all the time, so…the idea is to break with that thought, that DNA…so that the other people, the other women in my family can see that there is another way out. (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 3)

For Luna, that way out is education; through education she can become a heroine who, as a teacher, can contribute not only to changing that traditional role of women but also to improving the school system in Colombia.

Exercising Agency in Transmedia Communities

According to Archanjo et al. (2019) "pre-service teachers' identity oscillates between identifying as students and as teachers" (p. 62) and that is one of the reasons why they seek to legitimate their future language teacher's role and language proficiency by trying to achieve an ideal language level. Honing their language skills represents their agentive actions. Nevertheless, in this study, the preservice teachers exert agency on developing their whole selves. They seek and take part in cultural interactions in transmedia communities mediated by English and other languages, where they seem to achieve holistic learning.

Marcela's, Camilo's, and Santiago's interactions and self-motivated learning in transmedia communities are not defined by institutional authorities "setting standards and providing instruction but from [Marcela, Camilo, and Santiago] observing and communicating with people engaged in the same interests and in the same struggles for status and recognition that they are" (Ito et al., 2010, p. 22). That is, they are recognised as speakers of English and of other languages, as non-binary gender people, and above all, as agents of their own decision-making, growing up, and learning process.

In transmedia communities, Marcela, Camilo, and Santiago find relationships that center on their interests, hobbies, and career aspirations. They construct and express their likes and identifications; keep up-to-date; learn about languages, music, and politics; among other things.

Marcela feels that learning English in transmedia communities is less tense than learning in the classroom and she enjoys it:

> In order to practice and have more contact with the language, in my free time I watch movies and series. I not only resort to "serious" and "professional" things, but I also enjoy doing things a native speaker would probably do, such as watching talk shows, for example. I like them because I learn a lot of informal vocabulary. (Marcela's blog)

In her analysis, Marcela noted that she is "an active language learner," something that she finds "a very positive" trait in her identity building: "I can perceive that the most positive aspect of my identity is the one of a language learner, in these excerpts I want to portray that I am an active language learner" (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 2). She, as a regular user of transmedia communities, resorts to Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram not only to learn English but also to learn about politics, economics, Korean and pop cultures, among others.

Santiago, who describes himself as a videogames fan, recognises that, derived from his fondness for videogames, he not only has learned English but also some values for his life. In addition, the English that he learned through games helped him to become very popular in high school, as he helped those students who did not have good results with English. Later, this ability to help others would play a very important role in his decision to become a teacher, as I will explain further on. We can see these aspects in these extracts from Poems I and II:

I
In front of the console
I learned sounds and words
That allowed me to play and
Undertake missions
English was in all my visions
A video games fan
I became

II
English made me a class hero
I helped those who understood zero
I enjoyed being a little teacher
Although at school English
Was just another subject
At home, it was my hobby

Camilo re-presented Youtube, his favourite transmedia, in Poem III. He stated that Youtube allows him multiple activities: from watching series to learning the English language, interacting with people from other countries, and developing the identity with which he is most identified: a singer.

III
YouTube is my daily basis
I have to confess
There is not a single day
That I am not there.
I can see video blogs
Main channels and people
All around the world.
YouTube helps me to discover
Who I really am
What I still have to learn
This platform can be chaotic
And not reliable at all
But if you give it a chance
You can enjoy what it has to show:
From learning languages,
And listening to songs
To watch lots of series
And even learning to talk.

In sum, Marcela, Santiago, and Camilo negotiate different identities in transmedia communities where they interact and carry out activities to construct different aspects of their whole selves, away from the supervising eye of their teachers and parents. This is how Marcela identifies herself as an active language learner, Camilo as a non-binary gender person, and Santiago as a game fan.

Luna explained to me that she is not keen on transmedia communities. When we talked about transmedia communities she claimed: "I canceled all my social networks, I realize they made me waste my time and, to be honest, I do not miss them" (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 3). This is an interesting aspect that shows that the so-called "digital natives" is a fixed and monolithic term since "most of the empirical evidence demonstrates that it is not obvious that such a digital generation actually exists homogeneously" (Gros et al., 2012, p. 191). Therefore, labeling young people as "digital natives" does not acknowledge some young people's subjectivities and agentic actions, as in Luna's case.

Developing a Reflective Professional Language Teacher Role

Previously, we learned that transmedia communities are interest/academic driven communities where Camilo, Marcela, and Santiago acquire practical and academic knowledge. Within these communities, they construct identities related to their whole selves. Now we are going to see that these preservice teachers within their academic communities, namely, primary and secondary school, the programme in which they are enrolled, and the placement school where they carry out their practicum, construct their future by foreseeing themselves as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 2001); that is, as free men and women whose function

is to contribute to the education of active and critical citizens. Luna, Marcela, Santiago, and Camilo visualize themselves as teachers with the ability to transform the contexts in which they work through reflection and using the language as an excuse for such reflection.

For Torres-Cepeda and Ramos-Holguín (2019) preservice teachers construct and reconstruct their identities across previous experiences with different teachers. These experiences influence the kind of teachers they would like to become. In this sense, the role of secondary school language teachers is key, since preservice teachers tend to have a detailed memory of the experiences they went through with these teachers (Timmerman, 2009). Nonetheless, in this study, I found that not only secondary school teachers, but also primary teachers and classmates impact the desired self the researcher collaborators of this study want to achieve. In Poem II, Luna tells us about her experience during primary school:

II
Primary school
Brings me bad memories
Teachers looked like Trunchbull.
They seemed to be stuck,
Using methods that even then
Were old

Unfortunately, for Luna, her elementary school years seem to have been spent in a very unpleasant environment, generated mainly by teachers who resembled Trunchbull (one of the characters in *Matilda*, a book by British novelist Roald Dahl). Trunchbull is a cruel teacher who bullies children, and thus, Luna remembers her elementary teachers as having "no patience with children, they were rude and strict and their methods were out of date," just like Trunchbull.

In contrast, her high school years offered Luna a very different experience as we can see in Poem III:

III
In high school
I used to live
The average life of a Colombian girl
When I met the person who changed my way
Alicia my teacher, who inspired me to become
An English teacher.

It is during high school that Luna has an experience that would change her life: meeting her English teacher. We can see how the primary and high school learning experiences had an impact on Luna's identity construction as an English language teacher, as she affiliates her future profile with a teacher she admires and seeks to become a good teacher herself, projecting a desired teacher image who differs from the ones she encountered in primary school, as she stated in Session 5: "As a teacher, I would like to give the people the opportunity to become the best version of themselves, and but doing so, contribute a little bit to change education processes." Luna's words allow us to see the construction of a teaching role assumed as a reflective professional, an intellectual capable of taking charge of a socially and politically contextual pedagogy that considers social transformation as an explicit objective of its practice (Giroux, 2001).

In Poem III, Marcela recognizes the influence of her father, her classmates, and teachers in the construction of her professional identity, which she sees as an ongoing process with a happy ending in which she visualizes herself as a language teacher with a master's degree.

III
Friends come and go
Each one leaves a footprint
The same is true for teachers
Whose print I will reflect
In every part of who I am

In one of the sessions, Marcela expressed that she did not like "the task giver" kind of teachers and that she knew that teaching was about "very much more." These words suggest that Marcela understands that education goes far beyond instrumental issues (Giroux, 2001).

Santiago, who had initially started studying electronic engineering, decided to drop out and enter the langauge teacher education programme encouraged by the good memories he had of secondary school, where he could help his classmates improve their English skills. He finds this more satisfactory than the competitive and material world of his previous career studies where "there is no human interaction because there everyone is…very…very selfish. They do not care about you. They just think about money" [*sic*] (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 1). The above evidences that Santiago's professional choice is part of a professional identity construction based on his desire to exercise intellectual and moral leadership as a teacher (Giroux, 2001).

Camilo thinks that the values he finds in the teacher education programme are well in line with his own, since this programme stimulates a diversity of ways of thinking that develop a critical attitude and an interest in transforming the existing reality towards the construction of a better world (Méndez & Bonilla, 2016):

> [When] you teach, you learn…[and learning is]…like crossing a river that is always changing [because] knowledge is always changing…it is the same with education, you need to educate yourself to understand that the society is falling apart…you need to change the perspective of education. (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 4)

When Camilo states that "you need to change the perspective of education," he shows his interest "to promote new forms of social relations and modes of pedagogy within the school itself" (Giroux, 1983, p. 241).

Camilo, Luna, Marcela, and Santiago were doing the teaching practicum. For Izadinia (2015) the teaching practicum and the role of the mentor teachers in this experience are key in the construction of the preservice teachers' identities.

For Camilo, the teaching practicum was an opportunity to develop an institution-identity derived from the fact that, at the placement school, they associate the programme with practitioners whose pedagogical skills and language level are good. As he indicated: "When my homeroom teacher knew I was part of this programme she exclaimed: Superb! [and] that made me feel very comfortable" (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 5). Nevertheless, Camilo developed a burnout feeling with the teaching practicum since there was too much paperwork and he found himself "spending day and night preparing lesson plans" (Poem IV).

For Marcela, the teaching practicum showed her "what teaching is really about" and for Santiago it was a "great responsibility." Marcela and Santiago also experienced conflict derived from the difference between the theory they learn and the realities of the classroom.

Luna postponed the teaching practicum and undertook it on her own "on Saturdays with my cousins" (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 4) and with her boyfriend as her mentor. She decided to do so as she did not like the mentor assigned her because she asked Luna to have her hair cut, something Luna refused to do as "my hair is part of my identity" (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 4). In terms of her identity construction, Luna's determination demonstrates her agency through a personal decision related to the sequence of her mandatory teacher education programme in which she prioritizes her well-being over academic requirements (Sarasa, 2016).

For Luna, her boyfriend is an important part of her academic and professional growth since they attend conferences, study together, and, as I have just described, support each other, even in the teaching practicum.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the research collaborators who took part in this study construct their identities in "their daily interactions with significant others" (Izadinia, 2015, p. 2) and that these interactions take place in the interplay with the different communities to which they belong (Wenger, 1998).

Although Izadinia (2015) affirms that professional identity starts in teacher education and begins to form during the practicum, the findings presented in this report confirm that professional identity construction commences earlier within the preservice teachers' families, through the processes of identification or disidentification with their parents' or relatives' professions.

Identification and disidentification continue to happen in school with the experiences the preservice teachers went through with their teachers and classmates. Although Timmerman (2009) has suggested that secondary teachers have a strong influence on the identity formation of preservice teachers, our results cast a new light on this aspect since we found that some of the preservice teachers have clear memories of their primary teachers and their influence on their desired selves.

We also found that transmedia communities bring to the fore the agentic action of preservice teachers in the construction of their identities, not only in terms of the improvement of their language and pedagogical skills but also in their whole selves. The results of this study are aligned with Sarasa and Porta's (2018), which recognises the temporal disinvestments of preservice teachers in the mandated programmes in favour of their well-being, as in the case of Luna, who postponed her pedagogical practicum due to her mentor's demands, with which she disagreed.

Camilo, Luna, Marcela, and Santiago see themselves as transformative teachers who understand that teaching is more than dealing with instrumental and methodological issues and, instead, is a call to contribute to the education of their future pupils as agents of change in the construction of a better world.

To sum up, the identities present in the communities identified by the research collaborators of this study contribute to their professional identity construction. These identities cannot be reduced to what the communities they belong to expect them to be and, therefore, cannot be essentialised; instead, preservice teachers' identities are the result of their interests, likes and dislikes, agentic actions, and interactions as members of different collectivities (Norton, 2013; Torres-Rocha, 2019).

The present study confirms that identities are always changing, as Marcela stated "I am still building my identity" (Co-construction of knowledge, Session 1) and Luna summarizes in Poem XI:

XI
My main question is
Who am I?
I will find the answer
By living my life

Limitations of the Study

From my experience as a researcher transiting to a decolonial research perspective, I would like to state this endeavour was full of tensions, among which the most important was my internal struggle with the mainstream researcher who still dwelled inside and against whom I had to fight several times. This struggle made me go back and forth during the research process, especially in the co-construction of knowledge that took place during the interaction to exchange and generate knowledge and the poetic re-presentation stages where I was tempted to interpret the data from the privileged researcher's perspective. Consequently, I forgot I was researching *with* Camilo, Marcela, Luna, and Santiago and not *about* them. Fortunately, the voices of the decolonial scholars I had read; the helping hand of my tutor; Camilo's, Marcela's, Luna's, and Santiago's willingness; and my

own determination to contribute to the decolonial project gave me the strength to start anew.

As a doctoral student framed within academic and time constraints, the project contained questions and objectives that were set up in advance and not with Camilo, Marcela, Luna, and Santiago. The way the research sessions were designed make them appropriate for small groups only; a larger number would demand too much time, not only in terms of what we usually know as data collection but also in the co-construction of the knowledge process.

On a more personal note I would like to add that I was pleased to find that Camilo, Luna, Marcela, and Santiago stated that, by having taken part in this project, they not only had learned about research but also about themselves by reading and re-reading their autobiographies in order to write the poems. Luna stated that she learned about her capabilities, Marcela about her strengths, Camilo, of how much he has changed, and Santiago understood why he has come to be the person he is right now.

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About the Author

Julia Posada-Ortiz holds a PhD in Education with an emphasis on English language teaching at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (Colombia). She is an associate professor at the same university and a member of the research group "Aprendizaje y Sociedad de la Información."

Guidelines for Contributors

PROFILE

Issues in Teachers' Professional Development

This journal is led by the PROFILE research group at Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras—Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá campus. It is a publication mainly concerned with sharing the results of classroom research projects, reflections, and innovations undertaken by teachers of English as a second or foreign language as well as by teacher educators and novice teacher-researchers. Starting from the assumption that our professional knowledge is enriched by different members of our academic community, the journal welcomes papers from different parts of the world, diverse educational levels, and wide-ranging contexts. In sum, the *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development* journal (Henceforth *Profile*) belongs to the area of education; it deals with topics regarding the learning and teaching of English as a second or foreign language and teacher education in the same field. It is addressed to an international readership of pre- and in-service teachers.

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Papers cannot exceed 8,000 words, including the abstract, keywords, references, appendices, footnotes, authors' biodata, and acknowledgements (the last two should only appear in the submission form, not in the manuscript). Footnotes should appear on the same page, not at the end of the document. Please indicate the number of words at the end of the article. The title of the manuscript should have a maximum of 13 words.

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Table 1. Ways of Doing Compositions

Figure 2. Results of the Diagnostic Survey

Appendix A: Lesson Plan Sample

Write your text in good English (American or British usage is accepted, but not a mixture of these) and make sure grammar, punctuation, and style have been revised. Italics are not to be used for expressions of Latin origin; for example, in vivo, et al., per se.

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Ministerio de Educación Nacional. (n.d.). *Lineamientos curriculares para el área de idiomas extranjeros en la educación básica y media* [Curriculum guidelines for foreign language teaching in basic and secondary education]. https://bit.ly/3d2by05

Chapter in an Edited Book

Richards, J. C. (2012). Competence and performance in language teaching. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to pedagogy and practice in second*

language teaching (pp. 46–56). Cambridge University Press.

Conference Session or Paper Presentation

Inbar-Lourie, O. (2017, July 17–21). *Language assessment literacies and the language testing community: A mid-life identity crisis?* [Conference session]. 39th Language Testing Research Colloquium, Bogotá, Colombia. https://www.iltaonline.com/page/2017InvitedPlenaries

Proceedings Published in Book Form

Bailey, K. M. (2004). Plenary: Language teaching journals and reflective teaching. In A. Pulverness (Ed.), *IATEFL 2003 Brighton Conference Selections* (pp. 80–91). International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language.

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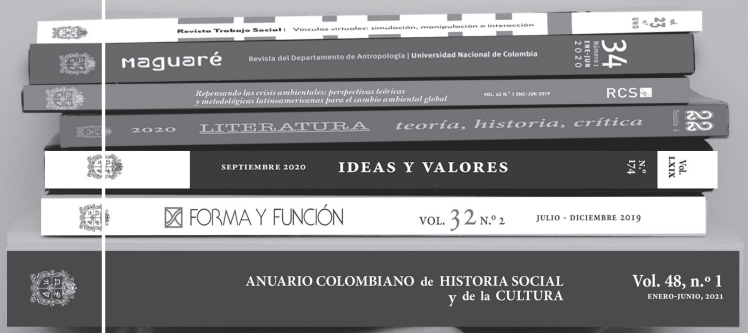

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