
P R O
F 25 I
L E
Number 1

ISSN 1657-0790 (*printed*) 2256-5760 (*online*)

PROFILE

Issues in Teachers' Professional Development

Vol. 25, No. 1, January-June 2023
Facultad de Ciencias Humanas
Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras
Grupo de Investigación PROFILE

WWW.PROFILE.UNAL.EDU.CO

Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, a refereed journal, encourages the dissemination of classroom research projects and innovations by teachers of English, and is published twice a year (in January and July). It is currently registered in Scopus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, Latindex, EBSCO, Informe Académico, Academic OneFile, Red Iberoamericana de Innovación y Conocimiento Científico - REDIB, the Directory of Open Access Journals - DOAJ, and Dialnet. It is indexed in the MLA International Bibliography, Educational Research Abstracts online - ERA, The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), The Emerging Sources Citation Index (Clarivate Analytics), The European Reference Index for the Humanities and the Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS), IRESIE, LatAm Plus, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts database - LLBA, Redalyc, SciELO Citation Index (Web of Science), CLASE - Citas Latinoamericanas en Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, Publindex - Minciencias (classified in **category A1**), and Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) 2021: Quartile 1 (Linguistics and Language), Quartile 2 (Education).

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FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS
www.humanas.unal.edu.co
Ciudad Universitaria, Carrera 30 # 45-03, Edificio de Posgrados de la Facultad de Ciencias Humanas (225), sótano.
Bogotá, D. C., Colombia
Copy-editing: Nathalie Barrientos Preciado
Coordinator of the School Periodicals: Daniel H. Trujillo
Design Coordinator: Michael Cárdenas
Design: María Camila Torrado
Printed in Colombia by pendiente
100 copies

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INDEXED BY LatAm Estudios+

LatAm Plus
http://www.latamplus.com/

SJR

Scimago Journal Rank 2021: Linguistics and Language (Q1), Education (Q2)
https://bit.ly/3e5zmAG

PROFILE

Issues in Teachers' Professional Development

Vol. 25, No. 1, January-June 2023 | ISSN 1657-0790 (*printed*) 2256-5760 (*online*)

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Vol. 25, n.º 1, enero-junio 2023 | ISSN 1657-0790 (*printed*) 2256-5760 (*online*)

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https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.106417

Editorial

The year 2022 was very productive for the *Profile* journal in terms of visibility and recognition for its scientific quality. Added to the classification in Scimago Journal Rank (Quartile 2 in the area of Education and Quartile 1 in the Linguistics and Language area), on July 15th the Colombian Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation granted the journal the Ángela Restrepo award, which honors excellence in the fields supervised by the Ministry. This award has been created to make visible the academic work that researchers and institutions carry out to contribute to strengthening Colombian science, technology, and innovation. The *Profile* journal was acknowledged in the category of excellence in scientific publication.

Note. Text in the photograph: Ángela Restrepo Award for Excellence in Science, Technology, and Innovation. Category: Excellence of Colombian scientific journals, 2022.

How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Cárdenas, M. L., & Nieto Cruz, M. C. (2023). Editorial. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 9–13. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.106417

This is just another incentive for our editorial work which, for over 22 years, has aimed at providing the national and international academic communities with a quality scientific publication. We would like to thank the invaluable support from our team of reviewers and members of the Editorial Committee, whose contributions make the edition and publication of the journal possible. We also commend the interest our authors and readers show towards the journal as an ideal means to access relevant academic and scientific knowledge on English language teaching and learning, research, and teacher education.

In this issue, we are very pleased to share with you 15 articles. Twelve correspond to the section *Issues from Teacher Researchers*, two to the section *Issues from Novice Teacher-Researchers*, and one to the section *Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations.* Overall, the articles in this issue come from eight countries: Argentina, Australia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Iran, Mexico, and Turkey.

Furthermore, the topics discussed by the authors concern teacher training and teacher professional development, teachers' identities as well as their pedagogical beliefs, language assessment, mentoring, collaboration and networking, language teaching methods (including online practices), and the development of language skills (writing, listening, reading, listening, and pronunciation). Research methods include observational techniques and introspective methods in individual and multiple case studies, all under a qualitative paradigm. These topics have been studied at pre- and in-service teaching levels.

The section *Issues from Teacher Researchers* opens with a contribution from Colombia in a joint effort of three researchers. José V. Abad, Jennifer Daniela Regalado Chicaiza, and Isabel Cristina Acevedo Tangarife present a case study that analyzes pedagogical relationships and teacher identities in research incubators. The result of this study led to the creation of a theoretical model that describes pedagogical relationships in research education around the axes of power and affect.

The second article is authored by Eva Estefania Trujeque-Moreno, Georgina Aguilar-González, and Fátima Encinas-Prudencio These Mexican scholars dedicated their work to mapping English language teacher-researchers' collaboration and networking practices in their professional paths. Three dimensions were examined: teaching, organization, and research. The findings revealed that each professor-researcher's agency was directly related to her or his capitalization of diverse strategies in each dimension and how this, in turn, configured their engagement in the English language teaching community and/or other communities.

Our third article comes from Argentina. Authors Mercedes Pérez Berbain, Lidia Payaslian, Anabella Sauer Rosas, Belén García, and Agustina La Porta discuss the impact of mentoring on English language teachers on a qualitative research design with four mentors and seven mentees. Mentees were found to improve their teaching practice and develop their professional knowledge. The study argues that mentoring can offer all English language teachers the possibility to build knowledge *with* other teachers, *from* their own experiences, and *for* other teachers and educational stakeholders.

The first article from Iran comes from the hand of Maryam Honarparvaran and Mohammad Saber Khaghaninejad, both in representation of Shiraz University. Their comparative study aimed at showing the factors that demotivate language professionals in contexts such as high schools and universities. The results indicated that, among the demotivating factors, the most prominent ones were financial issues, students' demotivation, facilities and course-books, and neglecting teachers for educational decision-making.

Next, Turkish authors Meryem Özdemir-Yılmazer and Yonca Özkan discuss a case study connected to a model of dynamic assessment in L2 classrooms with two English teachers. In this model teachers are expected to correct errors and simultaneously provide prompts for students to fix the problems. Results showed that while one of the teachers reconceptualized her role as a provider of graduated prompts, the other teacher resisted adopting any roles that dynamic assessment requires. The study implies careful consideration of personal and contextual factors shaping teachers' assumptions to make a change in teacher practice.

Our sixth contribution to this section comes from Chilean authors Marco Cancino and Paloma Ibarra. They focused their attention on EFL secondary education teachers' perceptions towards using Online Student Response Systems (OSRS). Findings revealed that EFL teachers regard OSRSs components as helpful and engaging as well as drivers and obstacles in relation to OSRSs use. The pedagogical implications of the study call for proper training for EFL teachers before using OSRSs, and the benefits in accepting the gamified aspects of OSRSs as a significant feature that can support learning.

Mónica Abad, from Ecuador, establishes a connection between EFL teachers' beliefs about listening and their actual listening instructional practices. Fifty EFL teachers participated in a mixed-method study that aimed at providing empirical evidence of listening teaching practices and determining teachers' beliefs about listening. Results evidenced that instructional practices emphasize task completion rather than listening development, are oriented towards the product rather than the process, and lack decoding development.

The eighth contribution is from Australian author Michael Burri. In his article, he compared L2 teachers' English pronunciation practices with the perceptions of their learners. The findings show that the learners have a strong desire to be taught and improve their pronunciation, and that the teachers' provision of oral corrective feedback meets the students' preferences. However, the use of mostly teacher-centered techniques and subsequent lack of opportunities for communicative pronunciation practice suggest some incongruity between teachers' practices and students' perceptions.

The second contribution from Iran presents the research work of Vahid Rahmani Doqaruni. The research centers around the functions of teachers' narratives in EFL classroom contexts. The purpose of the study was to find out what functions these narratives serve. Three functions of narratives emerged, namely, moral, pedagogical, and intercultural.

The second Colombian contribution is a joint effort between two universities, namely the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, in Bogotá and the Purdue University in West

Lafayette in the USA. Authors Diana Marcela Lizarazo Pereira, Felicia Roberts, and Ricardo M. Tamayo aimed to show the influence of emotion and word frequency in first and second language processing. The analysis of 100 participants' (50 L1 English speakers and 50 L2 English speakers) reaction time to vocabulary prompts showed that L2 English speakers process words slower than L1 English speakers do. L1 English speakers processed positive words faster than negative words, but L2 English speakers displayed a reversed pattern, which indicates L2 emotional attenuation for negative words.

The third Iranian article is authored by Reza Rezvani and Parisa Miri. The area of interest of these researchers is academic writing, and in particular how graduate students of TEFL manage their citing in academic texts. In this research, 16 graduate English language teaching students were given two summary writing assignments from published articles, one irrelevant and one pertinent to source-text use. The students participated in retrospective interviews about their source-text use after completing the tasks. Recursive thematic data analysis indicated that while they were inclined towards more direct source-text use in the first summary, they opted for more indirect and academic source-text use that involved their personal contribution and interpretation in the task.

The section closes with a case study conducted by Luis Hernando Tamayo Cano, Andrés Felipe Riascos Gómez, and Jorge Eduardo Pineda Hoyos. These Colombian researchers carried out a needs analysis conductive to the design of an English blended learning program from the perspective of teachers and administrators. Findings revealed the need to make a considerable investment in new personnel and e-infrastructure. Likewise, students' context should be considered to design EFL blended programs. Additionally, teachers and students should be offered ICT and methodological professional development. Finally, the program should carefully balance the integration of face-to-face and online modalities.

Section 2, *Issues from Novice Teacher-Researchers*, includes two articles. The first article is a contribution from the novice teacher-researcher, Marcela Ovalle Quiroz, together with her tutor Adriana González. They explore the imagined identities and the imagined communities of Colombian English language teachers in their investment and in their professional development. Findings suggest that English language teachers are invested in their professional development if they may develop three imagined identities—as proficient English speakers, ELT experts, and ICT competent users—and their affiliation to an imagined community of "bilinguals."

The second article of this section is a joint effort between the novice teacher researcher Juan Diego Gálvez and his tutor, professor Marcela Del Campo. This team aimed at strengthening the reading competence in English through the application of a reading comprehension module. The action-cycle study was carried out at a public high school in Colombia. The results show that the implementation of the material had a significant impact on the development of literacy competence, which suggests the material could be used as a tool for supporting English language learning.

Our issue closes with the section *Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations* with the inclusion of one article. María Eugenia Guapacha Chamorro and Orlando Chaves Varón did a review of EFL writing studies in Colombia between 1990 and 2020. They synthesised 63 research reports regarding authorship, publication year, focus, methodology (context, participants, research paradigm, design, data collection methods and analyses), validity, reliability, ethics, findings, limitations, and further research. The findings reveal that EFL writing is a developing research area in Colombia, characterised as a predominantly qualitative inquiry of adult writing instruction and learning at universities. From the findings, they propose a research agenda and some guidelines for authors and reviewers to enhance and evaluate research reports.

We hope you find this issue useful for your teaching practice and projects. We also invite you to spread the word about our publication so that other teachers learn about the opportunities we provide to get acquainted with the studies conducted by scholars in different parts of the world.

Melba Libia Cárdenas
Journal Editor

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PROFILE

Issues from Teacher Researchers

https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.94333

Pedagogical Relationships and Identities in Research Incubators: Reconceptualizing Research Training for Language Teachers

Relaciones pedagógicas e identidades en los semilleros de investigación: reconceptualización de la formación en investigación para los maestros de lenguas

José V. Abad
Jennifer Daniela Regalado Chicaiza
Isabel Cristina Acevedo Tangarife
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This article reports on a case study that analyzed pedagogical relationships and teacher identities in research incubators. Conducted over two years in an English teaching program at a Colombian private university, the study included semi-structured interviews with four research incubator coordinators and two focus groups with eight students. We found that mentoring in research incubators nurtures attitudes and competencies crucial to the students' construction of their identity as teacher researchers. From the results of our research, we built a theoretical model that describes pedagogical relationships in research education around the axes of power and affect. Finally, we draw some implications about an epistemological shift from knowledge-centered to knower-centered pedagogical relationships in collaborative approaches to research training.

Keywords: language teachers, pedagogical relationship, research incubators, research training, teacher identity

Este estudio de caso analiza las relaciones pedagógicas y las identidades docentes en los semilleros de investigación de un programa de licenciatura en inglés de una universidad privada. Se realizaron entrevistas con cuatro coordinadores y dos grupos focales con ocho estudiantes; se encontró que las mentorías en los semilleros de investigación favorecen el desarrollo de actitudes y competencias fundamentales para que los estudiantes construyan su identidad como maestros investigadores. Los resultados permitieron construir un modelo teórico sobre las relaciones pedagógicas en la formación de investigadores alrededor de los ejes del poder y del afecto. Además, se señalan algunas implicaciones con respecto a un cambio epistemológico en las relaciones pedagógicas orientadas desde enfoques colaborativos para la formación de investigadores y centradas no en el conocimiento sino en los sujetos que tienen el conocimiento.

Palabras clave: formación en investigación, identidad docente, maestros de lenguas, relación pedagógica, semilleros de investigación

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The paper presents final results of a study titled *Génesis del maestro investigador en los semilleros de investigación*, sponsored by Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, with code number 60577. The writing of this article has been documented as part of the data collection for the leading researcher's doctoral study on collaborative writing between research mentors and mentees in research incubators.

How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Abad, J. V., Regalado Chicaiza, J. D., & Acevedo Tangarife, I. C. (2023). Pedagogical relationships and identities in research incubators: Reconceptualizing research training for language teachers. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 17–32. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.94333

This article was received on March 13, 2021 and accepted on April 29, 2022.

Introduction

Integrating research with teaching represents a fundamental step toward achieving quality education. In Colombia, the official call to train teachers as researchers was introduced by the General Education Act (Ley General de Educación, 1994). Most recently, the government reinforced this policy through Resolution 18583 (2017), which made research training a legal requirement for all undergraduate teacher education programs in the country.

Taking this measure was only a matter of time. After all, teachers who actively engage in doing research not only accrue significant benefits for their professional development but also contribute to the renovation of the school communities they serve (Castro-Garcés & Martínez-Granada, 2016; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Edwards & Burns, 2016; Viáfara & Largo, 2018). Even Lugo-Vásquez (2008), who explored the disadvantages of teachers engaging in research, points to the fact that the adverse effects of teacher research are associated with teachers' lack of training, time, and administrative support rather than research per se. Albeit its evident benefits, teachers do not learn to do research by themselves: They need to be trained in doing so.

Restrepo-Gómez (2007) felt the need to differentiate between scientific and formative research to pave the way for research education in Colombia. Whereas experienced researchers conduct the former to generate new knowledge and solve perceived social and scientific problems, research educators engage in the latter to educate new researchers the fundamentals of research theory and practice. Miyahira-Arakaki (2009) claims that formative research is an educational tool that promotes students' appropriation of research knowledge.

Abad and Pineda (2018) state that, within the strand of formative research, student teachers get research training in two different yet complementary ways. The regular path implies taking mandatory research courses leading to the completion of the graduation paper. Those students who want to further their research training also follow the alternative path, which usually implies taking part in a *semillero de investigación* (research incubator; hereafter, RI).[1]

Since their inception in the last decade of the 20th century, RIs have become a hallmark of Colombia's academic landscape. Today, practically all higher education institutions in the country have integrated RIs into their programs to strengthen research training. RIs constitute spaces for personal, professional, and academic growth that allow students to engage in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of formative research while building solid academic communities.

Despite the popularity of RIs, little has been inquired about the pedagogical relationships nurtured within them and how these relationships impact future language teachers' professional identity as researchers. This paucity of information regarding RIs led us to posit the following questions: What are the essential features that characterize the pedagogical relationships between RI coordinators and students from the English teaching program at Universidad Católica Luis Amigó[2]? How do these relationships influence the identity construction of preservice teachers concerning their research training? By pursuing this line of inquiry, we sought to analyze the pedagogical relationships between RI coordinators and students in light of the theory of mentoring and their influence on the identity construction of preservice teachers as researchers. Next, we summarize the concepts and theories that guided our research.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Pedagogical Relationship

The pedagogical act (Barajas, 2013; Houssaye, 1988) takes place between the three vertices of a triangle:

1 As with other terminology within the field of education, the construct *semilleros de investigación* has been translated in various ways, including *student research labs* (Cañas et al., 2018), *research seedbeds* (Mesa-Villa et al., 2020), or *research incubators* (Abad & Pineda, 2018; Machado-Alba & Machado-Duque, 2014). However, for consistency, we will use the term research incubator in this article.

2 Hereafter, Luis Amigó.

teacher, learner, and knowledge. The sides of this triangle describe three separate yet intertwined relationships:

> The didactic relationship is the relationship between teacher with knowledge and that allows him to teach. The pedagogical relationship is the relationship between the teacher and the student, which allows the process to be formed. The learning relationship is the relationship that the student will build with knowledge in his approach to learning. (Zerraf et al., 2019, p. 2)

For Sánchez-Lima and Labarrete-Sarduy (2015), although the pedagogical relationship between research trainers and trainees originates and develops primarily within institutions, it goes beyond their boundaries, especially as it involves the development of 'not only cognitive but also affective dimensions of the student. Given the implications of research training for the professional development of novel researchers, the relationship between research trainer and trainee cannot be understood as a traditional teacher–student relationship based on the presumption that the teacher should be the sole purveyor of knowledge and the students only passive recipients.

Research Incubators

RIs are groups of "high school or college students who receive research training under the tutelage of a more experienced researcher" (Abad & Pineda, 2018, p. 94). Higher-education institutions often sponsor RIs, which ordinarily constitute *learning communities* (Sierra-Piedrahita, 2018) that engage in formative research within a particular discipline.

González (2008) claims that, through RIs, institutions pursue the formation of a research culture among undergraduate students, who get together to carry out research training and networking activities. Moreover, he emphasizes that RIs offer a space for the comprehensive development of their members, who thereon learn to design research tools and develop cognitive, social, and methodological skills.

These learning communities play a crucial role in education, as they concern themselves with different disciplines, and their structure guarantees their diversity and continuity; furthermore, the structure of RIs and the pedagogical relationships they favor make them educational settings wherein research training becomes a "perennial" process (García, 2010).

The popularity RIs have gained in Colombia and other Latin American countries may be partially attributed to the fact that they offer teaching and learning conditions that differ from those of regular research courses. RI participants meet beyond the temporal and spatial confines of a traditional class: Students who make up an RI, for example, often remain under the guidance of their coordinators for periods that extend throughout their bachelor's degrees. Furthermore, their academic progress is established via formative rather than summative assessment. Hence, teaching and learning conditions in RIs facilitate the emergence of research mentoring (Borg, 2006; Mora, 2018).

Mentoring

According to Malderez (2009), mentoring is a "process of one-to-one, workplace-based, contingent and personally appropriate support for the person during their professional acclimatization (or integration), learning, growth, and development" (p. 260). Unlike other teachers of teachers, mentors are models, supporters, sponsors, acculturators, and educators who accompany and guide novice teachers in the process of integration and inclusion into a particular professional milieu (Malderez, 2009).

Along those lines, Dağ and Sari (2017) claim that:

> The mentor has a series of roles such as a parent figure, problem solver, builder, recommendation giver, supporter, educational model, coach or guide. In addition, they are required to struggle with the ways of thinking of the mentees to improve their self-competences and to prepare them to the actual world of education. In this context, mentoring is a multi-dimensional process involving emotional support and professional socialization in addition to pedagogic guidance. (p. 117)

The benefits and challenges of mentoring in research education have been explored across multiple disciplines (Brown et al., 2009; Byars-Winston et al., 2020; Gholam, 2018; Gruber et al., 2020). In the field of language teaching, some researchers (Borg, 2006; Delany, 2012; Mora, 2018) conclude that a fundamental condition for teachers to be successfully trained as researchers is the assistance of a mentor. In a shared reflection on their mentoring experience in an RI, Abad and Pineda (2018) sustain that "research training galvanized by mentoring has an enormous potential to further teachers' professional development [and] bridge existing gaps between educational theory and teaching practice" (p. 85).

Teacher Identity

Besides being bound to context and shaped by discourse, teacher identity is diverse and fluid, and it is wrought out of the tensions between teachers' self-perception and the way they are perceived by others (Lu & Curwood, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Salinas & Ayala, 2018; Torres-Rocha, 2017). Teacher identity could be explained as a teacher's self-concept portrayed through a continually (re)constructed narrative of who they are, who they want to be, and what their story has been concerning others (Kumazawa, 2013; Varghese et al., 2005; Wang & Lin, 2014). About the multifarious nature of teacher identity, Abad (2021) contends that "teachers' multiple identities, which come from relational contexts other than school, influence the way they teach and construct themselves as teachers" (p. 124).

Method

Our journey to investigate RIs in the field of language teacher education started in 2016. Initial explorations developed into two research phases. The first empirical study, carried out in 2018, involved the systematization of 51 RIs from different schools at Luis Amigó. The second study included interviews and focus groups with RI teachers and students from the university's English teaching program. However, information gathered during these two studies aided in constructing the theory of pedagogical relationships we later describe; only data from the second one is presented in this article.

Research Philosophy and Methodology

Subscribing to the interpretive paradigm, we conducted a case study for the second phase of our inquiry. Teacher researchers who investigate from an interpretive perspective try to understand a social reality that is never neutral but relative to the meanings, perceptions, and interpretations that subjects build in their interactions with others and that make complete sense only within the culture that defines the educational phenomenon under study (Pérez-Serrano, 1994; Taylor & Medina, 2013). Through a case study, researchers seek a deep understanding of a complex phenomenon, problem, or program by analyzing specific aspects of a representative unit (a case) within an authentic context (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013).

Case Binding

For Moore et al. (2012), a case involves "a particular example or instance from a class or group of events, issues, or programs, and how people interact with components of this phenomenon" (p. 244). Although there is no single way to bind a case, we decided to do it in terms of activity, context, and time (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995). Hence, our study focused on exploring the pedagogical relationships between teachers, alumni, and students who had engaged in formative research within the context of the RIs belonging to the English teaching program at Luis Amigó. Data were collected during the 2018–2019 academic cycle.

RIs have become a key component of research education within the program. When the study began, it had eight RIs with about 90 students. In addition to the sensitization RI, which marked the initial stage of the research-training process, there were seven other thematic RIs.

Faculty teacher researchers coordinated these RIs, which comprised groups of four to ten students. They met their coordinator at least once a week during two-hour sessions, which could be extended as needed. Additionally, students were part of RIs for periods ranging from one year to the entire duration of their studies, even after graduation.

RI coordinators generally guided students through designing and implementing research projects related to their area of interest. This guidance included training activities that covered the entire length of a research project, from its inception to its dissemination through oral and written media. Consequently, these RIs constituted primary groups of a collaborative nature wherein coordinators had the chance to become research mentors for their students.

Nevertheless, the pedagogical conditions that frame mentorship were absent in only some of the RIs. Further, towards the end of 2019, they underwent a severe crisis, and five were closed down. Reasons for their termination included coordinators' burnout and failure to meet the university's administrative and productivity requirements. This crisis points to conflicting views between university research officials and research educators as regards the purposes of RIs and the roles of RI coordinators.

Participants

Participants were selected through criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2001): All had to be teachers, students, or alumni of the English teaching program at Luis Amigó. Coordinators must have performed this role for at least two consecutive years in the same RI. Students must have participated in the same RI for at least one year under the guidance of the same coordinator. In the end, four coordinators and eight students from five different RIs joined the project by signing consent forms. The four coordinators led RIs in assessment, technology integration, language policy, and cultural studies. Their experience as teacher educators ranged between five and 15 years; they all held 'master's degrees in education or language teaching. Table 1 shows the students' membership to the five RIs included in the study.

Table 1. Student Participants' Membership to Research Incubators

Student code	Research incubator focus				
	Assessment	Technology integration	Language policy	Cultural studies	English in early childhood
Student 1					x
Student 2	x				
Student 3			x		
Student 4			x		
Student 5			x		
Student 6*				x	
Student 7*		x			
Student 8*		x			

* Alumni

Data Collection and Analysis

We designed interviews and focus group guides considering our experience with RIs and the theoretical framework presented above. We piloted and field-tested each instrument before its implementation. First, we conducted 30- to 60-minute interviews with the four coordinators during the second semester of 2018. The initial analysis helped clarify the coordinators' perception of the pedagogical relationships they had built with students and their formative roles in RIs. Given the iterative nature of qualitative research, the initial findings derived from the interviews drove the construction of the guides used for the focus groups, which were held the following year and lasted about an hour each. The first focus group included three students; the second one was done with five.

Figure 1. Category Structure

- Pedagogical relationships
  - Directionality
  - Context
  - Closeness[1]
- Research mentor's roles
  - Role model
  - Supporter
  - Sponsor
  - Educator
  - Acculturator
- Students' research attitudes and competencies
  - Autonomy
  - Critical thinking
  - Self-confidence
  - Teamwork
  - Scientific curiosity[1]

[1]Emergent categories

For data analysis, we followed an integrated approach (Curry, 2015). We used a structure of preset categories based on the mentoring theory in research education. During the analysis, new categories emerged that were integrated into the category tree. Descriptive and interpretive memos allowed for the consolidation of findings, which were built around the research categories and shared with participants and other academic community members for *members checking* (Moore et al., 2012). Time and investigator triangulation (Burns, 1999) further enhanced the trustworthiness and validity of the study. Figure 1 shows our category structure.

Findings

Pedagogical Relationships in RIs: Horizontality and Closeness

In referring to the pedagogical relationships they had built in RIs, participants described a training field characterized by horizontality, emotional closeness, and trust among students and between them and the teacher. On this matter, some students commented:

> Well, in my case, if I am going to be with this coordinator, it is because I admire them. I very much respect their work and career, so I would say that my admiration [I have for them] has contributed emotionally, always encouraging me always to go beyond [what is required].[3] (Student 2, Focus Group 1)
>
> The relationship that I have with my RI coordinator is based on trust; in pedagogical terms . . . I have the confidence to tell them what I like and what I don't like. (Student 1, Focus Group 1)

This sense of closeness was enhanced by the trust the coordinators bestowed on the students so they could pursue their interests and ask questions and the degree of care coordinators showed for

3 Excerpts from participants were translated for publication purposes.

them as valuable team members. On this matter, teachers commented:

> I am also a peer; I am not the expert; I feel I have become an expert with them; it is with them that I learn. (Teacher 2, Interview)
>
> In the RI, we create friendship ties . . . we share not only academic but also emotional matters, so we get to know each other's difficulties, passions, and emotions. (Teacher 1, Interview)

Regarding the pedagogical relationship with the RI coordinators, some students also said:

> I believe that asking questions breaks the verticality often established in student–teacher relationships. In this case, the coordinator lets us look for the answers to those questions that even we can propose in our sessions. (Student 6, Focus Group 2)
>
> When you feel important, the bond becomes much more robust. You know that the other person cares and that, in a certain way, you are in a condition of equality with the other because equality means that everyone is important in building knowledge. (Student 6, Focus Group 2)

Besides creating a strong connection with the RI coordinators, students built strong bonds among themselves in a relationship characterized by solidarity and camaraderie that redefined their academic identity in the group. In this regard, some students went as far as defining the RI as a family and even a "pack":

> Amid these investigative dynamics [arises] a sense of solidarity, of being with the other, of even taking responsibility for the other to fulfill the goals we have set for ourselves, that we all have agreed upon. (Student 8, Focus Group 2)
>
> I could say that the [RI] also becomes like a family. (Student 8, Focus Group 2)
>
> The concept of a pack[4] comes to mind because, in some way, [the RI] allows you to feel part and have the support of a group, so I feel I belong there, and that feeling is good. (Student 7, Focus Group 2)

The possibility of creating strong bonds around research profoundly contributes to the person's education, as it taps into their emotional dimension. As some participants indicate, that sense of belonging was brought about and sustained by a significant distribution of power and a heightened sense of reciprocal care within the group. In that regard, some participants remarked:

> I think doing research together has been one of the most memorable things I would take from my RI since I have learned from it, and it has touched me at a personal or human level. (Student 6, Focus Group 2)
>
> This possibility of dialogue has brought us so close. Undoubtedly, all this time, we have built a sense of solidarity, a bond of brotherhood through a dynamic of horizontality. (Student 6, Focus Group 2)

Students' Identity as Researchers: Attitudes and Competencies

The pedagogical relationship students built with their RI coordinators impacted their research attitudes and competencies and, ultimately, how they perceived themselves as researchers in the making. The data show that thanks to their involvement in RIs, students developed competencies and attitudes necessary for research (Pirela de Faría & Prieto de Alizo, 2006), both human and academic. Students emphasized qualities such as autonomy, critical thinking, self-confidence, teamwork, and scientific curiosity. Table 2 includes excerpts that evidence each of these competencies and attitudes described by the students.

4 The word used in Spanish was *manada*.

Table 2. Research Attitudes and Competences Fostered in Research Incubators

Autonomy	"[The RI has taught me] perhaps not to settle for what is given so easily because the tasks make me go beyond what I already know or find at first sight. So, it makes me want to look for more information, to go to the sources and look for myself…to be more autonomous." (Student 2, Focus Group 1) "The RI has an approach similar to a flipped classroom, so we look for information outside the class and then come and share during the meeting. It is something voluntary, so the knowledge becomes more meaningful, and the meetings more enjoyable." (Student 3, Focus Group 2)
Critical thinking	"[The RI] has led me to develop critical thinking, so what this RI has caused in me is a complete transformation of what I believed in." (Student 2, Focus Group 1) "When you already have research training, you question everything: the context, your work as a teacher, the national and institutional policies . . . Actually . . . the fact that I have participated in this RI has made me more critical." (Student 5, Focus Group 2)
Self-confidence	"[Now I feel] I am capable . . . I was not very confident, but my coordinator—I do not know if it was intentional, or how they have made me develop more self-confidence as a person and as a teacher." (Student 1, Focus Group 1) "The RI made me realize that I am capable of doing many things that I possibly did not consider myself very capable of doing." (Student 5, Focus Group 2)
Teamwork	"Teamwork . . . has been fundamental. [The RI] has taught me that some things that can be done by yourself and some other require the cooperation of other people." (Student 1, Focus Group 1) "The RI represents for me doing research in the company of others, to know that we are all going after the same goal for which we are working. If anyone, for whatever reason, experiences some difficulty, they will receive support from the others." (Student 6, Focus Group 2)
Scientific curiosity	"[Participating in RIs] sparked that curiosity for research. I had taken the research courses at the university, which I did not like and from which I did not learn, so [in the RI] it was necessary to raise that desire and that curiosity to investigate." (Student 4, Focus Group 1) "One of the elements that moves the RI is to investigate what we want to investigate . . . We want to do research in so far as it becomes a life experience that challenges us in our daily work. . . The research question is really about ourselves and what is confronting us." (Student 3, Focus Group 2)

Furtherance of Disciplinary Knowledge

In the RIs, students delved deeper into specific pedagogical or disciplinary aspects of their field; this way, they recognized possible teaching components or research lines to continue advancing their development as teacher researchers. Student teachers indicated that the knowledge acquired within RIs carried over to their teaching. One of the participants, whose RI focused on linguistic policy, stated:

> After participating in the RI, I acquired a lens through which I could see the English class and analyze how it is connected to the power games and the national and international policies in education; that is very interesting to see, even in my teaching practicum. (Student 4, Focus Group 1)

Therefore, by a principle of *knowledge transference* (Cornell-Pereira, 2019), the knowledge, attitudes, and competencies developed in RIs contributed to the training of students not only as researchers but also as teachers.

> As teachers in our pedagogical practicum…when we ask ourselves what our next research project is going to be, we ask ourselves not only about the transformation of ourselves as teachers but also about how that transformation also gives us [power] to transform our micro contexts and even much broader contexts. (Student 6, Focus Group 2)

Coordinators as Research Mentors

The coordinators played the roles of educators, sponsors, supporters, and guides as they dealt with their students' academic training and emotional development. In turn, the students improved their attitudes and honed the competencies required for research. In other words, the roles played by the RI coordinators appear to be directly linked to the attitudes and competencies later developed by their students. In describing the role of their RI coordinator as a sponsor and supporter, one student stated:

> The work [we do], I feel, is more mutual. In addition, the coordinator has always motivated us and made us feel more confident, saying, "guys, what you are investigating is fine; keep doing it, and do not doubt yourselves." So, that also aids motivates us to continue growing. (Student 1, Focus Group 1)

Students also saw their coordinators as guides who scaffolded their learning to do research and to become researchers. One student said: "I see my RI coordinator as a guide and a complete company" (Student 1, Focus Group 1). For students, their coordinators operating as emotional sponsors and academic supporters were vital in developing attitudes such as autonomy and confidence. On this matter, one student commented:

> If a person with a professional track record, who knows, tells me that they trust me and believe in me, then why shouldn't I do it myself? So, they have given me much security and have made me develop more self-confidence as a person. (Student 1, Focus Group 1)

Discussion: A Theoretical Model for Pedagogical Relationships

As pointed out earlier, our initial reflections on the pedagogical nature (i.e., the essential features) of RIs were later supplemented by the findings of two studies, the latter of which we have herein synthesized. Ultimately, this line of inquiry led us to develop a theoretical model about pedagogical relationships in research education that has helped us understand why RIs offer unique conditions for the comprehensive training of new teacher researchers. In the following paragraphs, we outline this model.

Built around the pedagogical act, every teacher–student relationship emerges from and, at the same time, configures a relational context. This context, which refers not so much to the physical space shared by classroom participants as to the symbolic network of meanings they create, is defined around two axes: the axis of power and the axis of affect, on which directionality and closeness are signaled.

Marked on the axis of power, directionality is defined by the circulation of knowledge and the decision-making process that ultimately frames the curriculum, which the teacher could impose upon or negotiate with students to varying degrees. On the other hand, closeness shows the degree of emotional connection and affinity between teacher and students, which is marked on the axis of affect. The coordinates of power and affect, defined by the degree of emotional closeness between teacher and students and the directionality in which knowledge flows in their interactions, determine the nature of their pedagogical relationship to a large extent.

A traditional pedagogical relationship in a knowledge-centered environment usually implies a considerable social distance between teachers and students. Furthermore, in educational settings where directionality is high and emotional closeness is low, instructors ordinarily focus on deciding what must be learned and how, yet they often disregard students' emotional response to learning the subject they teach.

Such relational dynamics tend to reproduce the banking model of education (Freire, 1968/2005), in which teachers are the sole suppliers of knowledge while students are its passive and often disillusioned recipients. In research education, this form of relationship leads research trainers to overemphasize their roles as transmitters of knowledge and overseers of method application, usually at the expense of their connection with their trainees, which is pivotal in helping them overcome emotional crises associated with their initial inability to take ownership of research as an integral component of their professional identity.

On the other hand, empirical research's organic and messy nature, when carried out in relatively small yet lasting learning communities (Coll, 2004; Sierra-Piedrahita, 2018), offers different pedagogical possibilities that promote the emergence of research mentoring. In contrast to traditional pedagogical relationships, mentoring involves positive reciprocal affect and distributed power regarding knowledge construction. Hence, mentors and mentees often generate a more dialogic educational context in which knowledge flows in multiple directions.

Learning communities such as those formed in RIs lend themselves to the emergence of research mentoring. As described earlier, pedagogical conditions in RIs are not limited by the traditional space, time, and curricular constraints of regular research courses. As a result, the dynamics between students and teachers drastically shift, primarily as they pursue the resolution of real research problems for which everyone must contribute a piece of the solution. Consequently, as suggested by the results, RI coordinators and students can more easily engage in research mentoring than research trainers and trainees in traditionally organized classroom settings.

Collective approaches to formative research (Hakkarainen et al., 2016), such as those present in RIs, appear to support research mentoring. A caveat, nonetheless, is necessary for a balanced understanding of pedagogical relationships in research education: Research mentoring is neither an exclusive prerogative nor an unequivocal outcome of RIs. Despite their potential as an alternative form of research education, RIs face challenges usually associated with coordinators' lack of knowledge, time, administrative support, or emotional disposition to engage in mentoring. Likewise, effective research mentoring can also surface in other types of research training, including regular research courses.

RIs often promote collaborative, experiential learning around distributed decision-making regarding curriculum construction and implementation rather than focusing on the transmission and reproduction of theoretical or methodological knowledge. Along those lines, Mesa-Villa et al. (2020) conclude that:

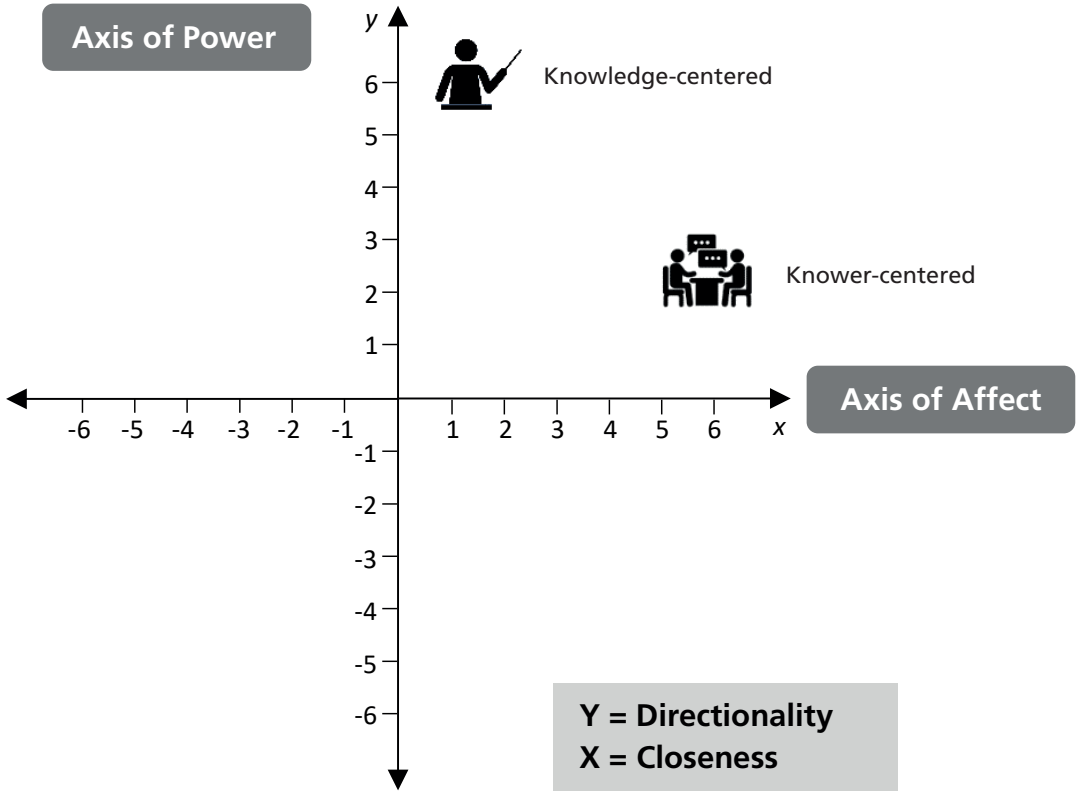
> Research Seedbeds comprises [*sic*] a strategy that fosters a community-based research education approach in which local and situated research practices are favored. This strategy is contrary to traditional educational methods in which research is taught from prescriptive agendas and conceived as an individual set of skills. (p. 171)

Nevertheless, we must note that although differential elements such as small class sizes and flexible temporal-spatial conditions for teaching and learning in RIs are advantageous for forming democratic pedagogical relationships, using them as the single explanation for effective research mentoring would be an oversimplification. Qualities of collaborative approaches to research training, including the communal nature of learning directed towards solving real-life problems, the precedence of integrative over compartmentalized and formative over summative assessment, the diffused and overlapping boundaries concerning traditional teacher and students' roles, and the distribution of power as regards the multidirectional circulation of knowledge, should be carefully considered in the analysis of pedagogical relationships.

These elements point towards a fundamental epistemological shift in research education from individualistic models centered on knowledge as an

external cultural product to collective models centered on knowers as they actively engage in the act of knowing together. Figure 2 summarizes our model and shows the axes of power and affect and the coordinates on which the pedagogical relationships of research trainers and trainees could be located for both knowledge-centered and knower-centered approaches.

Figure 2. Approaches to Pedagogical Relationships in Research Education



Our model, therefore, points to a shift in focus (a) from knowledge (*what* to know) to knowing (*how* knowledge is developed), (b) from individualistic approaches that accentuate fixed teaching and learning roles to collaborative approaches that integrate knowers as they fluidly engage in the process of knowledge construction, and (c) from vertical (more top-down) to horizontal (more bottom-up and collegial) relationships between the two human poles of the pedagogical act. Table 3 describes aspects of directionality, decision-making, closeness, and interactional focus[5] in each type of relationship. However, it is worth noting that rather than representing a black-or-white dichotomy between approaches, this model is intended to conceptually set the outer limits of a continuum in which pedagogical relationships could be described in their actual fluctuations and emphases.

5 By interactional focus we refer to the type of relation with knowledge as it is mediated by the interactions with other members of the academic community (teacher and other class members) favored in each approach.

Table 3. Common Features of Approaches to Pedagogical Relationships in Research Training

	Knowledge-centered	Knower-centered
Directionality	+ unidirectional	+ bi/multidirectional
Decision making	+ vertical	+ horizontal
Emotional closeness	- closeness	+ closeness
Interactional focus	+ individualistic	+ collaborative

Conclusions

Being this a qualitative case study, we do not purport to make broad generalizations as researchers in the quantitative tradition would. Instead, we sought to analyze the pedagogical relationships within RIs so that other members of the academic community may recognize our findings as legitimate within our particular context and our theoretical model relatable should they be paired with educational conditions similar to the ones described herein.

That said, as relatively small, yet long-standing learning communities, RIs appear to foster a learning environment of horizontality and closeness among their members. As regards the distribution of power, formative research within RIs usually involves a democratic process in which students not only express their opinion but also contribute to the construction of knowledge. Concerning affect, closeness in RIs, which could be partially attributed to some level of identification of the student with the teacher, is built upon reciprocal feelings of admiration, respect, affection, and trust. These feelings are fundamental for building a teacher–student relationship that sets the stage for research mentoring.

Emotional closeness and distributed power in the construction of knowledge are concomitant to the emergence of mentoring. RI coordinators who effectively assume the role of research mentors become supporters, acculturators, sponsors, educators, and role models for their students (Díaz-Maggioli, 2014; Malderez, 2009; Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999).

The pedagogical conditions of RIs are conducive to the rise of mentoring relationships because they give teachers an exceptional opportunity to connect with students emotionally and engage with them in the actual endeavor of conducting real research exercises that seek to answer genuine problems. Moreover, research mentoring favors the development of crucial research attitudes and competencies such as autonomy, critical thinking, self-confidence, teamwork, and scientific curiosity, which cut across students' education and contribute to their identity construction as teacher researchers.

The aforementioned pedagogical conditions allow RI coordinators to relate with students academically and personally to better prepare them for the ups and downs of their professional lives as teachers and researchers. Such a mind frame is based on the notion of research training as a journey in which students acquire theoretical and research-based knowledge and experiential and relational knowledge fundamental to their personal and professional development. In summary, coordinators scaffold students to develop research attitudes and competencies during the training process, making students grow as professionals and human beings.

Sustained research mentoring also allows student teachers to deepen the disciplinary aspects of the profession. Hence, by a principle of knowledge transference (Cornell-Pereira, 2019; Gholam, 2018), preservice teacher researchers carry research attitudes and competencies honed in their RIs into other educational settings. Moreover, as Molineros-Gallón (2009) indicated, students taking part in RIs will likely end up guiding research training processes themselves, a vital step towards

ensuring a generational renewal in language teacher education.

Finally, teaching and learning in RIs occur in an environment that facilitates students' personalized training, active participation, and integration with the entire community around the different elements of research. Compared with more traditional approaches to formative research, these conditions stimulate student–teacher relationships of greater personal closeness and better democratic decision-making regarding knowledge construction.

Our analysis resulted in constructing a model that describes pedagogical relationships in research education and points to differences between knowledge-centered and knower-centered approaches to research training. However, the substantial elements of this model about how pedagogical relationships influence teachers' and students' relationship with knowledge escaped the scope of the presented empirical research, so they should be further explored and tested in future research projects. In addition, we believe that research mentoring in settings other than RIs and factors leading to the dissolution of RIs well deserve to be investigated.

To conclude, we believe that RIs have become an essential component of research education in our country. When research mentoring consolidates in RIs, students explore research paths within their discipline. At the same time, they grow into active members of a learning community that favors meaningful academic and personal relationships. As students become conscious of the role of research in enhancing the quality of education, they develop research attitudes and competencies that can transform their teaching practice. Ultimately, the heightened awareness they gain about the role of research in language teaching lays the foundations for the solid construction of their professional identity as language teacher researchers.

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https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.94340

Mapping English Language Teacher-Researchers' Collaboration and Networking Practices Throughout Their Professional Paths

Configuración de las prácticas de colaboración y de trabajo en red de los profesores-investigadores de la enseñanza del inglés en sus trayectorias profesionales

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This article reports the findings of a multiple case study that identifies and describes the collaboration and networking practices of four Mexican English language teaching professionals belonging to two MA cohorts: 2005–2007 and 2007–2009. For two years, curriculum vitae analysis, maps, and in-depth interviews were used to collect data on these professionals' paths. Three dimensions were examined: teaching, organization, and research, as well as levels of involvement in these professional activities, which construct and shape participants' collaboration and networking practices. The findings revealed that each teacher-researcher's agency was directly related to their capitalization of diverse strategies in each dimension and how this, in turn, configured their engagement in the English language teaching community or other communities.

Keywords: collaboration, English language teaching, networking, teacher-researchers

Este artículo reporta los hallazgos de un estudio de caso múltiple que identifica y describe las prácticas de colaboración y de trabajo en red de cuatro profesionales mexicanos de la enseñanza del inglés de dos cohortes de maestría: 2005–2007 y 2007–2009. Durante dos años, se utilizaron *curriculum vitae*, mapas y entrevistas a profundidad para recolectar datos sobre sus trayectorias profesionales. Se examinaron tres dimensiones: docencia, organización e investigación, así como la participación en actividades profesionales que construyen y moldean prácticas de colaboración y de trabajo en red. Los resultados revelan que la agencia de los participantes está relacionada con la aplicación de diversas estrategias en cada dimensión y cómo esto a su vez configura sus compromisos con la comunidad de enseñanza del inglés o con otras comunidades.

Palabras clave: colaboración, enseñanza del inglés, profesores investigadores, redes

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Trujeque-Moreno, E. E., Aguilar-González, G., & Encinas-Prudencio, F. (2023). Mapping English language teacher-researchers' collaboration and networking practices throughout their professional paths. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 33–48. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.94340

This article was received on March 13, 2021 and accepted on September 5, 2022.

Introduction

In Mexico, as elsewhere, higher education English teaching professors construct and negotiate their professional paths in complex landscapes where they have to deal with several tensions, such as the one between individual and collective work, especially in their authorship development (Domínguez-Gaona et al., 2015; Encinas-Prudencio et al., 2019; Trujeque-Moreno et al., 2015). On the one hand, policies of organizations such as the *Sistema Nacional de Investigadores* (National Research System) and formal graduate programs require individual academic production. On the other hand, policies from the Secretary of Education—such as *Redes y Cuerpos Académicos* (networks and research groups)—and institutions call for collaborative work. This last policy's main objective is to promote professors' participation in formal research groups in national and international collaboration and networks and in international publications. However, faculty participation in international academic contexts depends not only on "professional knowledge." Professors must keep abreast with their current research issues and participate in national and international "conversations" to contribute to the discipline. It certainly requires the capability of collaborating and networking with other scholars. Besides the everyday tensions among participants in professional communities, academics must collaborate and network with scholars from different cultures, who speak different languages, and hold different ideologies (Leite & Pinho, 2017).

Each academic community has its history, culture, and practices. Thus, the implementation of Mexican higher education policies varies depending on each disciplinary culture. In the English language teaching (ELT) community, which is teaching-oriented and relatively new compared to other communities, master's programs for English teachers were implemented in the 90s. Since the end of that decade, several professors have obtained scholarships for national and international PhD programs. Most of these professors returned to their universities and, in many cases, participated in launching ELT undergraduate programs and other graduate programs. There are 180 undergraduate and 12 graduate programs in ELT or related fields, such as applied linguistics (ANUIES, n.d.). Several alumni from these programs work in different public higher education institutions, as is the case of the participants in this study.

Research on networking practices emerged in the mid-1980s in all kinds of organizations (Ibarra, 2004; Ibarra et al., 2005). About two decades later, interest in collaboration and networking research arose in primary and secondary education (Bogattia & Foster, 2003, as cited in Muijs et al., 2011). More recent studies—such as Fernández-Olaskoaga et al. (2014) on teacher collaboration in virtual settings, Vangrieken et al.'s (2015) review on teacher collaboration, and Krichesky and Murillo's (2018) study on teacher collaboration—explore this practice in education as a tool for improvement.

Interest in the evaluation of these issues in higher education increased after 2000 (among others, Allen, 2014; Gewerc-Barujel et al., 2014; Kiss, 2020), and various studies raise questions on North and South collaboration and networking (Leite & Pinho, 2017; Thomas-Ruzic & Encinas-Prudencio, 2015). Collaboration and networking have also been discussed in studies related to publication in English in the social sciences and the hard sciences. Curry and Lillis (2010), in a longitudinal "text-ethnographic" study, explored how 50 psychology and education scholars in southern and central Europe published in English. Their findings suggested that solid and long-lasting networks enabled scholars' publications in English. Englander (2013) discusses the relevant role of collaboration, teams, and networks in a publication in English on the hard sciences. There are, to our knowledge, studies on PhD students' paths to authorship in the hard sciences (Carrasco & Kent-Serna, 2011; Carrasco et al., 2012; Müller, 2012). However, there seems to be little research in the social sciences on ELT scholars' collaboration and networking practices in their paths to professional development.

Thus, this study focused on exploring four Mexican ELT professionals' collaboration and networking practices ten years after graduating from an MA program at a public university in central Mexico. Therefore, the research questions that guided this study were:

1. How are these teacher-researchers' collaboration and networking practices characterized?
   a. In what kinds of activities do these participants collaborate and network?
   b. To what extent or level?
   c. What kinds of roles do they take?
2. How do the participants' agencies interplay with their collaboration and networking practices in their professional paths?

Literature Review

Collaboration and Networking in Academia

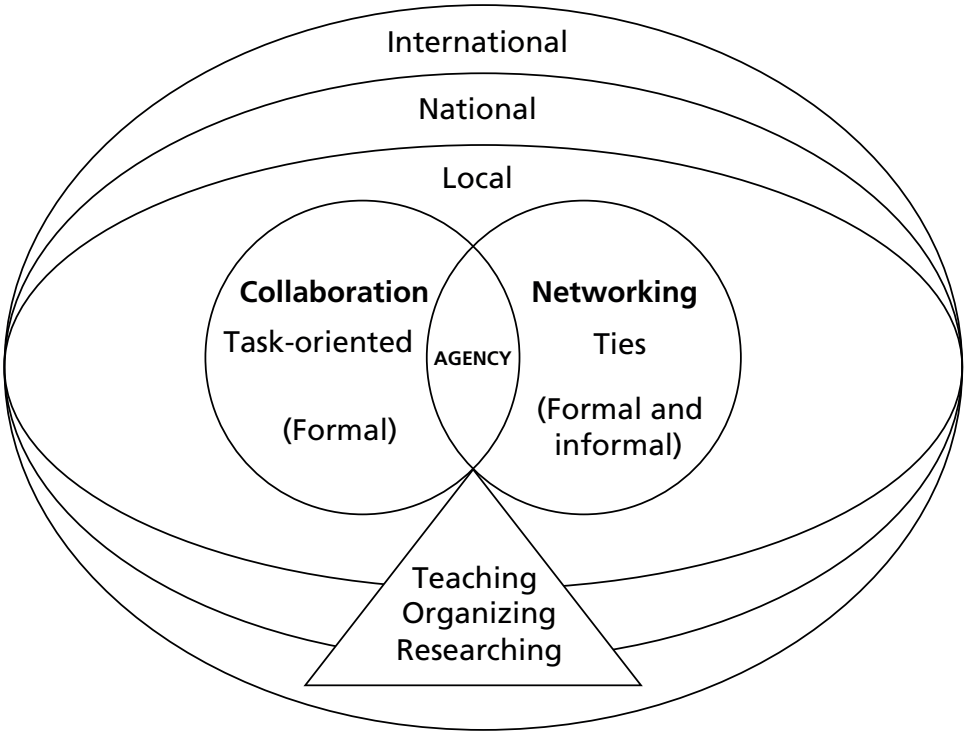
It was vital for this study to provide an approximation of each term in order to identify collaboration and networking practices. However, in this comparison and contrast analysis, we found that some authors use these terms indistinctly, and meanings vary according to the context in which they are used. For example, some authors view collaboration as collectively working on the same task and towards the same goal (Leite & Pinho, 2017; Müller, 2012), whereas networking is regarded as establishing key relationships or ties that strengthen social capital and career success in academia (Domínguez-Gaona et al., 2015; Leite & Pinho, 2017; Ramírez-Montoya, 2012; Šadl, 2009; Streeter, 2014). In some cases, close relationships are created through networks in both formal and informal contexts (Curry & Lillis, 2014; Ely et al., 2011; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2014). Fernández-Olaskoaga et al. (2014), Vangrieken et al. (2015), and Krichesky and Murillo (2018) approach teacher collaboration as a way the individual works with others to form teams to achieve something. Moreover, different interactions seem to happen while collaborating and networking with community of practice members, mainly on-site or virtual, locally, nationally, or globally (Leite & Pinho, 2017). Those interactions occur with peers that share similar roles or with other community members with lower or higher hierarchies (Thagard, 1997). For other authors, collaboration entails establishing a network; networking itself seems to be used to "cultivate your sponsors" (Streeter, 2014) through a web of connections that would lead to innovations in academia (Curry & Lillis, 2010; Leite & Pinho, 2017; Šadl, 2009). Nevertheless, both collaboration and networking bring out other difficulties, such as the complex task of negotiating and finding effective ways to connect and keep those connections active. Table 1 compares the key differences between these two concepts.

Table 1. Collaboration and Networking Practices in Academia

	Purpose	Context	References
Collaboration	• To carry out a task with a common objective • To achieve productivity	Formal ties	Fernández-Olaskoaga et al., 2014; Krichesky & Murillo, 2018; Leite & Pinho, 2017; Müller, 2012; Vangrieken et al., 2015
Networking	• To connect • To create social relationships (social capital)	Formal and informal ties	Curry & Lillis, 2014; Domínguez-Gaona et al., 2015; Ely et al., 2011; Leite & Pinho, 2017; Ramírez-Montoya, 2012; Šadl, 2009; Streeter, 2014; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2014

Both collaboration and networking participants' practices or dynamics occur within three major activities that lead to ELT professional development in the Mexican higher education context: teaching, researching, and participating in professional organizations. These categories, identified by Trujeque-Moreno et al. (2015) and Encinas-Prudencio et al. (2019), are used in this study to examine collaboration and networking practices (see Figure 1) from these participants' professional paths.

Figure 1. Mapping Collaboration and Networking Practices in Academia



Maps were developed to visualize participants' practices, the communities they belonged to, and the level at which they participated in their local, national, or international contexts, taking into account the conceptual differences in collaboration and networking above, as well as the participants' landscape of practice.

In this study, ELT teacher-researchers collaboration and networking practices are explored through a social perspective where relationships are crucial to understanding human and organizational behavior (Muijs et al., 2011). Moreover, learning in the profession is viewed as a socio-cultural process within landscapes of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015).

The "landscape of practice" of these ELT professionals is a complex system of communities of practice and boundaries between them that have turned, in some cases, into hybrid multidisciplinary communities. Like most other professionals, these professionals participate in more than one research community and learn from their practice in their workplace, professional and social networks, informal communities, and research websites, among others. Professionals inhabit the "landscape" with

an identity in dynamic construction and, in the process, often use an amalgamation of resources to construct their professional paths (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015).

In academic communities, participants adopt different roles in their interactions with other colleagues depending on their professional level and type of participation. Some focus more on writing and publication processes and are defined as "literacy" brokers (Curry & Lillis, 2010). They become editors, reviewers, academic peers, English-speaking friends, and colleagues who mediate text production. A few become "network" brokers and promote and facilitate their colleagues' or students' participation in their professional communities through their web of connections.

Agency in Professional Paths

When looking at ELT teacher-researchers' paths (Encinas-Prudencio et al., 2019), two of the critical features of professors' participation in the community arose: (a) teacher-researchers collaboration and networking practices and (b) agency, which are commonly considered as social action attained by a person's capacity. Priestley et al. (2012) view agency as an emergent phenomenon. They adopt an ecological view in which individuals achieve agency in specific situations due to their engagement in a specific context. Accordingly, individual capacity and the characteristics and dimensions of the context shape agency as a temporal process.

One of the central arguments in the ecological view of agency is that an individual's capacity is never enough to achieve agency. Agency is always achieved in concrete contexts, which are formed and shaped by culture (Archer, 2000). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) state that agency can be understood as a temporal process of social engagement permeated by the individuals' background, projections of the future, and engagement with the present. Through reflexivity—a self-dialogue—individuals evaluate their backgrounds, foresee the future, analyze the present, make strategic decisions, and devise a new action or response to a specific situation. We use this perspective of agency in this study.

Method

This multiple case study was a follow-up study on paths toward authorship in ELT (Encinas-Prudencio et al., 2019). Four categories emerged from the previous study: (a) context awareness of higher education and ELT communities, (b) collaboration and networking, (c) publication practices, and (d) agency. The current study explores collaboration and networking in depth.

Case study research is used to illuminate an understanding of complex phenomena (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2013). Merriam (2009) defines a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). In this case, we explored four ELT professionals' collaboration and networking practices in their professional development paths.

We chose the four Mexican participants with more outstanding track records out of eight participants from the previous study (mentioned above): Juan, Joaquín, Verónica, and Graciela (pseudonyms). The primary purpose was to understand the participants' relationships between their collaboration, networking practices, and professional development. They all graduated from one of two MA cohorts (2005–2007 or 2007–2009) of an ELT program in a public university in central Mexico. Two participants held a PhD, one was about to graduate, and the other seemed not interested in a PhD program since she was more focused on her teaching and research. Although the three PhD programs they studied were very demanding, only one had a scholarship; the other two worked while studying their program.

Over 24 months, we designed and applied the data collection strategies and analyzed the data for this study. Three data collection strategies were used: (a) the participants' curriculum vitae (CV), (b) interviews based on their CV about their professional development paths, and (c) a final interview where we showed each participant a map of their collaboration and networking

practices drawn with data collected with the CV and the first interviews. The main objective of these last interviews was to understand their collaboration and networking practices in teaching, organization, and research and how these related to their professional development.

The three of us analyzed the participants' updated CVs and designed an interview about their professional development paths based on those CVs. With these data and the interview, we engaged in collaborative coding (Smagorinsky, 2008) by comparing and contrasting each of our summaries to define categories. We later drew maps of the participants' collaboration and networking practices at local, national, and international levels. Later, as mentioned before, each participant was shown their map and then asked for opinions about it. Finally, we redrew the maps with their opinions, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2. Graciela's Professional Activities Mapping (After the Second Interview)

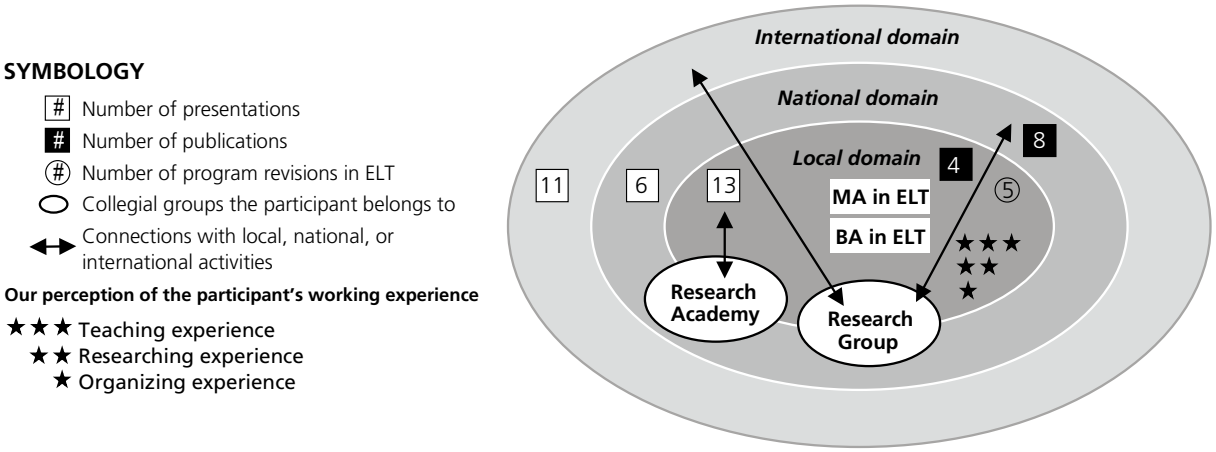
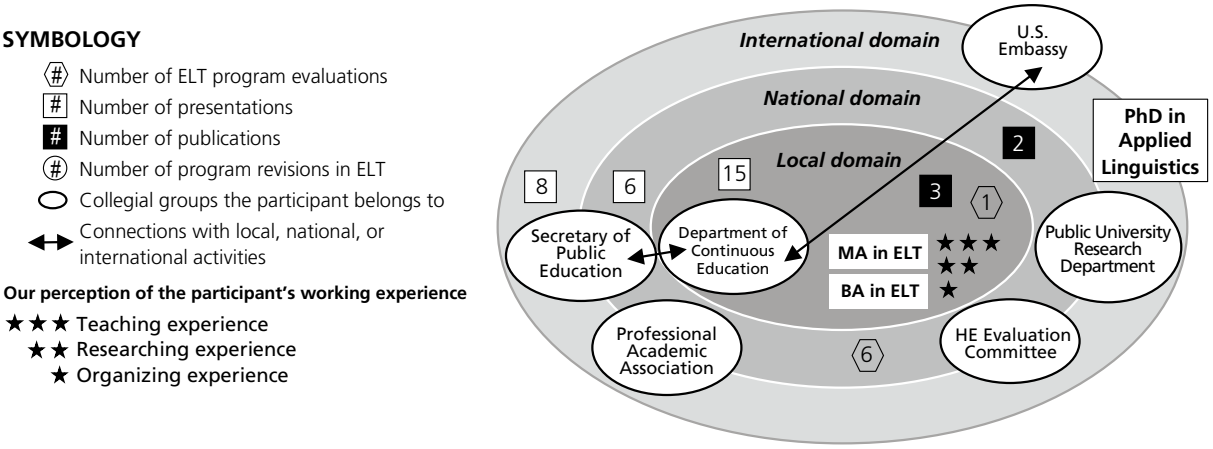


Figure 3. Juan's Professional Activities Mapping (After the Second Interview)



Findings

Participants' Background

All the participants had, we could say, more or less similar education experiences: They all mainly had a public education, learning English in the BA program (only one lived in the USA for two years), and all graduated from the same BA and MA programs. Moreover, they all had full-time positions at a public university in Mexico. Three of them were first-generation students, meaning they were the first children in the family to study higher education. Table 2 illustrates the participants' educational features.

Table 2. Participants' Educational Background

	ELT bachelor's program	ELT master's program	PhD	First-generation student
Juan	1997–2002	2005–2007	2017– Applied linguistics in an English-speaking country	Yes
Joaquín	1999–2004	2005–2007	2015–2019 Social sciences in Mexico	No
Verónica	1995–2000	2005–2007	2014–2019 Language studies in Mexico	Yes
Graciela	1995–2000	2007–2009	None	Yes

Teaching, Researching, and Organizing as Leading Activities in Collaboration and Networking in ELT

The results showed that although the participants had all been involved in the three types of activities (teaching, researching, and organization), their levels and kinds of participation varied in some cases significantly. As shown in Table 3, all the participants were immersed in teaching and had between ten and 20 years of experience. They all participated in teaching-related activities such as curriculum design, and three were involved in continuing teacher education. Graciela, however, probably focused more on her teaching, and her research and organizing activities were related to it. Graciela supervised 16 BA and two MA theses and allocated significant time to students' writing and thesis supervision. She worked mainly within her local ELT community in an ELT BA program.

Table 3. Participants' Teaching Experiences

Participant	Years of experience	Curriculum development		
		Program revision	Program design	Diploma course design
Verónica	10	3 programs	Since 2016	None
Graciela	20	None	Since 2013	None
Juan	18	5 programs, approximately	Since 2016	Since 2009
Joaquín	19	5 programs	Since 2016	2009–2014

Higher institutions worldwide and in Mexico have been implementing policies to promote faculty research. Thus, these four teacher-researchers participated in research activities, and they all published to some extent. Table 4 shows that Joaquín, who was the first to hold a PhD degree, was the participant who published the most. It was probably due to his work at a research center which led him to study diverse issues related to education. He wrote three books as a single author and one with his PhD thesis supervisor, with whom he also wrote four international publications. Joaquín, who built a research and publication career, recognized the role of MA professors and peers in his development and highlighted the crucial role of his PhD thesis supervisor as both his literacy and network broker (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Table 4. Research Experiences: Publication and Thesis Supervision

	National publications				International publications		Total	Thesis supervision
	Articles & chapters		Books		Articles & chapters			
	Author	Coauthor	Author	Coauthor	Author	Coauthor		
Verónica	2	7					9	6 BA theses
Graciela	2	10				1	13	16 BA theses 2 MA theses
Juan		3				1	4	11 BA theses
Joaquín	7	3	3	1	1	5	20	13 BA theses 1 MA thesis

The other three participants also collaborated with more experienced researchers or scholars who became their literacy or network brokers (Curry & Lillis, 2014; Lillis & Curry, 2010). On occasions, the literacy or network broker had a role only in one or two particular events; in others, they had a crucial role in a period of the participants' track record. In two cases, the participant and their literacy or network broker became colleagues and participated in the same research group. Graciela and Joaquín, who recognized their professors and thesis supervisors as literacy and network brokers, tended to publish more. Graciela reflected on the role of the thesis supervisor as follows: "I think that the thesis director choice is essential in a postgraduate degree; if you choose well, this could open a lot of doors for you…open spaces, you learn a lot…if it is a good relationship."

Joaquín, talking about his collaboration in writing an article with his PhD thesis supervisor, acknowledged that:

> She's been a great help. She asks questions…in many cases, I don't have answers to those questions. And that pinpoints the gaps…in my research project or…the gaps on the interviews, and then I go back into the field and fill those gaps . . . She doesn't question me [*sic*] what I'm doing it right or not. She asks questions because she wants to know what's going on as well . . . I don't feel she's judging me…She asks me, and I say, "I don't know, that's a good point"…but…go back…to complete, get a holistic understanding…and then she says: "getting closer."

The preceding has led us to reflect on the crucial role of postgraduate studies and especially thesis supervisors in academic development.

Finally, Verónica, in one of the interviews, talked about a colleague and explained:

> The master's and the work that I've been doing with [colleague's name], that was key; I learned a lot of things...a

> lot of collaborations and work, and that was key and, actually, that got me into the area of writing. And then, the second thing, when I entered the PhD, my supervisor also expanded my view in literacy.

So, the data in this study seemed to indicate that a close collaboration between a senior scholar and a less experienced one (such as in the cases of Graciela, Joaquín, and Verónica) had a substantial effect on their academic development. It corroborated the significance of professional track records of collaboration and networking activities as socialization opportunities in peripherical legitimate participation (Casanave & Vandrick, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Of note is that, in the last ten years, the participants joined two or more disciplinary communities, which implied acquiring two or more memberships (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). They all started participating in associations such as MEXTESOL, but later, they started taking part in communities more related to their current research interests. Joaquín admitted he had changed his research interests and, consequently, he was not interested in ELT or applied linguistics. He was more into education research but was still struggling to define his research field:

> Actually nowadays, right now I am finding some sort of difficulties defining what my area of research or my disciplinary field is if I can say so because, for some reason, I am not really into language teaching anymore. For some time, I was interested in discourse analysis, and I am not doing that anymore. Then, I belong to this group of comparative education, but I am not really working on comparative education. Then, I also do some stuff of social sciences, but I am not really into social sciences in terms of anthropological, or sociological, no [*sic*] that into that or political analysis. Then, I am also working in some sort of planning and perspective and stuff, but I am not really into this, so right now I would say I have groups. There are groups of people with whom I socialize. I share interests because I would probably open my academic development in different areas. I don't think I fit into any of those groups because I am not really into the different topics.

The other three participants continued in ELT or applied linguistics yet also had new research interests, leading them to join new disciplinary communities and acquire multiple memberships.

In their paths towards authorship, there were various tensions that scholars confronted and coped with regarding their social contexts and gender (reported in other studies such as Trujeque-Moreno et al., 2015). Among these is the tension between collaborative and individual work. While they all acknowledge the role of collaboration and networking in their track records, two participants, Joaquín and Verónica, admitted the role of lonely periods, especially during the PhD programs, and for Joaquín while researching and writing his three books. For instance, Verónica explained:

> The PhD has been, at least in that program, like a lonely process or lonely path because once you get [what] your topic is, you know what you have to do, but eh…but that work allows you to do things with other people, and I'm not very sure if I really collaborate formally with people. But I think that informally I've talked to some people in the area.

These two participants, however, confronted these lonely periods differently. Verónica implied these lonely periods were challenging, whereas Joaquín associated them with being productive: "I've been living alone for some time now, and it is difficult to go out in [city]. It could be very dangerous. So, I have been studying and writing most of the time."

Higher education policies in Mexico have also promoted collaboration and networking since 2002 with support and funding to research groups or *Cuerpos Académicos* (López-Leyva, 2010) and other projects. This policy challenged researchers to develop organizational competencies. Table 5 shows that Juan is the participant who was more involved in organization activities and worked with five organizations.

Table 5. Organization Experiences: Collaboration and Networking

	Organizations		
	National	**International**	**Key collaborations and networks**
Verónica	Collaborator of a research group and had just started to form her research group	Legitimate code theory	Network broker (1) Collaborators (4) Colleagues Research group
Graciela	Research group member	None	Literacy brokers (2) Network brokers (2) Collaborators (4) Research group member MA thesis supervisor and reader (4 publications)
Juan	• Continuing Education Department • Interinstitutional Higher Education Evaluation Committee (CIEES) • Secretary of Public Education (SEP) • University Research Department	USA Embassy	Network brokers (4) Collaborators (2) Colleagues
Joaquín	Research in Education	Comparative education	Literacy broker (1) Network broker (1) PhD thesis supervisor (5 publications)

At the time of the study, Juan was working with three organizations. In the interviews, he mentioned mainly three network brokers in different moments of his professional path, as stated in the following quote:

> In my academic life, as a professor, I should say, Fabiola, [she] is a key person. . . . I have mixed feelings. I should say Saúl was a key person. . . . I have to recognize that Manuel has also been a key person…Recently, people like Raquel; she's been very supportive and has shaped my perspective in different ways.

Discussion and Conclusions

Agency Strategies in the Participants' Track Records

Each participant engaged in their professional communities at different moments of their paths (Priestley et al., 2012). The level and kind of engagement depended on the professional they wanted to become (Archer, 2010) and on the collaborations and networks they had constructed in the different dimensions (teaching,

organizing, and researching) of their professional life. The short narratives below attempted to present each participant's involvement in their collaborations and networks and the meaning they gave to their "landscape of practice" (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015).

Graciela was widely involved in teaching activities, and her research and organization activities were related to them too. Moreover, her published work had a local and national scope. Most of her presentations, courses, and program revision participations took place in her local ELT community. Nevertheless, she worked with close collaborators in national and international professional activities. Her professional identity and development were shaped by her key collaborations with mentors, literacy brokers, and network brokers since she started her MA program in ELT. She capitalized on these ties in her co-authorships (publications) with mentors and colleagues.

Consequently, she was asked to be part of a research group by senior members of her local community of practice. A key area of broad participation was her role as a thesis supervisor for an undergraduate and a graduate program in ELT, allowing her to work with many students. Even here, Graciela focused more on teaching academic writing for research purposes. Her reflections on her social skills showed high awareness of her collaboration style, which is people-oriented. During the second interview, she focused mainly on the powerful influence of the non-professional groups she belongs to and on her learning process to collaborate and network, which also permeated her social strategies and tactics to work with others in her workplace. We identified her as a team player who liked to make close effective relationships with the people she worked with. Now, she wants to expand her collaborations and networks, yet she provided a little reflection on her future professional projects.

Verónica was involved in different professional activities; two of the most salient were researching and teaching at a public university. Her presentations and publications focused on different topics related to academic writing. She also had ample local and national participation in ELT through her presentations and publications. She reported that her PhD in applied linguistics increased her national and international collaborations and networks while looking for answers for her thesis project. She learned to work with peers and senior professors in two research communities: one in ELT and another focused on specialized writing issues.

Furthermore, she started the organization of her research group at her workplace. We could identify that Verónica's collaboration style was outcome-oriented. Even though she reported that she experienced a lonely path while working on her PhD thesis, she managed to look for answers outside her local research communities, which opened new doors for collaboration with other groups. Her reflections showed that she was unsure about her formal collaborations, but she acknowledged that, at least informally, she collaborated with different professionals in her areas of interest.

Juan's track record showed that he was widely immersed in organizational activities, and his research and teaching were strongly associated with these activities. His organizational participation and collaboration were evident at local, national, and international levels, as he was a coordinator of an educational department in an ELT program and a national English program for teachers' professional development. Moreover, he has been an international program coordinator for almost a decade. These experiences in coordination clearly showed his leadership role. Juan participated locally and nationally as an active member of committees in curriculum evaluation, language testing, and committees for BA graduation processes, including thesis supervision.

He was president of Puebla's chapter in MEXTESOL and organized and co-organized events for ELT professionals locally, nationally, and internationally. His presentations at academic events and publications were closely related to his main interests: professional development, curriculum design and evaluation, and language policies. At the time of the study, Juan was

studying a PhD program in applied linguistics at an internationally recognized institution in the United Kingdom that would allow him to develop further as a researcher and teacher and expand on his organization activities as a prominent network broker in his community and others. His professional identity and development were shaped by his in-depth collaboration in different projects with colleagues and mentors since he started his MA program in ELT and by network brokers since he became immersed in organization activities locally (Vangrieken et al., 2015).

Joaquín's data indicated two clear periods in his path: A first period mainly dedicated to English teaching and teacher education in ELT, and a second one in which he moved to a new state, worked at a research center, got his PhD in social sciences, and migrated into a new disciplinary community, education. Although during his first period, he published in ELT, most of his publications were related to issues about school management and the Mexican educational system. He was mainly interested in issues of inclusion, equity, marginalization, and poverty for the design of public policies and educational planning. Both his PhD program and work in the research center created the conditions for him to study these issues. While he studied for his PhD, he published as a second or first author, mostly with his thesis supervisor, who became both his literacy and network broker. After his PhD graduation in 2017, he published mainly as a single author (three books and eight articles or book chapters nationally and internationally). He continued to belong to a productive research community, participated in events and conferences, and belonged to the editorial board of two journals edited for a couple of such conferences. Joaquín was mainly immersed in teaching in his first period but showed significant research interest. During his second period, he was primarily dedicated to research and taught in BA, MA, and PhD programs. Thus, Joaquín's professional identity and development were mainly shaped by his research.

As presented previously, these teacher-researchers had similar educational backgrounds; however, they had diverse professional paths. The four interviewees displayed an understanding of their circumstances, their challenges at the time, and whom they wanted to become; in other words, their past, present, and future. These reflections enlightened our understanding of the participants' degrees of involvement in teaching, organization, and research in their professional communities at the different stages of their track records. Priestley et al. (2012) view agency as an emergent, temporal phenomenon that an individual achieves as a result of their engagement in a specific context. This view of agency can explain these findings. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the interviews displayed reflections in which the participants discussed their professional development. These reflections revealed an ecological perspective of agency within different temporalities: past, present, and future (Archer, 2010; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Thus, each participant capitalized on their interests, strengths, and context at that particular moment in their paths.

Literacy and Network Brokers' Influence on the Participants' Agency Development

Literacy brokers seem to be fundamental in the participants' publishing processes and creating the environment for a participant to implement their agency. Those who acknowledge their thesis supervisors as their literacy and network brokers publish the most, for example, Joaquín and Graciela. The theory of peripherical legitimate participation enlightens these relationships between thesis supervisors and supervisees—in other words, direct collaboration between a more experienced member of the community and a novice one (Lave & Wenger, 1991)—and conveys a more profound awareness of the context where participation takes place (Wenger, 1998). One of the participants, Graciela, explained clearly the way she worked "alongside" her thesis supervisor,

who helped her gain entrance into thesis supervision: "I invested a long time in these reading; this was a collaborative work that I started alongside [her thesis director], she involved me in thesis reading."

Verónica had a more senior colleague she recognized as a network broker than a literacy one. Juan reflected more on his four network brokers and how they supported his projects and decisions at different times of his track record. Finally, Joaquín, as mentioned above, acknowledged the role of MA professors and especially the collaboration with his PhD thesis supervisor as key in his professional development.

The participants in this study reported their scholar paths initiated in their MA programs. Thus, creating the necessary conditions to support professionals' collaboration and networking practices with other scholars locally, nationally, and internationally in postgraduate programs seem to be crucial in future academic development. Then, more strategic policies that promote collaboration and networking are necessary for higher education, which could lead to higher productivity in the professional activities already described.

Limitations and Implications

All the participants permitted to use the data we collected about their professional track records. Moreover, being insiders in this community of practice allowed us to have a more in-depth understanding of the participants' context. Nevertheless, our closeness to them might add subjectivity to our interpretation of relationships and results in this research. Therefore, a follow-up study could explore the paths of professionals in similar ELT communities in other public Mexican universities or countries.

This study has produced mainly three questions for future research. First of all, as three female researchers, our continuous reflections on gender, which emerged both from our female participants' data and our own experiences, have given rise to many questions on women's participation in academic communities, such as the tensions between women's personal and professional development.

Another issue raised during the study was the possibility of exploring the participants' publications from a discourse analysis perspective, both those publications written by a single author and those coauthored.

Furthermore, the writing process sparked interest in how each of us participated in investigating and writing this article. It was a two-year process, and we were three coauthors from different generations who participated actively in the discussions of data collection, data analysis, and the writing and rewriting of the article using diverse strategies at different moments of the writing process. Although each participant's degree of engagement varied at the different stages depending on our previous research experiences and personal issues, we discussed most points of our concern together, first on-site and later virtually during the last COVID lockdown. Thus, we would also be interested in studying the coauthoring process.

As shown above, this study has, hopefully, shed light on networking processes and practices in this specific context and has posited new questions, especially on collaboration and coauthoring processes and practices.

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https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101711

The Impact of Mentoring on English Language Teachers: A Case From Argentina

El impacto de la mentoría en los profesores de inglés: un caso de Argentina

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Despite evidence on the benefits of mentoring with beginning teachers, little is known about the impact of mentoring on experienced teachers. Based on a qualitative research design, this study explores mentoring with 11 teachers of English as an additional language (four mentors and seven mentees) during the COVID-19 epidemic. Data were gathered through mentees' journals, interviews, and documents. Drawing on thematic analysis, mentees were found to improve their teaching practice and develop their professional knowledge. Specifically, they displayed more sensitivity to learners, unleashed creativity, improved class management, strengthened relationships, increased motivation, and developed reflective competencies. The study argues that mentoring can allow all English language teachers to build knowledge *with* other teachers *from* their own experiences and *for* other teachers and educational stakeholders.

Keywords: continuing professional development, English language teaching, mentoring, teacher knowledge

A pesar de los beneficios que refiere la investigación internacional sobre la mentoría con profesores principiantes, poco se sabe sobre la mentoría con educadores experimentados. Este estudio cualitativo examina la mentoría con once educadores de lengua inglesa como lengua adicional con distintos grados de experiencia (cuatro mentores y siete mentorizados). Un análisis temático de los datos —recolectados de diarios, documentos y entrevistas— mostró una mejora en la enseñanza y el desarrollo profesional de los mentorizados en cuanto a la sensibilidad y relaciones con los estudiantes, la creatividad, la conducción de clase, la motivación y la reflexión. La mentoría permite a todos los educadores de lengua inglesa construir conocimiento *con* otros, *a partir de* la propia experiencia y *para* ellos mismos y otros actores de la educación.

Palabras clave: conocimiento de la enseñanza, desarrollo profesional continuo, enseñanza del inglés como lengua adicional, mentoría

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Pérez Berbain, M., Payaslian, L., Sauer Rosas, A., García, B., & La Porta, A. (2023). The impact of mentoring on English language teachers: A case from Argentina. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 49–64. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101711

This article was received on March 18, 2022 and accepted on September 27, 2022.

Introduction

International research evidence reveals substantial benefits when beginner English language teachers and teachers of other subjects engage in mentoring as a form of continuing professional development (CPD) (Aliaga-Salas, 2018; Banegas, 2022; Bao, 2021; Chan, 2020; Grassinger et al., 2010; Griffiths et al., 2020; Hobson et al., 2016; Lasater et al., 2021; Mullen, 2021). However, little is known about the impact mentoring has on English language teachers of varying degrees of experience since most studies have been conducted with early career teachers. Because of this—and concerned about supporting English language teaching (ELT) educators' CPD during the disconcerting times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic—we, members of the Public Schools special interest group (SIG) from the Buenos Aires English Teachers' Association (APIBA) set up a mentoring programme involving ELT educators of different degrees of experience. We also designed a research project to determine the initiative's impact.

Grounded in sociocultural theory (Johnson, 2006), this study aims to understand how the abovementioned mentoring scheme, as a way of CPD, helped support ELT teachers. In particular, we sought to find out how the mentees viewed the mentoring and how it impacted their CPD. To that end, we reviewed the literature on mentoring and analysed the data we had gathered from the study. We explored the mentoring process from the mentees' point of view.

Conceptual Framework

Mentoring is a well-established practice in education. It ranges from formally institutionalised endeavour within a specific scheme or programme (Aliaga-Salas, 2018; Hobson, 2016) to a self-driven informal tradition among colleagues (Tracey et al., 2008). The concept of mentoring goes back to Homer's *Odyssey* times (Grassinger et al., 2010). In the Greek poem, Odysseus's friend, Mentor, is entrusted with the education of Odysseus's son. Thus, in its roots, mentoring harbours concepts such as protection and guidance. Since then, mentoring has evolved into a much less overarching term focusing mainly on support, learnacy (Claxton, 2004), agency, reflective practice, and acculturation (Aliaga-Salas, 2018). Mentoring has been implemented within institutions mainly to help beginner teachers adjust to the school culture (Gakonga, 2019) and less frequently outside the school-university domains (e.g., Banegas, 2022).

For this study, mentoring has been conceptualised as a "two-way process that develops a reflective approach to learning through the key processes of collaboration, dialogue, observation, critical reflection, and enquiry" (Griffiths et al., 2020, p. 211). This definition foregrounds relationships as "structures through which individuals and groups engage in conversations," which, in turn, promote professional development (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019, p. 346). Hence, the present study is grounded in a sociocultural approach, which regards learning as a social process where the context in which each person lives plays a crucial role in the development of that person and, in turn, through participation, each influences their social context (Lantolf et al., 2018; Vygotsky, 1978; Williams et al., 2015).

The literature on mentoring has identified benefits for both mentors and mentees regardless of teachers' subject specialisation (Griffiths et al., 2020; Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Woloshyn et al., 2019), as well as for the broader educational systems within which they are situated (Hobson et al., 2009). These gains include the development of mentees' teaching skills, self-reflection, confidence, and self-esteem (Gakonga, 2019; Hobson et al., 2016; Lindgren, 2005; McIntyre & Hagger, 1996). During 2020–2021, research emerged to specifically address mentoring carried out online during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing nurturing (Ersin & Atay, 2021; Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019; Lasater et al., 2021). In such cases, mentoring has been shown to facilitate educators' development in the face of instability (e.g., Banegas, 2022; Chan, 2020; Mullen, 2021).

Mentoring appeared to be successful in ELT when it evidenced: (a) a clear purpose (e.g., a scheme outcome); (b) unified conceptualisation (e.g., participants showed an understanding of mentoring); (c) choice (e.g., mentees select mentors and whether to engage in mentoring or not; (d) review (e.g., mentors and mentees identify concerns in their relationship and make the necessary adjustments); (e) individualisation (e.g., mentees' specific needs tailor the mentoring process; and (f) support (e.g., participants are supported throughout the programme) (Gakonga, 2019; Hobson et al., 2016). Furthermore, it has been found that mentoring calls for non-hierarchical, off-line relationships, that is, outside line management or supervision, which are not tasked with evaluation (Hobson et al., 2016).

From a sociocultural perspective, and in the ELT context, in particular, mentoring has been regarded as a form of CPD—teachers build knowledge through mentor–mentees' interaction provided teachers have the affordance to do so (Banegas, 2022; Banegas & Glatigny, 2021; Gakonga, 2019; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020; Williams et al., 2015). Mentoring offers guided reflection and emotional and technical support (Gakonga, 2019). Hence, participants see how they shape their learning. Likewise, CPD programmes aim to help teachers develop insights to improve the quality of learners' learning (Cordingley et al., 2015). Impactful CPD initiatives in ELT address the diverse needs of teachers, are prolonged, offer support towards the co-construction of contextual knowledge, deepen the teachers' capacity to reflect and make informed decisions (Gakonga, 2019; Schön, 1991), and raise awareness of the effect of their teaching on student learning (Cordingley et al., 2015; Richardson & Díaz-Maggioli, 2018). Moreover, teachers' reflective practice has been found to foster changes in pedagogical beliefs and enhance teacher expertise—both mentoring's and CPD's ultimate purpose (Banegas, 2022; Richardson & Díaz-Maggioli, 2018). Not many accounts of socially built teacher knowledge have found their way into the ELT literature.

The research on mentorship in ELT has been explicit about how mentoring has been carried out (e.g., individually, collectively, in person, online, within and outside an institution) and what it has aimed to achieve (e.g., informed reflective practice, acculturation, support, learnacy, and agency) (Aliaga-Salas, 2018; Gakonga, 2019). It is fair to say that most of the literature deals with mentoring as a formal undertaking; that is, mentors usually take over a mentoring role within the context of a broader scheme (Butcher, 2002; Gakonga, 2019; Hobson, 2016; Kay & Hinds, 2002). Meanwhile, informal mentoring seems to be an under-researched practice (Tracey et al., 2008).

Even more importantly, the literature on mentoring in ELT has—with rare exceptions (e.g., Bao, 2021; Wasner, 2020)—exclusively focused on novice or preservice teachers (Aliaga-Salas, 2018; Gakonga, 2019; Hobson, 2016) and student-teachers in their practicum (Chan, 2020; Díaz-Maggioli, 2014; Tian & Louw, 2020). Novice teachers—also referred to as early career, newly qualified, or beginning—are teachers in their first year at school with a maximum of three years' teaching experience (Gakonga, 2019; Hobson et al., 2009; Shin et al., 2021). The assumption seems to be that mentoring only benefits teachers with little or no experience. Thus, this study seeks to explore mentoring with teachers of varying degrees of expertise who voluntarily engaged in mentoring as an alternative form of CPD during the COVID-19 pandemic, when most teachers may have felt it was like starting from scratch (Banegas, 2022).

The following questions guided the present study:

RQ1: How did mentees view mentoring as a way to develop professionally?

RQ2: How did mentoring impact mentees' CPD?

Method

This small-scale exploratory study is framed within a qualitative research paradigm (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The study focuses on a mentoring experience in Buenos Aires during the COVID-19 pandemic in

2021. It considers the views of the participating mentees (English language teachers) through their reflection in journals, in-depth interviews (Mann, 2011) and some internal documents. Through such a qualitative lens, we seek to understand the views of those who participated in the mentoring experience by analysing their discerned purposes, lived experiences, and situated paths.

Context

The study was conducted for five months (April–August) in 2021, initially with ten English language teachers who met at APIBA Public Schools SIG. A mentoring scheme was set up for English language teachers who worked in public schools, regardless of whether they attended the Public Schools SIG. The study took place in Buenos Aires, where, to our knowledge, neither face-to-face nor online mentoring existed in ELT.

Grounded in a sociocultural view of teacher education, that is, acknowledging that knowledge emerges from the interaction as a mediated and situated activity (Lantolf et al., 2018), we embarked on a mentoring scheme as an alternative form of CPD with ELT teachers with varying degrees of experience. The programme's aims were (a) to support teachers at a critical time and (b) to help them develop professionally.

The programme had the following key features: (a) participation in the mentoring project was voluntary and pro-bono; (b) mentors were experienced ELT educators and mentees were TESOL teachers of public schools; (c) mentors were free from evaluating mentees; (d) mentor–mentee pairs met regularly via videoconferencing and gathered data from their experience; (e) voluntarily, some mentors and mentees carried out the present study.

At the start of the project (April), each educator in the SIG chose to act as a mentor or mentee. Four teachers with over 15 years of experience decided to be mentors, and seven teachers with less experience chose to be mentees. A few weeks into the mentoring experience, there were several changes, such as one mentor changing mentees due to a clash of roles. During the mentoring experience, there were several causes of preoccupation: the pandemic itself, the mentor–mentee relationship, their communication, each participant's affordance of mentoring, and an awareness of the educational loss in learners with hardship at home and no connectivity.

Against this backdrop, three teachers acted as mentors, one as a co-mentor—since she arrived late into the distribution of roles—and seven chose to be mentees (the mentee who changed mentors was counted twice to be able to explore both experiences). Mentees chose their mentors from the very few options available. Because of the low number of mentors, there was more than one mentee per mentor. There were no pre-agreed guidelines on how mentoring would be carried out. Based on an initial meeting, each mentee–mentor pair set up their own ground rules, such as confidentiality and goals. Most mentor–mentee couples met once a week on Zoom or Skype, communicated via WhatsApp in between meetings, and opened a shared Word document on Google Drive to write ideas and reflect after each session. The approximate number of weekly hours pairs devoted to mentoring ranged from two to four, including writing their reflective journals. Journal entries did not follow any specific format but consisted of taking stock of the topics dealt with during the meeting, followed by a 250/300-word reflection.

Two mentees, two mentors, and one co-mentor made up the present study research group to analyse the data and write about the experience. All mentees but one had the chance to choose the group of learners to focus their mentoring on, usually the most challenging class.

Participants

There were 11 participants in this study: seven mentees, three mentors, and one co-mentor. Mentees were teachers of English as an additional language (Table 1) of varying degrees of experience who worked at state-run primary or secondary schools in Buenos Aires or the province of Buenos Aires (Argentina). Most mentees teach 18 hours a week in various schools to students learning English as

an additional language for approximately three hours a week. Most of them held a teaching degree from a higher education institution or a university in Argentina, except for two mentees close to graduating. It is important to point out that most teachers in Argentina start teaching without a teaching degree due to the high demand for ELT educators across the country. The preceding has a knock-on effect on how experience is considered before graduation, as evidenced by some mentees who perceived themselves as beginner teachers when they had several years of experience (Table 1). Mentors were experienced teachers with over 15 years of experience, with master's and postgraduate degrees, while the co-mentor was a novice teacher with seven years of experience. This paper's research team and authors consisted of two mentees, two mentors, and a co-mentor.

Table 1. Mentees' Academic Background

Mentees' pseudonyms	Years of teaching experience	Self-perceived teaching experience	XX SIG member	Graduate (G) / Non-graduate (NG)	Number of classes (groups) taught throughout the week	Number of weekly hours (60 min) taught in the group/s chosen for mentoring
Antonella	20	Experienced	Yes	NG	4	4
Cecilia	14	Early career	Yes	G	8	2
Dora	9	Early career	No	G	6	1.5
Gabriela	12	Experienced	No	G	6	3.5
Lara	5	Early career	Yes	NG	2	5
Mara	15	Experienced	Yes	G	10	3
Sarah	7	Early career	Yes	G	6	2

Written consent was obtained from all participants. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity, and participants' right to withdraw their consent without any consequences were observed. Mentees were informed that the data collected through journals and interviews would be used for a research study and that they would have the chance to validate the data and read the study before publication (British Educational Research Association, 2018).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from mentees' journals (except for one) to find out the mentees' views of mentoring and the impact mentoring had on their CPD; an 8,396-word shared document on Google Drive that contained minutes from participants' meetings, as well as in-depth interviews on Google forms, completed by all but two mentees. There were 53 journal entries gathered; on average, each mentee wrote nine entries (each containing around 300 words). Mentees wrote in English, the language of instruction. Although there were no guidelines for journal entries, all participants summarised the meetings first and wrote their reflections in the narrative form below.

In-depth interviews were conducted through Google forms. They consisted of 15 questions in English, and the research team could ask probing questions if needed through a video call. We sought to triangulate sources and points of view and acknowledge the ecology of the mentoring scheme, that is, understanding participants'

data within the contexts of the systems they work at and live in (Banegas, 2022; Edwards, 2020; Gibson, 1979).

We carried out an iterative and inductive thematic analysis (Cohen et al., 2018). Data were first analysed individually by each researcher before working as a group to reach a consensus. With the focus questions in mind, the data were read to identify axial codes and emerging themes directly connected to the research questions (Mertens, 2015). Data segments were selected and copied onto a shared Excel document. Then, for the sake of the study scope, data addressing only two main themes were identified and colour-coded: the participants' view of mentoring and the impact mentoring had on their CPD. Table 2 shows the axial codes in direct line with the two overall themes guiding this study and some extracts from the data which exemplify each main sub-theme. We acknowledge that the axial codes listed at the head of the list and those indented below are not exact synonyms but were seen as extended synonyms in this analysis. This analysis was carried out by the whole research team, who met online to agree on the analysis, to add to the reliability of an interpretive-natured study and acknowledge that assigning codes and showing their interconnectedness is a highly subjective task (Bell & Waters, 2014). All mentees engaged in member-checking, and none requested data analysis and interpretation changes.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis

Themes	Axial codes	Data segment example
Views	**CPD valid form** Professional improvement Professional development Learnacy	"Mentoring should definitely be put into practice as teachers' situated CPD." (Gabriela)
	Situated Context-driven Tailor-made Practice-oriented Down-to-earth Genuine	"I could find myself with real tools, designed for the class I was teaching, for the real children." (Gabriela)
	Inclusive Horizontal Democratic Distributed responsibilities	"We built an inclusive community of practice." (Dora)
	Dynamic Flexible	"It was very dynamic and flexible. We would reschedule meetings." (Antonella)
	Supportive Caring Empathy-driven Sensitive Relationship-bound	"[There was] evidence of flexibility, commitment, empathy and respect for others and generosity." (Sarah)
	Goal-oriented	"We discussed our mentoring goals and our teaching goals." (Dora)
	Clear framework	"We needed a clear framework." (Lara)

Themes	Axial codes	Data segment example
Views	**Build knowledge** Knowledge-building	"We built a team and we built knowledge (what to teach, how)." (Sarah)
	Time-consuming	"Making time requires effort and we usually tend to prioritise activities that allow us to earn a living or give us other types of personal gain." (Lara)
Impact	**Motivation** Confidence Empowerment Inspiration Engagement Renewal Enlightening	"Increasing my motivation." (Lara)
	Agency	"Sarah led the entire session today." (Sarah)
	Improved teaching Technical support Help in teaching Emotional support Theory into practice Creativity Informed decisions	"I added new insights and ways of working to my teacher toolbox." (Lara) "Focusing on one class has had an impact on all my teaching." (Gabriela)
	Acculturation	"Mentoring helped me understand better how schools work." (Lara)
	Interaction development Active listening Attention Listening development Narrating Dialogue Conversation	"We learnt how to be better listeners, here and with learners." (Gabriela)
	Collaboration We Community Group work Strengthened relationships Bond Two-way Community of practice Learning community Learning with others Empathy Interculturality Other Diversity	"There was flow, collaboration and genuineness." (Gabriela)

Themes	Axial codes	Data segment example
Impact	**Self-generated learning** Reflective practice Learning from others Outsider Evidence-based Data-driven Data Samples Pictures	"Learning has been so much faster because this experience is tailor-made." (Gabriela)
	Knowledge construction Contextualised tools Socially-constructed Inventing	"I shared the outcomes with my mentor, and, based on that, we developed a course of action: We built knowledge together." (Gabriela)
	Learners	"I realised mentoring did not only benefit me, but also them [learners]." (Gabriela)

Findings

Below we describe the research findings, grouped into two main areas corresponding to the research questions that drove the study.

Mentoring as a Way to Develop Professionally

An analysis of the mentees' data shed light on how English language teachers viewed mentoring as a form of CPD. Most of the findings coincide with the literature (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Gakonga, 2019; Griffiths et al., 2020; Hobson et al., 2009), revealing mentoring to be seen as situated, inclusive, dynamic, supportive, and time-consuming. It was also viewed as an endeavour that required a clear goal and framework and allowed mentees to build knowledge with others (see Table 2).

It came as no surprise that the emotional and social dimensions (feeling of pride and sense of belonging and collegiality) also present in the literature (Ersin & Atay, 2021; Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019; Lasater et al., 2021) were central in the data due to the extra pressure which the COVID-19 pandemic put on teachers and learners, as Antonella voiced:

Extract 1

We spent quite a bit of time on the importance of reinforcing the bond and checking on the emotional state of the students, as well as on us. (Journal)

While the literature describes mentoring as support from one person to another (Clutterbuck, 2014; Gakonga, 2019), data analysis from participating teachers with varying degrees of expertise who benefited from mentoring in this study exposes teachers' need for a bottom-up reflective practice. This allowed them not only to get support to improve the quality of learners' learning but also to "explore [their] creativity" (Lara, Interview, Extract 2) and build their knowledge as locals to their contexts (Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2011), as Extract 3 from a mentee illustrates:

Extract 3

I am anchoring every week our shared ideas in my own practice, for example, observing learners' diversity, and I am learning from my practice by telling you about it and finding meaning in what happened. . . . We're inventing a way of improving. (Gabriela, Journal)

The analysis of the data also revealed a sociocultural perspective of learning in participants who benefited from mentoring, placing interaction in English centre stage:

Extract 4

Conversations are very rich to clarify understandings. We reflected on my practice and built collective knowledge. (Sarah, Journal)

Moreover, data analysis exhibits "the core role which relationships played in mentoring, sustaining our motivation" in an endeavour viewed as horizontal and democratic, that is, with consented proceedings (Sarah, Minutes of meeting, Extract 5).

The analysis of the data also exhibited that the view of mentoring as a two-way practice that pursued socially-constructed knowledge might have discouraged participants with a more top-down expectation of learning, as Extract 6 from a mentee who dropped out from the mentoring programme shows:

Extract 6

I wanted to learn from people who had more experience in the field, who could provide me with new ideas. (Dora, Interview)

Furthermore, mentoring was viewed as a time-consuming and self-generated venture. In Gabriela's words: "What seemed to make the community of practice fruitful was what we put into it" (Journal, Extract 7). It seems to address a core issue in how mentees who benefited from the scheme conceptualised mentoring in this study—namely, teachers as protagonists of their learning.

The data analysis also revealed mentoring as a practice that helped teachers to reflect on their views based on their own lived classroom experiences (Extracts 8 and 9). Mentoring was also seen as a dynamic activity (Extract 10).

Extract 8

Our meeting gave us insight on the present situation and ways to overcome the difficulties. (Antonella, Journal)

Extract 9

I could find myself with real tools, designed for the class I was teaching, for the real children. (Gabriela, Interview)

Extract 10

You don't always have the words for what you want to say, so when you have them you write your thoughts or arrange a call. (Gabriela, Journal)

In line with the literature on mentoring as a form of CPD with early career teachers (Banegas, 2022; Banegas & Glatigny, 2021; Gakonga, 2019; Johnson, 2006; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020), the analysis of the data from teachers of varying degrees of experience revealed that mentoring was viewed as a "valid way of CPD" (Antonella, Journal, Extract 11). Furthermore, some mentees seemed to change their minds, such as Gabriela, who had negative feelings towards traditional CPD (Extract 12), but after the study, she saw mentoring as an excellent alternative to CPD (Extract 13).

Extract 12

I have always felt that these courses [traditional forms of CPD] were not easily applicable to the contexts where I work. Thus, I would leave the training sessions with a sour feeling of having wasted my time. (Interview)

Extract 13

Mentoring . . . should definitely be put into practice as . . . teachers' situated CPD. (Interview)

Impact of Mentoring on the Mentees' CPD

Aligned with studies on mentoring with early career teachers (Aliaga-Salas, 2018; Banegas, 2022; Gakonga, 2019; Hobson et al., 2016; Lindgren, 2005; McIntyre & Hagger, 1996), data analysis from English language teachers with varying degrees of expertise revealed that mentoring impacted positively on their CPD. It was unexpected, considering that most teachers had some

teaching experience, and the mentoring experience lasted only five months. However, the data analysis revealed that participants benefited from mentoring regarding their (a) teaching practice and (b) teacher development (Table 2), as Gabriela reflects in a journal entry:

Extract 14

It has been a thoroughly enlightening experience, from which I was able to be listened to and learn, get a different point of view to solving everyday issues in the foreign language class.

In line with previous studies on mentoring with early career teachers, enhanced teaching practice (Gakonga, 2019; Hobson et al., 2016; Lindgren, 2005) was seen, for example, in teachers becoming more sensitive to individual learners, as Gabriela states in Extract 15.

Extract 15

I feel connected to the children for the first time in ages. I feel I have an educational goal; I feel I am their educator, not the technical entertainer like they once made me believe I was. (Journal)

There was also reference to developed teaching strategies such as teachers unleashing their creativity ("I explored my creativity as regards activities." Lara, Interview, Extract 16); "improving class management," (Lara, Journal, Extract 17); and showing "inclusive strategies, flexibility beyond planned [tasks] and achiev[ing] the goal of teaching learners how to learn" (Sarah, Journal, Extract 18). Teachers acknowledged that some of the teaching strategies they were using were inspired by those enacted in mentoring, such as flexibility, sensitivity, and inclusion, as Gabriela reflects in her journal: "In a way I am mirroring what we do together, how we listen to each other and how we learn" (Extract 19).

Teacher development was accomplished due to strengthened relationships between mentors and mentees. Sarah pointed out: "I carried on mainly because of [the relationship we have built]" (Minutes of meeting, Extract 20). Echoing previous studies on mentoring with early career teachers (Hobson et al., 2016; Lindgren, 2005), teacher motivation also indicated teacher development, as shown in Extract 21.

Extract 21

This mentoring experience has been empowering me beyond my initial expectations. I now feel the theory we've read and talked about in my body. (Gabriela, Journal)

In addition, mentees pointed out developed competencies such as interaction, collaboration, and reflection, as stated by Sarah: "We developed our competencies, connecting theory and practice such as reflecting critically, interacting, and creating" (Journal, Extract 22).

Data analysis also showed developed reflective competencies leading to socially-constructed knowledge, which seems to be the most significant finding of this study. As Extract 23 indicates, mentees viewed themselves as protagonists of their learning:

Extract 23

I shared the outcomes with my mentor, and, based on that, we developed a course of action: We built knowledge together and then I shared what I learnt with other colleagues from school. They were all very interested because they saw how the children were responding. (Gabriela, Interview)

This bottom-up approach to learning which mentoring seems to have made possible, resulted in the sense of ownership and agency in the teachers. They built with others knowledge that was context-driven. It also hints at the trickle effect that teacher knowledge may have: Extracts 23 and 24 evidence the effect mentoring had on Gabriela's CPD: "I've redefined and reassessed my teaching profession, satisfied with the meaning I take from my work" (Journal, Extract 24).

Consistent with the literature on how teachers build knowledge (Johnson & Golombek, 2020), the learning process teachers engaged in voluntarily was

acknowledged to be emotionally driven, socially bound, and individually based.

Below we will discuss the implications of mentoring as an alternative form of CPD with English language teachers of varying degrees of experience during a critical period such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

In this study, we sought to answer two research questions: how mentees viewed mentoring as a way to develop professionally and how mentoring impacted the mentees' CPD. In line with the literature reviewed (Aliaga-Salas, 2018; Banegas, 2022; Bao, 2021; Chan, 2020; Gakonga, 2019; Grassinger et al., 2010; Griffiths et al., 2020; Hobson et al., 2016; Lasater et al., 2021; Mullen, 2021), primarily focused on novice or preservice teachers—defined as teachers in their first year at school with a maximum of three years' teaching experience (Gakonga, 2019; Hobson et al., 2009; Shin et al., 2021)—the findings in this study showed mentoring as a promising alternative for English language teacher's CPD (Extract 13), especially during a critical time such as the COVID-19 epidemic. Our findings revealed that mentoring improved teaching practice and professional development regardless of the participants' teaching experience (Extracts 14, 18, and 22). One important caveat is that, at the time this study took place and given the unsettling context, even experienced teachers may have felt they were starting all over again (Banegas, 2022). This backdrop may have added extra motivation to those experienced and less experienced participants who remained in the mentoring programme. Conversely, it may have put extra pressure on those teachers who dropped out, regardless of their length of teaching experience.

The findings in this study allude to the critical role that mentees' conceptualisation and affordances of mentoring played in the impact mentoring had on their CPD, as well as how their learning views contributed to shaping their own learning experience (Extract 4). Some mentees viewed mentoring as a two-way bridge, allowing them to exercise their agency while benefiting substantially. They considered mentoring an inclusive and dynamic approach to learning through collaboration, dialogue, observation, critical reflection, and enquiry (Griffiths et al., 2020). Other mentees either did not view the mentoring scheme this study focused on as a good CPD experience or gauged the commitment it involved as beyond their possibilities and, therefore, withdrew. Findings showed that the latter were not game-changers—inspiring other colleagues or influencing educational policy—but game-players (Extract 6).

As opposed to other forms of CPD, mentoring has been found to offer English language teachers the possibility to engage in situated, needs-driven, personalised professional conversations to develop an informed view of their contexts and find ways not only to overcome difficulties but also to build teacher knowledge (Extracts 3 and 23). This last finding seems to add new knowledge to the literature on mentoring. The research on mentoring reviewed in this study (Banegas, 2022; Bao, 2021; Chan, 2020; Gakonga, 2019; Griffiths et al., 2020; Lasater et al., 2021; Mullen, 2021) reported improved development of mentees' teaching skills, self-reflection, and confidence, as well as higher teacher retention rates and enhanced wellbeing and teacher learning. Regarding this last repercussion, enhanced teacher learning, the literature is not explicit on whether that refers to teachers displaying improved competencies when teaching learners or whether teachers would also share their renewed views and practices with colleagues. This broader perspective of professional development is what the findings in this study explicitly forefront (Extracts 23 and 24). Although very limited in scope, the findings in this study show the advocacy of teachers when they build knowledge with others from the data they collect from their local contexts (Extract 9), demonstrated by the sharing of their knowledge with colleagues at school.

In this study, teachers were found to explore their creativity (Extract 16). As findings have shown (Extract 1), the mentoring framework which will be discussed below offered a secure environment for teachers to go beyond the quick fix of "whether their practices work, but [enquire] for whom, in what ways, and why" (Johnson, 2006, p. 248). Mentees appeared to have created possibility; for example, by showing flexibility and sensitivity to learners, teachers were said to have found meaning in what they did and reassessed their profession (Extracts 18 and 24). Mentees showed keenness in mirroring with their learners some of the competencies they developed in mentoring (Extract 19). It places mentoring as a form of CPD in a positive light, along with first-rated initiatives on teacher empowerment and equity, such as lesson study and inclusive inquiry (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020).

Specifically, findings identify mentoring as a means to foster teacher knowledge in ELT. Imbued with their teaching experience, mentees narrated the teaching events, and mentors and mentees engaged in reflection (Schön, 1991; Extract 14). In line with the latest research in reflective practice (Mann & Walsh, 2017), reflexive practice (Aslan et al., 2022), teacher research (Banegas & Consoli, 2020; Consoli & Dikilitaş, 2021; Smith, 2020), and CPD (Banegas, 2022; Cordingley et al., 2015; Johnson & Golombek, 2020; Richardson & Díaz-Maggioli, 2018), this study shows how teachers can develop knowledge (Extracts 3 and 4)—namely, engaging in reflection, conceptualising their thoughts in interaction with the mentor(s), and designing a collaborative plan (Banegas & Glatigny, 2021; Kolb & Kolb, 2018). Mentoring enabled teachers to develop agency, noticeable by the mentees' everyday use of "we" when referring to their work (Extracts 4, 7, and 22). Thus, mentees' individual professional development also became evident (Extracts 15 and 22). As locals to their contexts, teachers have the potential to inform not only their and their colleagues' work but also research and educational policies (Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

The bottom-up approach to mentoring and to building teacher knowledge revealed in this study with more and less experienced English language teachers has shown, as hinted above, an increase in teacher motivation, empowerment, and satisfaction from the meaning they took from their work (Extract 21). Findings also show that the emotional and social dimensions played a central role in mentoring (Extract 24), exposing not only feelings of pride and a sense of collegiality but also providing a space for going beyond tensions and concerns (Extracts 4 and 8) to build knowledge (Extract 22). Short of other means of professional development due to the pandemic crisis, mentoring was regarded as a highly valuable practice (Extracts 11 and 13), reinforcing the importance of providing ELT educators with varied and inclusive opportunities for CPD (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020).

At the core of mentoring lay the relationships that mentors and mentees build, promoting professional development for those involved (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). It was by creating and strengthening the bonds in the mentoring relationships that trust, reflection in interaction, knowledge, and a sense of belonging were developed (Extract 5). As it happened, each participant created mentoring day after day, not by following some preconceived guidelines. With hindsight, relationships were thought to be the most sustaining factor (Extracts 20 and 21).

As stated above, the success of mentoring depends on an understanding of mentoring as a two-way process (Griffiths et al., 2020), which requires clear goals, commitment, effort, trust, a solid mentor–mentee relationship, freedom from evaluation, a sustained framework, and a sociocultural view of learning, that is, one that regards learning as a social process, with interaction as the centre stage (Lantolf et al., 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). As it became apparent, the most revealing outcome from this study is that mentoring as a CPD practice may enable English language teachers of varying degrees of experience to build knowledge

by themselves, *with* other teachers, *from* their own experiences, and *for* themselves and other educational stakeholders.

Conclusion

Primarily ethnographic and descriptive, this study shows the benefits of mentoring as an alternative and more inclusive form of CPD for English language teachers of varying degrees of experience, not merely for early career ones; namely, a two-way practice that can offer support and the possibility of developing competencies such as interaction, reflection, agency, and social learning. Moreover, through mentoring, teachers can create insights that can directly inform their practices and other colleagues, future researchers, and educational policies. In addition, this study suggests that English language teachers who engage in mentoring as a situated CPD practice develop their creativity and criticality and are very likely to offer their learners a similar experience. Therefore, from a sociocultural view, mentoring may have a lot to building teacher knowledge, especially during critical times.

Despite the positive findings, our study encountered several limitations: First, the small number of participants involved. However, this number permitted the diversity and depth needed for this inquiry. Second, the data collected may have been influenced by the researchers, some of whom were also mentees. Third, the amount of data collected by participants who remained in the project exceeded the data obtained from the participants who withdrew from the scheme, which limited the number of diverse views on mentoring. Last, this study would require a follow-up (e.g., after one year) to examine the sustainability of the mentees' reported outcomes.

Making recommendations for general teaching and teacher education is contrary to the approach in this study, which insists on the particularity of settings and events (Toohey & Smythe, 2021). Nevertheless, having explored some English language teachers' views of mentoring and its impact on their CPD, an emphasis was placed on the importance of bottom-up approaches to CPD, which are context-driven, relationship-centred, and knowledge-based. As this study has shown, teachers, within their contexts, need to build knowledge with others actively. Therefore, this study has implications for CPD programmes for English language teachers showing that general, imposed, top-down, decontextualised CPD, which does not directly address teachers' needs and relegates teachers' voices, may be bound to fail. Conversely, situated, teacher-generated CPD initiatives promote socially built and disseminated knowledge.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dr. Darío Banegas, who encouraged us to write this report and guided us throughout the process.

https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.96423

Professional Demotivating Factors Among High School, Institute, and University EFL Teachers: A Comparative Study

Factores profesionales desmotivadores entre docentes de inglés en colegios, institutos y universidades: un estudio comparativo

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This mixed-methods study investigated and compared the professional demotivating factors for EFL teachers in three contexts: high schools, language institutes, and universities. Consequently, a validated questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed to gather data from 189 Iranian EFL teachers. The results indicated that the most prominent demotivating factors were financial issues, students' demotivation, facilities and course books, and neglecting teachers for educational decision-making. However, *financial issues* and *facilities and course books* were less demotivating for university teachers. During the qualitative phase, it was also revealed that supervisors' feedback and attitudes, relationships with colleagues, and preferential treatments negatively affect EFL teachers' motivation. Furthermore, unlike high school teachers, language institutes and university EFL teachers perceive job insecurity as incredibly demotivating.

Keywords: demotivating factors, English as a foreign language teachers, job insecurity, language learning institutes, high schools

Este estudio de tipo mixto indagó sobre los factores profesionales desmotivadores entre docentes de inglés en tres contextos: colegios, institutos de idiomas y universidades. A 189 docentes de inglés iraníes se les pidió responder un cuestionario validado y entrevistas semi-esctructuradas. Dentro de los factores desmotivadores más prominentes están los de tipo económico, la desmotivación de los estudiantes, las instalaciones educativas, los libros de texto y la falta de inclusión de los docentes en la toma de decisiones educativas. La fase cualitativa, basada en la teoría fundamentada, reveló que las actitudes y la retroalimentación de los supervisores, las relaciones con colegas y los tratos preferenciales pueden incidir negativamente en la motivación de los docentes de inglés.

Palabras clave: colegios, docentes de inglés, factores desmotivadores, inestabilidad laboral, institutos de idiomas

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Honarparvaran, M., & Khaghaninejad, M. S. (2023). Professional demotivating factors among high school, institute, and university EFL teachers: A comparative study. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 65–82. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.96423

This article was received on June 7, 2021 and accepted on September 19, 2022.

Introduction

Most fields of learning view motivation as a primary key to success (Khaghaninezhad & Jafarzadeh, 2013). Motivation is identified as a factor "responsible for determining human behavior by energizing it and giving it direction" (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 117). The profound effects of motivation in teaching and learning a foreign language are also acknowledged accordingly (Dörnyei, 2014). As argued by Ellis (2015), theories of motivation have adopted different perspectives to explain the concept of motivation and particularly to consider the needs and concerns of teachers in L2 teaching and learning contexts. For instance, Anderson (2014) claimed that the critical message in the literature on motivation is that "motivation cannot be isolated to a learner alone or to a teacher" (p. 178) and emphasized the centrality of the teacher's role in motivating learners. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) introduced teacher behaviors as robust motivational tools and noted that teachers play a significant role in positively and negatively affecting learners' motivation.

Sinclair (2008) defined teachers' motivation in terms of what attracts teachers to the profession of teaching, how long they desire to remain in it, and how much they concentrate on teaching. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 117), teachers' motivation can be viewed as *motivation to teach* and *motivation to pursue a lifelong career*. They stated that certain features characterize teachers' motivation; namely, it is closely related to "intrinsic motivation," is highly constrained by "social contextual factors," and reflects the temporal dimension of motivation, which has a "fragile nature."

Richardson and Watt (2006) implied that identifying adverse effects on teacher motivation seems essential to help teachers safeguard their motivation. Considering the critical position of teachers in education, their low motivation levels would negatively impact high educational standards (Falout et al., 2009). In effect, despite the determining role of teachers' motivation in all aspects of educational practices, this area has not been investigated enough as a separate research area (Chong et al., 2019). Patrick et al. (2010) regarded teachers' enthusiasm, among the other teacher variables, to be highly related to learners' intrinsic motivation. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) mentioned that "teachers' motivation has a direct impact on students' achievements" (p. 199). Thus, adverse influences on teacher motivation should be scrutinized to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

This study investigated demotivational parameters affecting Iranian EFL teachers in three pedagogical contexts. To this end, the perceptions of three groups of EFL teachers at public high schools, language learning institutes, and universities were examined. Moreover, the study attempted to discover the similarities and differences among EFL teachers regarding their perceived demotivating influences in these three contexts. Consequently, this inquiry was an effort to find justifiable answers to the following research questions:

- What are the main demotivating factors affecting high school, language learning institute, and university EFL teachers?
- Which similarities/differences exist in demotivating factors among high school, language learning institute, and university EFL teachers?

Literature Review

Motivation is a determining factor that can affect the success of learning a foreign language. As Brophy (2010) stated: "Motivation is probably the most frequently used catch-all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task" (p. 165). Motivation is a sophisticated term in second/foreign language learning and teaching. Teaching, like any other activity, needs motivation, and thus general models of motivation can help understand teacher motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Motivation theorists are interested in explaining the role of motivation in physical activities, such as

task engagement and persistence, as well as cognitive activities, such as problem-solving and decision-making (Meece et al., 2006).

Brown (2014) defined *demotivation* as "the loss of interest that once was present" (p. 163). In the same vein, Dörnyei (2001) expressed that the personality, commitment, competence, and teaching methods of L2 teachers can cause demotivation. In contrast, *amotivation* refers to the lack of motivation not due to the absence of initial interest but to the person's emotions when faced with the activity. Furthermore, amotivation makes an individual unable to obtain the expected outcome, usually accompanied by feelings of helplessness or depression. Although amotivation and demotivation may convey the same concept, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) referred to a slight distinction between the two terms; some external factors commonly cause demotivation. When the causes of demotivation are eliminated, the underlying motives of behavior may reappear. However, amotivation is pertained to conceiving the desired outcome unfeasible.

EFL Teachers' Motivation and Demotivation

Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) believed that teachers' motivation is essential in education because it significantly affects students' motivation. Haggai and Piwuna (1997) highlighted L2 teachers' role as the most critical factor in all L2 learning activities and tasks. In addition, Eggen and Kauchak (1992) argued that it is the teachers' role to design an environment suitable for implementing instructions, teaching, and learning. Such an environment should have a warm and empathetic atmosphere to move students toward success, comprehension, and reinforcement, and thus teachers are the ones who build motivation in the classroom.

More importantly, teacher motivation is a crucial issue due to its correlation with the quality of education (Javaid, 2009). Teachers' motivation should be considered at the forefront of government policies to improve quality education and achieve the aims of education (Meece et al., 2006). Motivation can be related to achievement and enable L2 learners to expand the continuous sustained attempt at language learning; without motivation, even highly competent learners may fail to achieve long-term goals (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Therefore, teachers should be motivated to enhance their productivity and effectiveness in teaching, which can improve the quality of education and instruction (McKay, 2002).

Srivastava (2014) believes teachers' motivation and job satisfaction can be linked. To him, increasing job satisfaction and motivation would lead to better job performance and efficiency. Moreover, teachers' commitment can be improved when they feel motivated. Haque (2009) states that demotivation can even lead to counterproductive behaviors. Hence, the sources causing demotivation—such as inability, inadequate means, and lack of interest—should be identified to perceive demotivational attitudes. The following lines review studies on the demotivating factors for EFL teachers in different instructional contexts.

Demotivating Factors at High Schools

Kızıltepe (2008) conducted a study to determine the demotivating factors in the Turkish EFL context of public schools and found that improper administration and indifferent students were the foremost demotivators for high school EFL teachers. Hettiarachchi (2013) investigated the sources of demotivation for teachers in Sri Lankan public schools; limited learning facilities, the large number of students per class, the mismatch between textbooks and the students' proficiency level, and teaching methodology were identified as the main demotivators. In addition, unhelpful education administration, challenging conditions of teacher transfer, and lack of good rapport between colleagues were found to demotivate teachers frequently.

Mukminin et al. (2015) attempted to examine the demotivating factors among Indonesian high school EFL teachers at two high schools in Jambi. The fin-

dings revealed that students' limited knowledge of the English language was one of the significant factors that demotivated teachers. Other factors were the school environment and limited supporting facilities. Tampubolon (2017) compared the demotivators for EFL instructors at public and private high schools in Indonesia in another study. In private schools, students' demotivation, physical conditions, textbooks, and curricula were found to be demotivating. In contrast, in public schools, six factors caused demotivation for English teachers: teacher's workload, physical condition, material/textbook, working condition, parental interest, and curriculum.

Another study by Dişlen (2013) sought to explore the factors causing demotivation in EFL classrooms at Anatolian high schools. The author found that a positive and psychologically healthy environment is the main parameter for the job satisfaction of EFL teachers. Moreover, the findings revealed that syllabus density, health problems, shortage of proper instructional materials, and attention distracters (such as a noisy environment) would result in a lack of motivation and enthusiasm on the part of EFL teachers.

Demotivating Factors at Language Learning Institutes

Kim et al. (2014) conducted a mixed-methods study to compare demotivating factors between Chinese and Korean EFL teachers in the private sector. They found that class size was the dominant demotivating factor for Chinese and Korean teachers. Chinese teachers expressed that parents' interference and high expectations mainly demotivated them.

Menyhárt (2008) explored teachers teaching styles and what motivates or demotivates them at private language learning institutes. The results revealed that teachers were encouraged by the subjects they teach and students' intellectual development. They were also motivated when they could be creative in their classes; however, stress, low salaries, job insecurity, the prescribed curricula, and inadequate teaching facilities appeared to affect teacher performance negatively.

Nazari and Taki (2015) examined the demotivating professional factors among 109 Iranian EFL teachers at private language institutes. They found that a lack of communication among teachers, professional jealousy, and learners' heterogeneity were the most detrimental parameters to teachers' job satisfaction. The results also showed that recognizing and eradicating such impeding factors would enhance learners' educational attainment.

Demotivating Factors at Universities

The significant role of students in teachers' motivation was found salient in a study by Sugino (2010) on 97 Japanese university teachers. He found that university teachers perceived factors related to students' attitudes to be mainly demotivating; for instance, using cell phones and sleeping in class, not being interested in the subject, and being rebellious. Other demotivating factors were long meeting hours, the load of paperwork, and fixed teaching materials. Fattash (2013) highlighted that the English language teachers at An-Najah University found learners' indifference and dissatisfaction demotivating. Another demotivating factor was "rigid administrative regulations which hinder teachers' academic progress. Teachers feel that their efforts are not appreciated by the administration" (p. 128), which would create a sense of detachment, lack of commitment, and lack of dedication to the institution.

In addition, Kim and Kim (2015) conducted a survey on initial career demotivators for Korean EFL teachers at college. The findings indicated that some L2 teachers were demotivated to teach L2 learners with a significant gap in language proficiency or students with low motivation. Other demotivating factors were communicative difficulties, inadequate administrative support, heavy workloads, and lack of social recognition.

Falout et al. (2009) selected 900 university EFL teachers in Japan to examine the demotivating factors and check the relationship between past demotivating

experiences and professional achievements. They classified the demotivators into three classes: external, internal, and reactive factors. Internal and reactive factors were shown to correlate with long-term EFL teaching and learning outcomes and experiences; however, external demotivators (which were more effective than the other two) were highly connected with institutional regulations.

Dobre (2013) scrutinized the teachers' demotivation factors in the Romanian academic context. Consequently, by evaluating the responses of 34 college EFL teachers to a validated questionnaire, the author concluded that students' attitudes and feelings could be the primary source of teachers' de/motivation. Moreover, she proposed a new framework of motivational research called "directed motivational currents" to help teachers find solutions and lead themselves from not enjoyable psychological professional states into enjoyable ones.

The studies mentioned above have shed some light on the less explored area of demotivation factors among EFL teachers. Even though teachers worldwide share most of these demotivating forces, teachers in each specific context perceive certain factors to influence their motivation more dominantly. Furthermore, the role of demotivating factors has been mostly neglected in the Iranian EFL context. This study has tried to explore the demotivational parameters affecting Iranian EFL teachers in public high schools, private language institutes, and universities to provide some insights for pedagogical policymakers and partially fill the existing gap.

Method

This study employed a mixed-methods research design; for the quantitative phase, the data were gathered through a questionnaire on teachers' demotivation in three different contexts of Iranian EFL teaching and learning. For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 participants (10 interviewees from the EFL teachers of each context) and inspired by grounded theory, the obtained data were analyzed, and common themes were derived and compared with the outcome of the quantitative phase.

Participants

In total, 189 Iranian EFL teachers teaching English in three contexts—public high schools, private language institutes, and universities—participated in the study. The participants—78 men (within the age range of 26–59) and 111 women (within the age range of 24–50)—were selected through the convenience sample procedure. All teachers had at least three years of teaching experience since the researchers deemed that this minimum of teaching experience was required to give the teachers a better understanding of the problems inherent in teaching and the possible deficiencies of the educational system. The sample included three groups: 64 teachers from high schools, 65 teachers from language institutes, and 60 general English teachers at universities. Seventeen teachers held bachelor's degrees, 101 held master's degrees, and 71 were either PhD holders or PhD candidates.

Regarding teaching experience, on average, the high school teachers had taught for 12 years, the language institute teachers had taught for 11 years, and the university teachers had taught for 13 years. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire on teachers' demotivating factors. Thirty teachers (10 volunteers from each group) were invited to participate in the interview sessions whose items were derived from the literature and questionnaire.

Data Collection Instruments

Teachers' Demotivation Questionnaire

This study used the teachers' demotivation questionnaire developed by Soodmand-Afshar and Doosti (2015). The questionnaire consisted of two parts; the first part included demographic information (i.e., gender, age, English teaching experience, the level of education), and the second part consisted of 58 items measured

by a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). An initial version of the questionnaire was given to a couple of experts at the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics of Shiraz University to check its face and content validity. The questionnaire pilot with 20 EFL teachers of three groups and Cronbach's alpha indicated an excellent reliability level (0.82). Some revisions in the wording were made to suit the respondents of the three contexts under study.

Semi-Structured Interviews

These interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward demotivating factors and the reasons behind them. Each interview contained 13 open-ended questions and lasted between 20 to 35 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the participants' workplace, and an expert friend accompanied the researchers to certify the accuracy of the exposed data and satisfy the inter-rater reliability. The questions of the interviews were constructed based on the outcome of the quantitative phase, recurrent themes in literature, and the researchers' experience. Then, the items were checked by three TEFL experts at the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics at Shiraz University.

Data Collection Procedure

In the first phase, the questionnaire was distributed among 189 EFL teachers who were asked to complete it on paper or electronically via email. A principal component analysis was run to see how various questionnaire items loaded on different factors, considering the impact of socio-contextual features in teacher demotivation. Table 1 shows that the questionnaire enjoyed a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index of .717, which was adequate. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant. (p = .000). The component matrix revealed that 39 items of the questionnaire had factor loadings over 0.40.

Table 1. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Index and Bartlett's Test for the Questionnaire

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		.717
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	1340.107
	df	435
	Sig.	.000

For the qualitative phase, the researchers interviewed 30 EFL teachers teaching at high schools, language institutes, and universities. Seventeen women and 13 men aged 25–45 voluntarily participated in the study's second phase. Seven participants were PhD candidates, 16 were MA holders, and seven were BA holders of TEFL and English literature. The researchers assured the participants that their responses would remain confidential. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed and translated into English. Some translations were member-checked to ensure they conveyed the exact meaning the participants wanted to express.

Results

The 58 items of the questionnaire were subjected to principal components analysis. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire after running the factor analysis. It indicates that Item 38—which deals with the financial issue—has the least mean (1.71) with a standard deviation of 0.88, while Item 6—related to attitude toward teaching—has the highest mean of 4.41 with a standard deviation of 0.67.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Questionnaire Items (*N* = 189)

	Mean	*SD*	Strongly agree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly disagree
Q1	4.35	.74	2(1.1%)	2(1.1%)	11(5.6%)	87(46.1%)	87(46.1%)
Q5	3.59	1.0	2(1.1%)	40(21.3%)	31(15.7%)	76(40.4%)	40(21.3%)
Q6	4.41	.67	0	4(2.2%)	6(3.4%)	85(44.9%)	94(49.4%)
Q7	4.32	.73	0	4(2.2%)	17(9%)	81(42.7%)	87(46.1%)
Q9	4.12	.80	0	8(4.5%)	25(13.5%)	90(47.2%)	66(34.8%)
Q10	4.34	.79	0	10(5.6%)	7(3.4%)	81(42.7%)	91(48.3%)
Q11	3.59	1.01	2(1.1%)	27(14.6%)	55(29.2%)	62(33.7%)	43(23.1%)
Q18	3.35	1.21	12(6.7%)	47(24.7%)	24(12.4%)	75(39.3%)	31(16.0%)
Q19	2.71	1.17	30(15.7%)	66(34.8%)	34(18%)	49(25.8%)	10(5.6%)
Q20	2.97	1.33	30(15.7%)	47(24.7%)	34(18%)	49(25.8%)	28(14.6%)
Q21	2.81	1.19	23(12.4%)	73(38.2%)	24(12.4%)	57(30.3%)	12(6.7%)
Q22	3.12	1.31	27(14.6%)	40(21.3%)	30(15.7%)	64(33.7%)	28(14.6%)
Q26	3.57	1.10	12(6.7%)	21(11.2%)	32(16.9%)	92(48.3%)	32(16.9%)
Q27	3.32	1.145	15(7.9%)	34(18.0)	38(20.2%)	79(41.6%)	23(12.4%)
Q28	3.55	1.02	8(4.5%)	19(10.1%)	51(27%)	81(42.7%)	30(15.7%)
Q29	3.35	1.16	15(7.9%)	32(16.9%)	44(23.6%)	68(36%)	30(15.7%)
Q31	3.12	1.06	15(7.9%)	37(19.1%)	63(33.7%)	59(31.5%)	15(7.9%)
Q32	3.11	.94	11(5.6%)	38(20.2%)	63(33.7%)	72(38.2%)	4(2.2%)
Q35	2.09	1.00	61(32.6%)	74(39.3%)	28(14.6%)	26(13.5%)	0
Q37	1.79	1.02	104(55.1%)	40(21.3%)	26(13.5%)	19(10.1%)	0
Q38	1.71	.88	95(49.4%)	75(38.2%)	10(4.5%)	9(4.2%)	0
Q45	3.02	1.06	15(7.9%)	55(29.2%)	34(18%)	81(42.7%)	4(2.2%)
Q46	2.65	1.04	25(13.5%)	67(34.8%)	51(27%)	42(22.5%)	4(2.2%)
Q47	2.69	1.15	28(14.6%)	68(36%)	38(20.2%)	45(23.6%)	10(5.6%)
Q48	3.02	1.21	21(11.2%)	55(29.2%)	28(14.6%)	68(36%)	17(9%)
Q49	2.82	1.22	16(18%)	20(22.5%)	22(24.7%)	24(27%)	7(7.9%)
Q52	2.98	3.33	42(22.5%)	42(22.5%)	53(28.1%)	41(21.3%)	11(5.6%)
Q53	2.84	1.14	21(11.2%)	59(31.5%)	53(28.1%)	39(20.2%)	17(9%)
Q58	3.56	1.09	2(1.1%)	40(21.3%)	39(20.2%)	66(34.8%)	42(22.5%)

The rotated factor matrix showed seven items loaded on Factor 1, which explained 12.22% of the total variance and related to teachers' general view of their occupation and passion for teaching. Five items were loaded on Factor 2, accounting for 10.49% of the total variance, which concerned the educational settings' physical surroundings, classes, and the quality of course books. Six items were loaded on Factor 3, which accounted for 9.02% of the total variance; these items were related to the managers' and supervisors' support and how much

they allow teachers' freedom in the teaching process. Three items loaded on Factor 4, explaining 7.11% of the total variance, concerned with students' active classroom participation and intrinsic motivation to learn English. Two items loaded on Factor 5, which accounted for 6.48% of the total variance, were concerned with the quality of teachers' relationships with other teachers in the same educational setting. Three items loaded on Factor 6, accounting for 6.42% of the total variance, were related to teachers' salaries and the degree of satisfaction with their economic status. Two items loaded on Factor 7, accounting for 3.07% of the total variance, explained the extent to which teachers are engaged in decision-making, teamwork, and collaboration. Finally, Factor 8 accounted for 2.62% of the total variance and was labeled "attitudes toward effective teaching." Thus, the questionnaire was composed of eight factors: (a) attitude toward teaching, (b) facilities and course books, (c) supervisors' attitude, (d) students' motivation, (e) relationship with colleagues, (f) financial issues, (g) teachers' involvement in educational issues, and (h) attitudes toward effective teaching.

As Table 3 shows, the most motivating factors contributing to the participants' motivation are mainly related to the first factor, "attitude toward teaching," with the highest mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 0.577. The most demotivating factor was "financial issues," with the least mean of 1.86 and a standard deviation of 0.845. "Students' motivation" (M = 2.7), "teachers' involvement in educational issues" (M = 2.74), and "facilities and course books" (M = 2.99) were considered demotivating factors as well.

Table 4 depicts the descriptive statistics regarding the demotivating factors for public high school EFL teachers.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Regarding Demotivating Factors for EFL Teachers (N = 189)

	Mean	*SD*
Attitude toward teaching	4.14	.577
Facilities and course books	2.99	.686
Supervisors' attitudes	3.27	.767
Students' motivation	2.7	.801
Relationship with colleagues	3.11	.947
Financial issues	1.86	.845
Teachers' involvement in educational issues	2.74	1.06
Attitude toward effective teaching	3.48	1.09

Table 4. The Demotivating Factors Affecting High School EFL Teachers (N = 64)

	F1	Q1	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q9	Q10	Q11
Mean	4.14	4.26	3.58	4.51	4.45	4.23	4.51	3.42
SD	.58	.63	.99	.62	.67	.77	.67	.99
	F2	**Q18**	**Q19**	**Q20**	**Q21**	**Q22**		
Mean	2.77	2.83	2.87	2.74	2.55	2.87		
SD	.69	1.29	1.38	1.31	1.02	1.38		

	F3	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q48	Q49
Mean	3.30	3.39	3.42	3.42	3.51	3.12	2.93
SD	.77	1.14	1.09	1.12	1.18	1.12	1.24
	F4	**Q45**	**Q46**	**Q47**			
Mean	2.96	3.29	2.68	2.90			
SD	.80	1.01	1.08	1.11			
	F5	**Q31**	**Q32**				
Mean	3.27	3.42	3.13				
SD	.94	1.15	.96				
	F6	**Q35**	**Q37**	**Q38**			
Mean	1.77	2	1.64	1.68			
SD	.84	1.03	.98	.87			
	F7	**Q52**	**Q53**				
Mean	2.93	2.90	2.97				
SD	1.06	1.19	1.11				
	F8	**Q58**					
Mean	3.48	3.48					
SD	1.09	1.09					

Note. F1 = attitude toward teaching, F2 = facilities and course books, F3 = supervisors' attitudes, F4 = students' motivation, F5 = relationship with colleagues, F6 = financial issues, F7 = teachers' involvement in educational issues, F8 = attitude toward effective teaching.

As discernible, "financial issues" were the most demotivating. Moreover, "students' motivation" (M = 2.96), "facilities and course books" (M = 2.77), and "teachers' involvement in educational issues" (M = 2.93) were also demotivating factors for high school EFL teachers. Table 5 illustrates the descriptive statistics of demotivating factors for EFL teachers at private language institutes.

Table 5. The Demotivating Factors Affecting Private Language Institute EFL Teachers (N = 65)

	F1	Q1	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q9	Q10	Q11
Mean	4.02	4.31	3.66	4.4	4.17	3.91	4.26	3.46
SD	.68	.90	1.11	.77	.82	.89	.82	1.04
	F2	**Q18**	**Q19**	**Q20**	**Q21**	**Q22**		
Mean	2.85	3.4	2.8	2.57	2.65	2.828		
SD	.56	1.12	1.16	1.27	1.219	1.29		
	F3	**Q26**	**Q27**	**Q28**	**Q29**	**Q48**	**Q49**	
Mean	3.05	3.68	2.94	3.4	3	2.66	2.63	
SD	.95	1.10	1.21	1.06	1.23	1.35	1.37	

	F4	Q45	Q46	Q47
Mean	2.82	3.08	2.74	2.65
SD	.95	1.07	1.09	1.19
	F5	**Q31**	**Q32**	
Mean	3.01	2.94	3.08	
SD	.93	1.05	1.04	
	F6	**Q35**	**Q37**	**Q38**
Mean	1.66	2.03	1.45	1.48
SD	.63	1.01	.78	.74
	F7	**Q52**	**Q53**	
Mean	2.46	2.17	2.74	
SD	1.07	1.17	1.19	
	F8	**Q58**		
Mean	3.51	3.51		
SD	1.19	1.19		

Note. F1 = attitude toward teaching, F2 = facilities and course books, F3 = supervisors' attitudes, F4 = students' motivation, F5 = relationship with colleagues, F6 = financial issues, F7 = teachers' involvement in educational issues, F8 = attitude toward effective teaching.

Table 5 implies that demotivating factors are accounted for by "facilities and course books" (M = 2.85), "students' motivation" (M = 2.82), "financial issues" (M = 1.66), and "teachers' involvement in educational issues" (M = 2.46). Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of demotivating factors for university EFL teachers.

Table 6. The Demotivating Factors Affecting General EFL University Teachers (N = 60)

	F1	Q1	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q9	Q10	Q11
Mean	4.18	4.52	3.52	4.30	4.39	4.26	4.22	4.04
SD	.54	.59	1.20	.56	.66	.69	.90	.93
	F2	**Q18**	**Q19**	**Q20**	**Q21**	**Q22**		
Mean	3.49	3.96	2.35	3.87	3.39	3.91		
SD	.59	.97	.83	1.06	1.23	.90		
	F3	**Q26**	**Q27**	**Q28**	**Q29**	**Q48**	**Q49**	
Mean	3.57	3.65	3.78	3.96	3.65	3.43	2.95	
SD	.70	1.07	.95	.70	.93	.99	.93	
	F4	**Q45**	**Q46**	**Q47**				
Mean	2.51	2.56	2.48	2.48				
SD	.92	1.03	.95	1.16				

	F5	Q31	Q32	
Mean	3.06	3	3.13	
SD	.76	.90	.81	
	F6	**Q35**	**Q37**	**Q38**
Mean	2.29	2.30	2.48	2.09
SD	.87	.97	1.12	.99
	F7	**Q52**	**Q53**	
Mean	2.93	3.04	2.83	
SD	.96	1.065	1.15	
	F8	**Q58**		
Mean	3.73	3.74		
SD	.96	.96		

Note. F1 = attitude toward teaching, F2 = facilities and course books, F3 = supervisors' attitudes, F4 = students' motivation, F5 = relationship with colleagues, F6 = financial issues, F7 = teachers' involvement in educational issues, F8 = attitude toward effective teaching.

As depicted in Table 6, "financial issues," "students' motivation," and "teachers' involvement in educational issues" were considered as the main demotivating factors with means below 3 ($M = 2.29$, $M = 2.51$, and $M = 2.93$, respectively). Furthermore, "facilities and course book" was not demotivating for university EFL teachers. An analysis of variance was conducted to address the second research question; however, the descriptive statistics suggested that the demotivating factors among EFL teachers of the three contexts of instruction were mainly accounted for by "facilities and course books," "students' motivation," "financial issues," and "teachers' involvement in educational issues."

Table 7 reveals that, firstly, the difference among EFL teachers from high schools, language institutes, and universities in terms of demotivating forces in Factor 2 (facilities and course books) was significant ($p < 0.05$). Regarding Factor 4 (students' motivation), the statistical analysis indicated no significant difference among EFL teachers in these three contexts ($p > 0.05$). However, Factor 6, "financial issues," was found to bring about a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) among the EFL teachers of different contexts. In addition, regarding Factor 7 (teachers' involvement in educational issues), the mean difference among EFL teachers from high schools, language institutes, and universities was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Table 7. Comparing EFL Teachers from Public High Schools, Private Language Institutes, and Universities

		Sum of squares	*df*	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
Factor 2	Between groups	7.97	2	3.99	10.59	.000
	Within groups	157.77	71	2.22		
	Total	351.96	73			
Factor 4	Between groups	2.75	2	1.38	1.73	.18
	Within groups	68.44	86	.796		
	Total	71.19	88			

		Sum of squares	*df*	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
Factor 6	Between groups	5.92	2	2.96	4.89	.01
	Within groups	52.04	86	.60		
	Total	57.96	88			
Factor 7	Between groups	4.85	2	2.43	2.25	.11
	Within groups	92.71	86	1.08		
	Total	97.56	88			

Table 8. Post Hoc Test for High School, Language Institute, and University EFL Teachers

Dependent variable	(I) group	(J) group	Mean difference (I–J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
F2	Institute	School	.07	.15	1	-.29	.44
		University	-.64*	.16	.001	-1.05	-.24
	School	Institute	-.08	.15	1	-.45	.291
		University	-.72*	.17	.000	-1.135	-.31
	University	Institute	.64*	.16	.001	.24	1.05
		School	.72*	.17	.000	.31	1.13
F6	Institute	School	-.11	.19	1	-.58	.35
		University	-.63*	.21	.01	-1.14	-.12
	School	Institute	.11	.19	1	-.35	.58
		University	-.51566	.21	.05	-1.03	.00
	University	Institute	.63*	.21	.01	.12	1.14
		School	.51	.21	.05	-.01	1.04

The researchers also ran a post hoc test to confirm where the differences occurred between groups. Table 8 demonstrates the result of the post hoc test.

Based on Table 8, regarding the "facilities and course books," the score of university teachers was higher than high school and institute teachers. Considering the *p*-values (0.001 and 0.00, respectively), a statistically significant difference between university and high school/language institute EFL teachers was discernible. Regarding Factor 6, "financial issues," the mean of university EFL teachers was higher than that of high schools (mean difference = 0.51), and this difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.05$). It can also be concluded that "facilities" and "financial issues" have less adverse effects on university EFL teachers.

After extracting the demotivating factors affecting teachers in the three contexts of the study, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 volunteers (10 interviewees from each group of EFL teachers). The interviews aimed to scrutinize the outcome of the quantitative phase and other potential factors not considered in the questionnaire. Through the principles of grounded theory, the data was coded carefully, and the required steps of "open coding," "conceptual coding,"

"clustering," and "themes/categories development" were followed sequentially (Charmaz, 2002). Next, the resulting factors are described with some examples.

The first and foremost cause of demotivation reported by the EFL teachers was related to "learners' behaviors and their level of motivation." As a high-school teacher mentioned,

> [Students] are used to the best of service in their life. It seems that they don't have the same point of view, as our generation, toward the university and the future job. They know that they can enter university easily. (Participant 1)

Although some EFL teachers at language institutes mentioned their salary as the most demotivating force, they all believed that students could negatively influence their motivation to teach. Participant 4, a language institute teacher, expressed: "Boys are often trouble-makers. They are not obedient. They don't come to class to learn something. They just want to have fun. Girls are better."

> In the same vein, a university EFL teacher explicated, When I'm going to teach new stuff, they nag or don't like to listen. They constantly look at their watches. This students' demotivation can demotivate us, and over time you ask yourself, "so what?" Learners' motivation has decreased compared to previous years. (Participant 13)

The second important factor causing EFL teachers' demotivation was "financial issues." All teachers emphasized that financial problems affect their motivation; however, high school teachers, especially women, seemed more satisfied with their salary considering their summer vacations. For example, a language institute teacher and a university teacher expressed their dissatisfaction in this way,

> We put much effort into our work. If I want to teach for three hours, I have to study for about six hours; I have to print some materials with my own money. At the end of the semester, I get almost nothing. This reduces my motivation. (Participant 21)
>
> I'm not satisfied with my salary, and I think this is the case for all of us. When you are a teacher, especially a language teacher, you deal with the soul and feelings of the students. Language is a phenomenon connecting with people's characteristics and beliefs…so EFL teachers' financial expectations must be met…unfortunately, in our society, being a teacher cannot be considered a decent job for a living. (Participant 18)

In addition to a "low salary," language institutes and university teachers complained about their "job insecurity." Almost all EFL teachers noted that the supervisors do not appreciate their efforts suitably. For instance, Participant 28, a language institute teacher, said: "[The supervisors] not only don't encourage us, but they criticize us. I spend a lot of time in my classes and get reprimanded. This is heartbreaking!"

Teachers complained about the "inadequate facilities" in all three language learning contexts. In this regard, high school teachers mostly pointed out that the schools are not equipped with laboratories, and class sizes are unsuitable. However, the facility's inadequacy was not severe for university teachers; they stated that the number of students per class negatively affects their motivation. For language institute teachers, the "prescribed methods or syllabus" have adverse effects on their motivation, believing that this would repress their creativity: "We don't have any role in syllabus designing. Everything is determined in advance, and we just put it into practice. This affects my motivation. It is imposed on me" (Participant 17).

Teachers pointed out some forces which weaken the motivation to seek opportunities for "professional development." Another parameter that influences teachers' motivation regarding professional development mentioned by high school and language institute teachers, but not included in the questionnaire, was the influence

of an observer. Interestingly, some teachers considered the lack of observation very demotivating: "I try to have self-development. I recorded my classes several times and reflected on them, but I'd like someone to observe my classes, but it hasn't happened yet" (Participant 20).

Discussion

The findings revealed that the EFL teachers in the three contexts had a high degree of dissatisfaction with their financial conditions. High school teachers believe their salaries are unfair as all teachers obtain similar salaries. There should be differences among teachers according to the amount of energy they invest in class participation and teaching. Likewise, all participants were dissatisfied with their salaries due to payment delays; moreover, they claimed that the managers never considered their degrees and years of experience for their payments. It is in line with what Markovits et al. (2014) found about the negative influence of economic factors on teachers' motivation and job satisfaction. In addition to financial status, "job insecurity" was one factor that negatively affected this study's participants. As Kim and Kim (2015) expressed, job stability can motivate teachers, while job insecurity can be regarded as a source of demotivation.

The findings also indicated that students' demotivation demotivated most of the EFL teachers in all three contexts. As teachers spend most of their time with L2 learners, maintaining a positive and strong relationship is vital in keeping teachers motivated (Curby et al., 2009; Henson, 2001). More importantly, a positive relationship between teachers and learners can be a source of intrinsic motivation for both (Christophel & Gorham, 1995). University teachers were also demotivated by their students as they usually learn English because it is a part of their curriculum and not because they are interested. Alexander (2008) stated that

> when students have low self-confidence and self-esteem, high anxiety and inhibition, their motivation can be destroyed. Moreover, teachers' negative attitude towards students and non-supportive classroom environments damage students' willingness towards lessons. Shortage of positive reinforcement, approval, and appreciation of students by teachers influences motivation to learn negatively. (p. 488)

The findings are in line with the results of Addison and Brundrett (2008), Aydin (2012), and Fattash (2013), who demonstrated a strong affiliation between learners' and teachers' motivation.

Additionally, EFL teachers in all three contexts were demotivated because the managers do not usually engage them in participatory decision-making, goal-setting, and problem-solving processes. The participants' statements in the interviews were in line with the study of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013), which documented that managers should provide opportunities for teachers' collaboration and teamwork in decision-making to enhance their motivation. Another factor that can decrease teachers' motivation is the lack of support from colleagues. This factor can harm the quality of teaching (Sugino, 2010). Communication among colleagues can make teachers motivated and satisfied with their teaching life. Based on the interviews, EFL teachers had not received much encouragement and feedback from their colleagues; teamwork, collaboration, and sharing of ideas were non-existent in their working places.

The findings also indicated that inadequate facilities and course books at institutes and high schools were a major demotivating factor, which is in agreement with the results of Yaghoubinejad et al. (2016) and Mukminin et al. (2015). They found that teachers were demotivated because of inadequate language facilities and English course books. Aydin (2012) considered the lack of supporting material for classroom use as a source of demotivation. He expressed that problems with course books, such as diversity, lack of coherence, and imbalanced activities, can negatively influence teachers.

The results are also in line with Al-Khairy (2013), who found that inadequate facilities influence teachers'

motivation negatively; however, the quantitative results of the study showed that, unlike high school and institute EFL teachers, university teachers did not consider facilities demotivating. Aydin (2012) mentioned the physical conditions, such as crowded classrooms and noise, as a demotivation factor in the EFL teaching process. Also, Khodadady and Khaghaninejad (2012) stated that overcrowded classrooms could negatively affect teachers and cause embarrassment, stress, and exhaustion for some teachers. Similarly, Baba-Khouya (2018) pointed out that crowded classrooms are the main demotivators among teachers and students in learning environments.

Conclusion

Very few studies have investigated EFL teachers' demotivating factors in different contexts of English teaching and learning in the Iranian context. This study concentrated on investigating the main demotivating factors for public high schools, private language institutes, and university EFL teachers and the possible similarities and differences in this regard. This study investigated the opinions of 189 teachers of these three pedagogical contexts employing a mixed-methods design. It was found that financial issues, students' motivation, facilities and course books, and teachers' involvement in educational issues were demotivating for high school EFL teachers. The main demotivating factors for language institute teachers were financial issues, teachers' involvement in educational issues, students' motivation, and facilities and course books. These factors, except for the latter, were also judged demotivating by university EFL teachers. In addition to the financial status, language institutes and university EFL teachers referred to job insecurity as a dissatisfying factor that leads to job dissatisfaction, discouragement, and demotivation. The differences among the three groups were statistically significant in terms of facilities and course books, and financial issues. At the same time, they have roughly similar views regarding students' motivation and teachers' involvement in educational issues.

Through the interviews, EFL teachers declared that they were not motivated enough for professional development because of negative feedback from stakeholders, the heavy workload, the high costs of attending conferences, and restrictive and unfair rules for promotion. Moreover, they complained about the poor relationship with colleagues, lack of mutual respect, and jealousy that damaged their motivation. Interviews also indicated that most teachers were dissatisfied with inadequate facilities in all three educational contexts. They complained about unsuitable teachers' rooms, lack of laboratory and teaching aids, and class sizes. More importantly, they clarified that the textbook and the prescribed teaching methods demotivate them.

Differences exist among public high school, private language institute, and university EFL teachers regarding demotivation though they share the same cultural background and have educational similarities. If their demotivating factors are identified and dealt with appropriately, the quality of English teaching and learning would be undeniably improved, and the teachers' health and satisfaction would be assured.

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https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101065

Challenges and Complexities in Teacher Conceptualization of Dynamic Assessment in the L2 Classroom: A Case Study in Türkiye

Desafíos y complejidades en la conceptualización docente de la evaluación dinámica en el aula L2: un estudio de caso en Turquía

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Dynamic assessment is a dialectic procedure requiring teachers to assess learners' progress by paying attention to students' errors while providing graduated prompts to help them fix them. Although previous studies have focused on the teachers' competence in carrying out the dynamic assessment, this case study explores the dynamic assessment conceptualization of two English language teachers. Data were gathered through video-recorded sessions, reflective reports, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. Results showed that while one of the teachers reconceptualized her role as a graduated prompt provider, the other teacher resisted adopting any roles that dynamic assessment requires. The study implies careful consideration of personal and contextual factors shaping teachers' assumptions to make a change in teacher practice.

Keywords: dynamic assessment, teacher beliefs, teacher professional development, Türkiye

La evaluación dinámica es un procedimiento dialéctico para evaluar el progreso de los alumnos prestando atención a sus errores a fin de brindarles indicaciones graduales para corregirlos. Mientras estudios anteriores analizan la competencia de los docentes para implementar la evaluación dinámica, este estudio de caso exploró la conceptualización de la evaluación dinámica por parte de dos profesoras de inglés. Los datos se recopilaron mediante videos, reflexiones, entrevistas semiestructuradas y observaciones en el aula. Se encontró que mientras una participante conceptualizaba la evaluación dinámica como una forma de proporcionar indicaciones graduales, la otra se resistía a adoptar las funciones que requiere la evaluación dinámica. Para cambiar la práctica docente, se sugiere la importancia de considerar los factores personales y contextuales detrás de las suposiciones de los docentes.

Palabras clave: creencias del maestro, desarrollo profesional docente, evaluación dinámica, Turquía

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This article is based on the dissertation completed by Özdemir-Yılmazer (2018). Prof. Özkan was the dissertation supervisor.

How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Özdemir-Yılmazer, M., & Özkan, Y. (2023). Challenges and complexities in teacher conceptualization of dynamic assessment in the L2 classroom: A case study in Türkiye. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 25*(1), 83–96. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101065

This article was received on February 15, 2022 and accepted on September 27, 2022.

Introduction

In recent years, several scholars have explored the implications of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind (SCT) for the mediating activities that support second language (L2) development (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; van Compernolle & Henery, 2014). As one of those, dynamic assessment brings out a novel perspective to classroom-based assessment, which views assessment and instruction as a single educational activity "aimed at promoting learner development through appropriate forms of mediation that are sensitive to the individual's (or in some cases a group's) current abilities" (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004, p. 50). In practice, the dynamic assessment procedure involves a dialogical student-teacher interaction where the teacher mediates with the student by providing graduated prompts arranged from implicit forms of correction to increasingly explicit ones, if needed (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). During this dialogical procedure, the teacher intends to diagnose the student's potential for development while simultaneously promoting student development (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). Therefore, in a dynamic assessment procedure, the reliance on teacher prompting and the level of prompts are viewed as an indicator of how close the student is to independent functioning, and a decrease in the reliance on explicit forms of assistance and frequency of prompts is interpreted as the student's development towards being self-regulated, gaining more independence and control over language (Herazo et al., 2019).

Whereas a growing body of research in the last two decades has shown the effectiveness of dynamic assessment in L2 settings (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2007, 2008), relatively little is known about how dynamic assessment might be conceptualized by classroom teachers to be included in their repertoires and guide their feedback actions and assessment practices in the classrooms. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring a case study to answer this research question: How does teachers' conceptualization of speaking assessment change during an eight-week professional development program focused on a dynamic assessment?

Dynamic Assessment

Dynamic assessment has originated from SCT, which suggests that human cognition develops as a result of the dialectical interaction of the mind and sociocultural activities mediated and facilitated by cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978). Through this interaction, humans process higher mental development to acquire and internalize cognitive abilities, skills, and knowledge. Social interaction, or *mediation*, is essential in SCT as it allows individuals to access the knowledge and experiences of more capable peers through language, regarded as the greatest semiotic tool. Therefore, one significant implication of SCT for L2 development is to provide mediation to learners to help them regulate the forms and functions of the target L2. Mediation is not just about offering assistance to the learner to get the correct answer but about providing the appropriate assistance to help the learner move towards independent functioning (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). Mediation, therefore, should be designed to diagnose and be sensitive to learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD), which has been defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Under the broad term of dynamic assessment, there are two approaches: interventionist dynamic assessment and interactionist dynamic assessment (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). Interventionist dynamic assessment involves a pre-programmed list of graded mediation (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004); that is, the hints and prompts used to mediate the learner are determined before the assessment and weighted taking into account their explicitness. During interventionist dynamic assessment implementations, the assessor does not go beyond the pre-programmed mediation, standardizing the assessment procedure for

all learners involved. In this regard, the implementation of interventionist dynamic assessment tends to be more standardized with a concern to minimise measurement errors (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004).

On the other hand, interactionist dynamic assessment incorporates mediation emerging from the interaction between the learner (or a group of learners) and the assessor without pre-determined mediation. In interactionist dynamic assessment implementation, the focus of the assessor is not on grading the learners' performance on pre-planned standards but on understanding the learner's ZPD as well as promoting learner development within their ZPD by attuning mediation during the procedure (Antón, 2009; Davin et al., 2017; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Poehner, 2008). From the perspective of interactionist dynamic assessment, task completion is not only the goal of the learner but a shared goal between learner and mediator (Poehner, 2008).

From Teacher Practice to Teacher Conceptualization of Dynamic Assessment

During the last two decades, the significant implications of dynamic assessment for L2 classroom practice have been revealed by researchers mainly while collaborating with individual learners in tutoring sessions (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2007, 2008; Poehner & van Compernolle, 2013). More recently, the focus in the L2 dynamic assessment field has shifted to understanding L2 teachers' implementation of dynamic assessment in the classroom and the success of teachers at carrying out mediation to capture the learners' level of development (Davin et al., 2017; Davin & Herazo, 2020; Herazo et al., 2019; Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; McNeil, 2018; Poehner & Wang, 2021; Sagre et al., 2022). The professional learning activities designed to train L2 teachers to encourage them to implement dynamic assessment in their classrooms have yielded changes in teacher practices in various contexts. Davin et al. (2017), Herazo et al. (2019), and Davin and Herazo (2020), for instance, have shown how classroom feedback acts of L2 teachers changed from corrective feedback (i.e., recasts) to scaffolded mediation after they participated in professional development program on L2 classroom dynamic assessment. In addition, Sagre et al. (2022) found changes in how three participating teachers responded to the learners' errors by adopting the role of prompt providers after participating in a professional development program focused on dynamic classroom assessment. In their study, although all teachers adopted the role of graduated prompt providers, it was only possible for one of the teachers to assume the dual role of prompt provider and assessor.

Although many L2 dynamic assessment studies have illustrated L2 teachers' implementation of dynamic assessment in the classrooms, focusing on their success in using subsequent mediational prompts, little has been revealed about the teachers' conceptual understanding of dynamic assessment (Herazo et al., 2019). However, as indicated by Lantolf and Poehner (2010), "dynamic assessment is not a pre-specified technique or method of assessing that must be followed in a prescribed manner, but in fact is a way of reconceptualizing the relationship between teaching, assessment and development" (p. 27). Thus, the immediate instructional context should be considered. In instructional contexts where summative assessment is dominant, it might be challenging for teachers to conceptualize and adopt dynamic assessment as it has brought a new and radically different assessment perspective for teachers rooted in a dualistic understanding of instruction and testing. Moreover, previous research indicates that teacher cognition is complex and shaped by various factors such as teachers' prior experiences as students (Lortie, 1975), their values and beliefs (Borg, 2003), the context in which they work (Babaii et al., 2021; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006), and their already settled personal practical knowledge (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002). Therefore, it requires time, guidance, and collaboration for teachers to change their already established paradigms and adopt the dialectical procedure of dynamic assessment in their classrooms (Davin et al.,

2017; McNeil, 2018; Poehner, 2007). Given that language assessment is a situated activity (i.e., located in particular contexts), we argue that the conceptualization of dynamic assessment can be transformative for in-service teachers. To this end, this case study reports the challenges and complexities of teacher conceptual understanding of dynamic assessment in an L2 learning context and how teachers can resist changing their perceptions to view assessment as an opportunity to assist learners in self-regulating the targeted L2 forms and functions.

Method

Context and Participants

The study was carried out in the Centre for Foreign Languages (CFL) in one state university in Türkiye that offers English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in two faculties. To prepare students for their EMI studies, the CFL offers a year-long English language training. Several standardised tests are subsequently administered to determine whether the students are eligible to take the end-of-year proficiency exam, which is used to decide if a student can be admitted to the EMI faculties. It is worth noting that the students' oral performance is evaluated over 15 points each week. This oral assessment practice was designed to ensure students' active participation and motivation to engage in speaking tasks.

All English language teachers at the CFL ($N = 45$) were invited to participate in the study. Among them, two female teachers—Aylin and Ceren (pseudonyms)—accepted to participate in the professional learning workshops designed for this study and consented to allocate time for the scheduled sessions. Both teachers were in charge of pre-intermediate language learners at the CFL. Aylin held a master's degree in English language teaching and had 17 years of teaching experience at the CFL, and Ceren held a master's degree in the field of English language teaching and was pursuing a PhD degree in the same field. She had eight years of English language teaching experience in higher education. She had been teaching in the CFL for four years. Besides her course load, Ceren also worked as a CFL's curriculum committee member, responsible for course design and developing extra materials to be included in the syllabus.

Although the primary goal of this study was to provide in-service language teachers with an opportunity to explore an alternative approach to assessment and instruction to incorporate it in any of their language courses, the discussions in the sessions focused more on the evaluation of oral proficiency. Both teachers delivered speaking courses and expressed their need for professional development in speaking-skill assessment.

Research Design and Professional Development Program

In addressing the research question, we chose the case-study method as it allows us to capture a more holistic account of the participating teachers' established perspectives regarding the relationship between assessment and instruction and the extent of the teachers' conceptualization of dynamic assessment (Yin, 2003). Taking the complex structure of teacher cognition into account, we assumed that the case study method would permit understanding the multiple facets of the teachers' conceptualization of the dynamic assessment perspective.

As part of the project, Ceren and Aylin participated in eight weekly professional development sessions that lasted approximately three hours each. These were collaborative sessions where the researchers and the participating teachers discussed a series of resources on dynamic assessment (e.g., articles, book chapters, and videos). As experienced researchers and classroom practitioners interested in language assessment, SCT, and dynamic assessment, we led the sessions. The main topics of the sessions were the theoretical underpinnings of dynamic assessment and its various applications in language classes, practical considerations of implementing dynamic assessment in the participants' classrooms, and the participants' critical reflections on the pedagogical outcomes of dynamic assessment. The primary resource was the guidebook *Dynamic Assessment in the Foreign Language Classroom:*

A Teacher's Guide (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011) and the video materials included in this guidebook. The content of the sessions was designed with a twofold aim: (a) to understand the teachers' existing perspectives about the assessment of oral proficiency and (b) to facilitate their conceptualization of dynamic assessment. During the sessions, the teachers reflected on their context, their assessment and feedback practices, and the weekly readings on dynamic assessment. They discussed dynamic assessment and its potential to assess learners' ZPD through scaffolded mediation.[1]

The permission to collect data was granted by the CFL's administrative/ethical board before data collection. Both participants gave their written full consent to participate in the study.

Data Sources and Data Analysis

The exploration of the teachers' conceptualization of dynamic assessment is based on multiple data sources, including video-recorded sessions, weekly reflective reports, and semi-structured interviews. We employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) for the discussion and interpretation of the qualitative data. We then translated any Turkish data into English and familiarized ourselves with the data by reading and re-reading them before the analysis. In the second phase, we engaged in the analysis of generating initial codes by segmenting the dataset into preliminary codes related to any challenges, complexities, or progress of the teachers' conceptualization of dynamic assessment. In the next phase, we sought overarching thematic categories by considering the codes that potentially fell under these categories. Next, we reviewed and refined the identified themes, named them, and defined them. Additionally, throughout the project, we observed the lessons of the participating teachers to capture any change in their classroom practices due to their experience in the professional development workshops. We also analyzed the excerpts of teacher–student interactions drawn from the transcripts of the field notes and the audio-recorded classroom sessions to exemplify any possible changes in the teachers' response to student errors.

Findings

Ceren: Emerging Conceptualization of Dynamic Assessment

In the first week of the sessions, the teachers' discussion and reflection embarked on their existing beliefs of oral proficiency assessment and assessment practices in the speaking courses. During the first session, Ceren, as one of the CFL's curriculum committee members, explained the aim of the speaking courses, the expected outcomes, and the assessment criteria of those courses. She indicated:

> The starting point [of these classes] was the speaking club; in fact, this course is entirely for students' own sake. OK, there was an assessment requirement in this course, but there must be [to ensure the active participation of students in the course]. (Workshop Session 1)[2]

The assessment criterion of the course appears to motivate students to engage in speaking tasks other than assessing the oral proficiency development of the students. To practice such a form of assessment, Ceren stated her *focus-on-fluency perception* to explain her speaking assessment practices that do not include interrupting students' talk unless there is a mistake that hinders the intelligibility of the talk. In the case of unintelligibility, she expressed that the only method she used was providing recasts, as this was the only way she knew how to provide feedback to the students: "Frankly, I do not know other [modes of] feedback rather than recast in speaking...I do not know any other method which teaches the right utterance" (Workshop Session 1).

1 The objectives and the content of each workshop can be found at https://bit.ly/3znd89f

2 Excerpts from the data sessions and the participants' interviews were translated from Turkish to English for publication purposes. The excerpts from the participants' reflective reports are originally in English.

In the second session, Ceren continued to support the design of the speaking course, emphasizing that the initial aim of the course was not to demotivate students by focusing too much on incorrect utterances unless, as mentioned above, these were quite unintelligible. During the third session, Ceren demonstrated the first traces of her awareness related to the inconsistency in the design and practice of the speaking courses. Building on the discussions about the contradiction of an existing speaking course without an aim to develop students' oral proficiency, she critically reflected on the design of the course and reported her emerging feelings of discontent:

> All my enthusiasm got lost. What are we doing? I feel so unhappy because [the discussion] created awareness for me…we were [so] happy when we did not know what we were doing. (Workshop Session 3)
>
> Actually, yes, [assessing the process might be better], but how will we assess? Do we have a rubric with us? According to [which criterion] will I evaluate [the performance of] the student? According to [which outcome] will I [teach] to the student? (Workshop Session 3)

Besides the reflections on the contextual realities and instructional problems, Ceren also expressed her enthusiasm to explore dynamic assessment, evidenced by her reflective report. In the report, she stated that she found dynamic assessment quite exhilarating and promising and that she had been waiting for the program designers to understand that dynamic assessment can be implemented in the classroom. As a first impression, she mentioned some potential drawbacks of dynamic assessment, such as sparing too much time to finetune the prompts for each student in the classroom. It is not surprising that, at first, Ceren evaluated dynamic assessment from her established perspective of assessment and instruction, which led to some concerns about exploring dynamic assessment as an alternative assessment method to be implemented in her classes. Nonetheless, she reported her willingness to try dynamic assessment as an alternative technique to prompt the students: "But why not? We can give it a chance."

In the following week, Ceren continued to reflect on her assessment perception and practices during the discussions and to explore dynamic assessment. However, similar to the previous week, she was observed to frequently question dynamic assessment practices through her perspective of assessment, which had been influenced by her experience of assessing students' proficiency via prepared assessment tools that specify student learning outcomes. To illustrate, the following extract from the discussions displayed her situated belief in speaking assessment, which requires a rubric to score the performance of the students: "We always evaluate [the performance] by using the same rubric…How can it be possible to grade individually? There must be a rubric" (Workshop Session 5).

Although her established perspective acted as a filter through which she interpreted dynamic assessment, Ceren continued to show a conceptual understanding of dynamic assessment during the sixth week. Although she had some concerns about applying scaffolded mediation, she continuously reported her eagerness to implement dynamic assessment in her classroom.

In one of the speaking lessons in week seven, Ceren decided to provisionally try unplanned mediated prompts in her speaking class in an interactive way. The following excerpt from her speaking class shows one of her initial attempts to use scaffolded prompts to help a student narrate his problems in a free-speaking activity:

1. Student: I get tired of everything?
2. Ceren: Why? What happened?
3. Student: Well...I am in depress.*
4. Ceren: Huh?
5. Student: I am in depress.*
6. Ceren: You are in what?
7. Student: In depress.*
8. Ceren: You are in…noun form, noun form.
9. Student: Ahaa...I am in depression.
10. Ceren: Depression...good, good.

In the interaction with the student, Ceren did not provide an instant recast but implied a problem in the fourth move (Huh?). The student uttered the same inco-

rrect utterance, leading Ceren to ask a question indicating which part of the utterance was incorrect (Move 6). The students' repetition of the incorrect response triggered Move 8, where Ceren provided metalinguistic support. The third and relatively more explicit mediation of Ceren was responded to correctly by the student. This excerpt shows Ceren's willingness to consider scaffolded mediation to help the student self-correct rather than ignoring the incorrect utterance or only providing a recast.

Ceren reflected on her unplanned action in the following session, where she shared her excitement about approaching student errors with scaffolded prompts. Although she was successful at carrying out the role of prompt provider, she was aware that it would have been better to have a language focus to approach student errors other than providing prompts for random errors, which was tiring for Ceren on the first try. She explained: "I tried [graduated mediation] from time to time. Actually, I did (laughs). I did but [the first mediation, the second mediation] …anyway, my passion may not be enough, for now, I need to have a plan" (Workshop Session 8).

Ceren's willingness to implement mediation in her classroom indicated her reconsideration of feedback acts limited to recast use. Ceren seemed to adopt scaffolded mediation in her teaching repertoire to respond to the students' incorrect utterances rather than entirely changing her conceptualization to apply dynamic assessment as one educational activity unifying assessment and instruction. It is predictable, considering that she had already begun to learn about dynamic assessment during the workshop sessions, and conceptualizing the contrastive perspective of dynamic assessment requires time and effort. Still, Ceren's intention of having a planned focus for the language or skill she would work with considering the students' potential development indicated her emerging conceptualization of dynamic assessment. The experiences of Ceren throughout the sessions showed how she had changed her perspective of speaking assessment from only focusing on fluency to focusing more on students' responsiveness to the teacher's mediation. Such mediation helped Ceren understand her students' language difficulties and see their potential to self-regulate their correct use of language. She commented on the extent of her conceptualization of dynamic assessment in the semi-structured interview at the end of the sessions: "My viewpoint toward students and the classroom has changed. I said to myself: 'OK, they do not know, but I can make them produce with one or two mediations'…my definition of students' success has also changed." Table 1 summarizes the key themes identified in Ceren's discourse during the sessions.

Table 1. Themes Identified in Ceren's Discourse

Key themes	Week(s)
Focus on fluency perception	Weeks 1 & 2
Awareness of inconsistency in the design and practice of the speaking courses	Week 3
Discontent with the design of courses and realization of her limited knowledge of how to approach student errors	Week 3
Enthusiasm to explore dynamic assessment and willingness to explore options to try a new role	Weeks 3, 4, & 5
Provisional implementations of scaffolded mediation in the classroom	Week 7
Satisfied with her acquired knowledge of approaching student errors (other than recasts) and critical reflection on her unplanned action	Week 8
Change in her feedback actions and perception of student potential	Semi-structured interview following the workshop sessions

Aylin: Conflicts With the Established Perspective of Assessment

In the first week of workshop sessions, and similar to Ceren, Aylin reported that she had a focus-on-fluency perception in speaking assessment as she thought that it would be demotivating for the students to be interrupted by a teacher at every mistake. During the session, she shared a personal story about how she felt unhappy when being explicitly corrected by her English teacher in secondary school. Therefore, she was now building empathy with the students, which led her to consider that students should not be interrupted while speaking and that fluency should be the criterion to assess students' oral performance in the speaking class. Aylin's reflections revealed that prior personal experiences as a student, rather than any theoretical perspectives, influenced her focus-on-fluency perception of speaking assessment. She said: "The problem is that there was nothing about theory in our minds; we try to do something on our own and do not think about what is in the background [of the practice]" (Workshop Session 1).

During the discussions in the second and third weeks of the sessions, Aylin critically questioned the inconsistency in the CFL's policy of speaking instruction and classroom assessment of speaking. The awareness of the problems in the institutional context and discussions about them paved the way for critical self-reflection. She raised an obvious self-critique when she questioned her merits of assessing oral proficiency as an experienced language teacher, which can be exemplified by the following excerpt from her reflective report:

> Do I know how to assess someone's speaking performance and progress? I don't know the exact answer, but I have some clues about it. For someone teaching for 17 years, what a shame! But I've realized after this session that we need to find our "roots" in whatever we decide to do.

Regarding adopting dynamic assessment as a theory-based assessment approach in the classroom, Aylin's reaction was cautious. She thought that implementing dynamic assessment (in any of the courses) in her institutional context would be challenging because of a non-tentative curriculum policy in the school, which requires all the course contents to be covered before the centralized examinations. She stated: "Can I finish tasks on time because we have weekly units to cover, and they are included in the quizzes and exams? Or could dynamic assessment be better if I was teaching a class in [a degree program]?" (Workshop Session 2).

During the third week, Aylin was interested to learn about dynamic assessment and engaged in discussions about the divergence of dynamic assessment from other approaches she was familiar with. However, again, she verbalized her concerns by highlighting that the implementation of dynamic assessment did not follow the current mainstream assessment procedures of the CFL. One of her concerns was providing mediation during the assessment procedure, which had not been a part of the examination process in the institutional and nationwide education system. She expressed her ideas in the following excerpt:

> In fact, this is [in stark contrast with] our education system, where teachers are not expected to assist the students during examinations or wait until students answer correctly…As we [the instructors] did not experience such a system, how do we approach [dynamic assessment]? (Workshop Session 3)

This concern indicated that contextual realities had played a role in shaping Aylin's discrete assessment and instruction perception, which ultimately influenced her hesitation to consider dynamic assessment as an alternative method. In the beginning stages of learning about dynamic assessment, Aylin seemed to evaluate it only as a contrastive assessment practice through which prompts are given to the students by interrupting their speech. Although Aylin contributed a lot to the discussion during the following sessions and displayed progress in

the theoretical understanding of dynamic assessment, she constantly emphasized the impracticality of dynamic assessment in her current context.

> I would like to provide mediation individually, but there is no time for it. It would be only possible if I called them for [individual] tutoring, but the schedule [does not allow for such an arrangement]. (Workshop Session 5)
>
> I try to be sensitive to the potential of my students, but if only the number of my students in one classroom was smaller. . . . So, I don't think this [dynamic assessment] is gonna [sic] work out…we don't have so much time. (Reflective journal)

Throughout the speaking classes, Aylin was not observed to incorporate dynamic assessment as a method of assessment, instruction, or mediation to enrich her feedback practices. In light of her conceptual process during the sessions, it might be concluded that Aylin resisted changing her perspective to interpret and adopt a more dialectic assessment approach because of the powerful influence of her established perspective of speaking assessment and the discrete perception of the relationship between assessment and instruction. Aylin's discourse and reflective reports during the program portrayed how her personal experiences receiving feedback as a student and the professional experience in a centralized and summative assessment context hindered her consideration of dynamic assessment or scaffolded mediation as an alternative practice. Another factor might be that Aylin, as an experienced language teacher, opted to stay in her comfort zone and did not take risks to try a new instructional practice in her classes. As such, her frequent emphasis on the impracticality of dynamic assessment in her institutional context might be interpreted as an unfavourable reaction and renunciation that prevented her from delving more into the dynamic assessment. Table 2 summarizes the key themes identified in Aylin's discourse during the sessions.

Table 2. Themes Identified in Aylin's Discourse

Key themes	Week(s)
Focus on fluency perception	Week 1
Critical self-reflection over her merits of assessing oral proficiency	Weeks 2 & 3
Cautious toward dynamic assessment	Weeks 4 & 5
Focus on the impracticality of dynamic assessment in her context	Weeks 5 & 6
Resistance to changing her established perspective of not interrupting students as they speak	Weeks 7 & 8

Discussion

Previous dynamic assessment L2 studies have primarily focused on teachers' competence in mediating learners' language development (Antón, 2009; Davin et al., 2017; Herazo et al., 2019; Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; McNeil, 2018) rather than on the complexity of conceptualization of dynamic assessment by the teachers and how the application of dynamic assessment in the classroom might increase teachers' conceptual understanding of such kind of assessment (Herazo et al., 2019; Sagre et al., 2022). This study investigated the extent of two higher education English language teachers' conceptualization of dynamic assessment to address this gap, as they explored dynamic assessment as an alternative to assessment and instruction during an eight-week professional development program.

In response to the research question (see Introduction), our findings suggest that both teachers demonstrated an understanding of how assessment and instruction are divided into conventional test-based approaches and the implications of dynamic assessment as a unified approach in terms of its simultaneous action

of assessing student potential and assisting students within their potentials to overcome linguistic problems (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). The process of conceptualization of dynamic assessment was idiosyncratic for each teacher. Aylin, for example, acknowledged how assessment and instruction are divided in the traditional static assessment and how the unified assessment and instruction perspective of dynamic assessment can help identify the learners' actual performances and their needs for future development. Nevertheless, she was reluctant to act on her dynamic assessment knowledge in her classroom. The findings might suggest that Aylin resisted questioning her established beliefs from the outset, which evidenced a conflict between her prior assumptions of assessment and dynamic assessment knowledge. Although Aylin articulated some of the moral, emotional, and context-related factors that had shaped her beliefs, her established perspective might have influenced her consideration of dynamic assessment as an alternative pedagogical practice (Borg, 2003; Golombek, 1998; Williams et al., 2013). The findings from Aylin's conceptual process agree with the results of previous studies suggesting that teacher conceptualization of new approaches and their implementation in the classrooms is a complex, revolutionary, and developmental process that requires a significant amount of time and experience, as well as being subject to some conflicts and contradictions (Davin et al., 2017; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; McNeil, 2018; Smagorinsky et al., 2003).

On the other hand, Ceren attempted to try scaffolded mediation in her classroom, which indicated her emerging conceptualization of dynamic assessment at the end of the program. Like the findings of Herazo et al. (2019) and Sagre et al. (2022), it was observed that, whereas Ceren did not consider assessing students' performances in her classroom by tracking their development over time, her feedback actions in the classroom shifted from only providing recasts to using scaffolded mediation. Although she was a novice to dynamic assessment and expressed her need for experience to provide unscripted mediation and a structured plan for a language focus, her attempts at such implementation might indicate a change in her feedback actions (Davin et al., 2017). Also, the final semi-structured interview indicated that the professional development sessions positively influenced her perception of student potential (Karimi & Nazari, 2021). Similar to the findings of Herazo et al. (2019), Ceren's praxis of dynamic assessment might have further promoted her conceptual understanding of the mediated practice. It has been well documented in the literature that teachers' decision-making in the classroom also relates to an increasing conceptualization of their actions (Herazo et al., 2019; Smagorinsky et al., 2003).

Overall, our findings, consistent with the results of previous studies (Borg, 2003; Golombek, 1998; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007), suggest that teacher conceptualization of novel perspectives and their willingness to implement new and contrastive pedagogies in the classes are influenced by various overlapping and interacting personal, affective, moral, and contextual factors. In the present study, one of these factors was revealed as the teachers' perception of focus-on-fluency in oral proficiency assessment, which was based on teachers' belief that an emphasis on students' incorrect utterances might discourage them from speaking in the target language. Therefore, the practice of dynamic assessment, which requires teachers to work with the students on the incorrect utterances interactively by providing graded prompts, was not considered by the participating teachers as an alternative practice at the beginning of the sessions.

Another factor was the teachers' situated beliefs of assessment which had been established due to their extensive experience in instructional contexts where summative assessment was dominantly practiced. Aylin, in particular, had conflicts between her already-held beliefs of assessment and the dynamic assessment perspective, which might have caused her not to consider dynamic assessment as an alternative assessment practice

in her classroom. Also, the instructional context of the teachers, which requires them to follow a strict and centralized curriculum, allowed little opportunity for them to implement individualized interactionist dynamic assessment practices. As a result of this contextual reality, both teachers tended to discuss the potential impossibility of implementing dynamic assessment in their classes, no matter how promising this approach to assessment and instruction could be.

Conclusions and Implications

This study aimed to investigate how dynamic assessment might be conceptualized by L2 classroom teachers to be included in their repertoires to guide their feedback actions and assessment practices in the classroom. Although this study reports a relatively short-term professional development program, the results might suggest some implications for other contexts where professional development revolves around contrasting pedagogies, like dynamic assessment. First, the reflective discourse and collaborative and dialogic meaning-making processes in professional development sessions enabled the teachers to be aware of the influences or constraints posed by the institutional status quo and the cultural and contextual histories that had shaped their instruction and assessment practices. In line with previous research (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003), the experiences of the two teachers in this study implied that in-service professional development programs should include an aim of developing a consciousness toward the structural and interpersonal constraints which could prevent free, autonomous, and intuitive teaching practices. This professional development experience can only cultivate teachers open to new perspectives, ideas, and alternative methodologies. Although the dynamic assessment-focused workshop series in this study provided critical self-reflection opportunities to the teachers (Kvasova, 2021; van der Veen et al., 2016), it would have been better to have institutional support, which may include adopting dynamic assessment in the school curriculum. Additionally, implementing dynamic assessment in other skill courses—other than speaking ones—might have been possible, provided teachers' beliefs were not too focused on speaking skills and how students can be demotivated if interrupted while talking. One lesson from this study is that dynamic assessment professional development should be sensitive to contextual realities and personal beliefs and designed accordingly in the areas where teachers are more open to changes in their practices.

Another implication of the study is that, for changes to occur in teacher cognition and practices, teacher professional development should include opportunities for critical and reflective thinking, particularly in alternative and contrastive assessment approaches. Such thinking may contribute to in-service teacher professional development programs in countries where the education system from primary school to university is bound to quantitative test scores. The test-dominant culture of these countries, including Türkiye, impacts all stakeholders' opinions on adopting summative-oriented perspectives in every assessment opportunity. Although summative testing and quantitative test results have particular aims, teachers should differentiate and understand what summative assessment and alternative assessment approaches inform them about students' abilities (Leung, 2007; Lewkowicz & Leung, 2021; Torrance & Pryor, 2001). At that very point, the effectiveness of dynamic assessment to inform teachers about the ripening abilities of the students (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2008; Poehner & van Compernolle, 2013) and to give teachers opportunities to support students in their development process can be considered by teachers and teacher educators to empower teaching practices both in instruction and assessment. However, as indicated by Herazo et al. (2019), much of L2 dynamic assessment research has been conducted in dyads, with a tutor and individual students (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2007, 2008; Poehner

& van Compernolle, 2013). Therefore, the evidence from the implementation of scaffolded mediation in large classrooms is needed for in-service teachers to conceptualize better the possible ways of incorporating dynamic assessment in their instructional contexts.

Moreover, we suggest that centralized language programs allow teachers to try new approaches in their classrooms and support them in seeking ways to contribute to the learners' language development (Babaii et al., 2021). The opportunity of praxis might help teachers to delve more into the exploration of alternative and contrasting approaches in language classrooms (Davin & Herazo, 2020; Freeman, 2002; Herazo et al., 2019; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007), which might promote their conceptual understanding beyond professional development sessions. Finally, professional development programs on such contrastive approaches should be extended to longer periods and sustained as much as possible to foster a change in teacher cognition and practice.

Due to the case-study design and the small number of participants, the findings of this study may not provide an accurate representation of teacher conceptualization of dynamic assessment in other educational contexts. Therefore, future studies can investigate other factors influencing teacher conceptualization of mediated practice in different teaching contexts. In addition, the professional development program incorporated in this study could cover eight successive weeks. Future research could consider organizing dynamic assessment-based professional programs extended to longer periods, evaluating the complex process of teacher appropriation of new pedagogies. Last but not least, future research could, for example, investigate how L2 students respond to the mediated practice.

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the two in-service teachers who participated in this study.

https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101107

EFL Secondary Education Teachers' Perceptions Toward Using Online Student Response Systems

Percepciones de profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera respecto al uso de sistemas de respuesta en línea para estudiantes

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This mixed-methods study explored 30 EFL teachers' perceptions of online student response systems (OSRSs) in emergency remote teaching settings. Data were collected using a survey addressing components related to the acceptance and use of OSRSs and semi-structured interviews. Survey findings revealed that OSRS components are regarded as helpful and engaging by EFL teachers. At the same time, interview data identified drivers (ease of use, increased student engagement, and immediate feedback) and obstacles (internet connection issues, lack of training, and distractive elements) concerning OSRS use. Pedagogical implications refer to the need for EFL teachers to receive proper training before using OSRSs and the benefits of accepting the gamified aspects of OSRSs as a significant feature that can support learning.

Keywords: EFL teachers' perceptions, emergency remote teaching, gamification, online student response system

Este estudio de métodos mixtos exploró las percepciones de 30 profesores de inglés sobre los sistemas de respuesta en línea para estudiantes (OSRS, por sus siglas en inglés) en entornos de enseñanza remota de emergencia. Los datos se recolectaron mediante una encuesta y entrevistas semiestructuradas. La encuesta reveló que los componentes de OSRS son considerados útiles y atractivos por los profesores, mientras que las entrevistas identificaron motivantes (facilidad de uso, mayor participación de los estudiantes y retroalimentación inmediata) y obstáculos (conexión a Internet, falta de capacitación y elementos distractores). Las implicaciones pedagógicas apuntan a la necesidad de que los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera reciban formación adecuada antes de utilizar los OSRS y a los beneficios de aceptar los aspectos lúdicos de estos sistemas para el aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: enseñanza remota de emergencia, ludificación, percepciones de profesores de inglés, sistema de respuesta en línea de estudiantes

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Cancino, M., & Ibarra, P. (2023). EFL secondary education teachers' perceptions toward using online student response systems. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 97–111. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101107

This article was received on February 16, 2022 and accepted on September 26, 2022.

Introduction

Over the last three years, technological approaches to teaching and learning have flourished due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many teachers to teach remotely (Alqahtani & Rajkhan, 2020). Emergency remote teaching refers to the unplanned practice that prompted teachers to deliver their lessons remotely to deal with the logistic problems raised by the pandemic or other unforeseen circumstances (Bond et al., 2021). Participation and motivation have decreased in online environments influenced by emergency remote teaching due to the physical and affective distance between peers and their learning environment and the increased learner anxiety accompanying the process (Sharma & Bumb, 2021). The abrupt change in teaching modality has required teachers to become more aware of the available technological resources to foster creativity and critical thinking among their students (Ali, 2020; Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020). Furthermore, teachers have been burdened with the need to quickly adapt to these new technological tools. Teaching children and teenagers requires teachers to be updated with the latest trends to enhance engagement and motivation in an increasingly virtual world (Graafland, 2018). These new approaches have sought to improve learning and provide more instances for flexibility and creativity in the classroom. In this respect, gamified approaches to learning have been proliferating in the literature, as they seem to yield better learning experiences and outcomes than traditional learning methods (A. I. Wang & Lieberoth, 2016).

Gamification is "the practice of using game design elements, game mechanics, and game thinking in non-game activities" (Al-Azawi et al., 2016, p. 133). In educational settings, gamification is characterized by approaches that use game elements to promote desired behaviors and drive learning outcomes (Zainuddin et al., 2020). Thus, gamified approaches can bring game-like elements—such as board games, flashcards, total physical response approaches, and online student response systems—into pedagogical practices that take place in non-game settings (Wong et al., 2020). The psychological states achieved by learners being exposed to these approaches are triggered by game-like components such as reaching new levels, using badges and leaderboards as a reward system, and being immersed in a game context (Huotari & Hamari, 2013). A traditional non-gamified context can thus turn into a more dynamic learning setting that nurtures learner persistence, learning by repetition, collaboration and teamwork, and friendly peer competition (Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020; Ding, 2019).

The positive impact of gamification on learning and motivation in learning contexts has been documented in educational research, where using gamified approaches not only motivates and engages learners but allows teachers to access online environments and adapt their teaching to specific groups, styles, and levels (Alabbasi, 2017; Al-Azawi et al., 2016; A. I. Wang & Tahir, 2020). One such gamified platform is the online student response system (OSRS), a web-based tool that collects and shares language assessment data and effectively provides immediate feedback (Bruff, 2009). These systems allow learners to use their technological devices as online tools to complete learning activities, such as quizzes, while increasing participation (A. I. Wang & Tahir, 2020). The first attempts to integrate student response systems in the classroom included "clickers," electronic devices handed to students to elicit answers from them (Badia-Valiente et al., 2016). Then, OSRSs overcame the logistic difficulties of the clickers by replacing specific devices with computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. To use an OSRS, teachers and students only need to log on to a website or application and respond to real-time questions via the internet. The use of OSRS platforms such as Kahoot! and Socrative has increased in tertiary education contexts (Muir et al., 2020), as they include elements providing helpful information for teachers, such as a statistic treatment of correct response rates from single participants and the whole group (Cancino & Capredoni, 2020).

Through the use of OSRSs, teachers have sought to increase collaboration and motivation in a complex pandemic learning context (Herrada et al., 2020). The employment of these technological tools has helped to strike a balance between upholding traditional teaching strategies and adopting new approaches to the transmission of knowledge, as well as to increase students' attention and engagement in general educational settings (Sánchez-Mena & Martí-Parreño, 2017). There is a scarcity of studies addressing the perspective of EFL teachers regarding ORSRs and how the current pandemic and emergency remote teaching settings have influenced their use in language settings. It becomes necessary to understand EFL teachers' perceptions of the impact of OSRSs on active participation and motivation. In addition, this impact needs to be addressed regarding the drivers and challenges posed when using the technology in emergency remote language learning settings, as perceptions can be influenced by using a foreign language to achieve learning goals. Therefore, the present study sought to explore Chilean EFL high school teachers' perceptions regarding implementing and using OSRSs in an emergency remote teaching environment.

Literature Review

Teachers' Perceptions of Gamification and Learning

Research on gamification in education has exponentially increased over the past ten years (Kasurinen & Knutas, 2018). For example, Sánchez-Mena and Martí-Parreño (2017) found that 16 teachers who implemented gamification through educational video games perceived that their students' engagement increased and that the approach facilitated their learning more comprehensively when compared to more traditional methodologies. However, teachers also found that gamified approaches were challenging in other ways, such as requiring increased knowledge of gamification elements, not having a proper environment to introduce the technology, and not having enough time to incorporate the activities into the lessons. Alabbasi (2017) administered a survey that assessed game elements regarding their psychological and cognitive effects and how they facilitate the formation of learning habits. He found that teachers felt that including gamified approaches in the lesson increased their learners' autonomy and allowed them to track their learning development. In line with this, Wong et al. (2020) aimed to investigate preservice teachers' perceptions of using gamified language activities to improve young learners' language skills. The study analyzed the perceptions of 33 senior-year preservice teachers completing a 16-week internship in their last semester. Data were collected through a 22-item questionnaire assessing the effectiveness of gamified language learning activities in the preservice teachers' practicums. Results revealed that integrating gamification in primary language learning contexts improved creativity and critical thinking in learners. In line with this, Chen et al. (2010) found that college students using gamified web-based learning platforms were more engaged and had higher self-reported evaluations of their learning than peers who were not exposed to the technology.

Specific aspects have been found to impact gamification success negatively. In this respect, Sánchez-Mena and Martí-Parreño (2017) identified four main demotivators teachers have regarding the use of OSRSs: the perceived lack of resources regarding time, training, economic support, and the classroom setting; the impact of students' apathy on gamified learning when seen as a waste of time rather than a learning instance; teachers beliefs that particular subject areas are more complex to gamify than others due to time constraints and a tight schedule; and the impact of disruptive elements on gamified lessons (e.g., disrupting other teachers' lessons). The adverse effects of gamification on educational settings are also reported by Toda et al. (2018). They argue that gamification can have deleterious effects on students' performance when instructions are misunderstood,

which may lead to a loss of motivation and a diminished focus on the task at hand. Indeed, reduced focus can become a frequent outcome of a gamified lesson due to the many aspects learners need to pay attention to while engaging with technology. Furthermore, learners may show indifference and display undesired behaviors when distractors are not adequately addressed (Toda et al., 2018). Learners need to be engaged with the gamified task, but at the same time, they must feel they are learning through the approach (Lavoué et al., 2018).

OSRSs: A Gamified Approach to Learning

OSRSs are technological tools with gamified elements that are designed for learning. They help teachers diversify their lessons and remove traditional components such as the whiteboard. An OSRS exposes students to various interactive options—such as multiple-choice and open-ended questions—previously created by the teacher to test specific aspects of the lesson (Cancino & Capredoni, 2020). Teachers can create activities on the platform and then assess results using charts and graphs with percentile reports that identify areas where learners lag while ensuring anonymity for students in the group. OSRSs have also been referred to as personal response systems, audience responses systems, and electronic voting systems (Ranieri et al., 2018).

The technological tool has been found to support learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many students in educational institutions have undergone some switch from face-to-face teaching to emergency remote teaching (Herrada et al., 2020). OSRSs are frequently used in large classrooms to simplify teaching by providing immediate feedback to students (Cardoso, 2012) and to create an interactive classroom environment. OSRSs allow teachers to gather students in a shared virtual platform during a lecture, a quiz activity, or as practice time to review the contents taught during the lesson. They provide different alternatives for input—such as multiple-choice, true or false, and open-ended questions—and tools to organize information (e.g., percentile analysis and progress charts). These features have characterized OSRSs as innovative software allowing teachers to control the lesson's context, timing, and learner participation in post-activity feedback when correct answers are discussed (Lavoué et al., 2018).

There are many types of OSRSs available on the market. Some of the most commonly used are Kahoot!, Socrative, Wordwall, Quizzizz, Nearpod, and Mentimeter. They share similar features: colorful design, attractive images, innovative templates, interactive presentations and activities, and competition modalities. Some are more utilitarian, including platforms to solve quizzes, share opinions, and analyze results. Although teachers have included OSRS activities in their face-to-face classrooms, emergency remote teaching contexts have decisively pushed for the inclusion of these tools in online settings and their adaptation to students' needs. OSRSs are increasing their popularity owing to the wide variety of options they can provide to users, making them an appealing tool for educational purposes. However, the same sanitary condition that prompted their use in emergency remote teaching settings presented teachers with challenges such as a lack of resources, inadequate training, and an increased workload (Sharma & Bumb, 2021).

OSRSs in Educational Contexts

Several studies have addressed the benefits of using OSRSs in the classroom. A frequently researched OSRS is Kahoot!, an engaging and motivating tool for teachers and a platform that can improve learning outcomes, classroom dynamics, and learners' attitudes toward the lesson (A. I. Wang & Tahir, 2020). Similarly, Campillo-Ferrer et al. (2020) studied the effects of using Kahoot! in a social sciences program with 101 students. Data were collected through a questionnaire assessing participants' perceptions regarding technical expertise and use of the tool, motivation to use the platform, and its impact on problem-solving skills and social competencies. After

creating Kahoot! activities in their class and implementing them, students had learning sessions that included explanations, descriptions, and reflections on main social science concepts. Results showed that OSRS activities increased students' motivation and allowed them to learn with this approach. The authors underscore the benefits of introducing digital platforms in the classroom because they can help learners develop creativity and critical thinking and increase concentration, which has been confirmed in other studies (Yapıcı & Karakoyun, 2017). Finally, in language learning settings, Cancino and Capredoni (2020) assessed 23 preservice EFL teachers' perceptions towards an OSRS (Socrative) in terms of its usability and its impact on engagement and learning. Survey and focus group interview data revealed that the preservice teachers held positive perceptions of the usability of the OSRS. However, they reported relatively neutral opinions on the impact of the application on learning and engagement, which was explained by the lack of immediate feedback and perceived issues with the layout of the application.

To sum up, the literature review has suggested that using OSRSs positively impacts learning perceptions, as perceived by pre- and in-service teachers. Teachers also use these tools to motivate their learners and support their lessons. Gamified approaches to learning, such as OSRSs, increase students' efficacy, engagement, quality of learning, and positive perceptions toward using the technology in general educational settings. Fewer studies have been conducted on EFL teachers' perceptions of using and implementing OSRSs in emergency remote teaching settings.

Method

Research Design

A mixed-method approach was used to collect and analyze data, as we wanted to combine the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods to deepen the richness and understanding of the data (Strijker et al., 2020). While the quantitative approach provided descriptive statistics to characterize the sample, the qualitative perspective sought to understand individual views and the nature of the phenomenon based on the participants' personal experiences (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, the present study assessed in-service teachers' perceptions ($N = 30$) of the use of OSRSs in emergency remote teaching contexts and identified several factors that hindered (such as internet connection issues and lack of proper OSRS training) or facilitated OSRS use (such as ease of use and immediate feedback provision).

Participants

Convenience sampling was used to ask 30 EFL graduate teachers from a private university in Chile to participate in the current research study. They graduated between 2016 and 2018 and worked face-to-face (for at least one year) and then in emergency remote teaching (for at least one semester) EFL contexts due to the pandemic. The graduation year range was selected to access a more homogeneous group of EFL teachers exposed to emergency remote teaching. However, they did not receive formal training in their university program to navigate teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. They worked in several types of high school institutions (private, public, and subsidized), and their ages ranged from 24 to 33 years.

Instruments

Adapted UTAUT Survey

A survey was adapted from Cheung et al.'s (2018) instrument, which drew from the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003). The instrument assesses the factors influencing perceptions toward using and applying technologies in various settings. The UTAUT instrument includes 20 items addressing five components: performance expectancy, which refers to the perceived consequences associated with the use of technology (e.g.,

"If I use OSRS, I will increase my chances of becoming more competent in teaching"); effort expectancy, which assesses the cognitive burden associated with learning how to use the technology (e.g., "It would be easy for me to become skillful at using OSRSs"); social influence, characterized by the impact that others' beliefs may have on the individual using the technology (e.g., "People who influence my teaching behavior think that I should use OSRSs"); facilitating conditions, which refer to the beliefs and actions in the workplace that support the use of technology (e.g., "I have the tangible resources necessary, such as equipment and accessories, to use OSRSs"); and behavioral intention, which addresses general perceptions of the technology (e.g., "I am a keen user of OSRSs").

The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The adapted survey was translated into participants' L1 (Spanish) and included sections addressing demographic information, academic background, and type and frequency of OSRS use. The UTAUT survey has been used to study and predict users' perceptions of using technology (Al-Saedi et al., 2020) and to assess participants' perceptions of using clickers in educational settings (Cheung et al., 2018). It has also been used to assess teachers' attitudes toward using social media for educational purposes (Gruzd et al., 2012). These studies suggest that the UTAUT components can be adapted to investigate in-service teachers' perceptions of diverse technologies. Thus, the instrument was modified to focus on OSRSs in emergency remote teaching environments.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight teachers randomly extracted from the sample. This instrument allowed the researchers to explore the in-service teachers' attitudes toward OSRSs in their learning contexts. The interviews were conducted in the participants' L1 to avoid comprehension issues. The interview protocol included questions that sought to explore the five components of the UTAUT survey and address challenges and drivers as OSRSs were implemented in emergency remote teaching settings. Some of the questions included in the interview protocol addressed performance expectancy (e.g., "How do you think OSRSs can improve your work?"), effort expectancy (e.g., "How hard is it for you to understand how to use OSRSs?"), social influence (e.g., "How do you think your colleagues see the use of these platforms?"), facilitating conditions (e.g., "Does your workplace give you the necessary technological resources to use OSRSs?"), and behavioral intention (e.g., "Do you think that OSRSs affect the learning process positively or negatively?").

Procedures and Data Analysis

The UTAUT survey and the semi-structured interviews were piloted to receive feedback regarding comprehension issues with the instructions and the adapted items. Ten EFL teachers who were not part of the sample were asked to complete the UTAUT survey through a Google Forms document that included a section for participant feedback. Then, two pilot interviews were carried out to confirm the clarity of the questions and the length of the interview. Pilot participants reported no major comprehension issues regarding survey items or interview questions.

Once pilot procedures were completed, an email with information about the study and a Google Forms link to the survey was sent to a list of 150 EFL graduate teachers from a private university. In the link, participants were informed that their personal information would not be published and that they could withdraw from the study at any point in the process. Thirty teachers responded to the emails and agreed to participate. Once the consent form was secured and survey data were collected, the semi-structured interview was conducted with eight participating teachers. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

Quantitative data obtained through the Google Forms UTAUT survey was analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics and relevant frequency analyses. Means and standard deviations are presented for each component in the questionnaire. As for the interview data, qualitative content analysis (Creswell, 2012) was used. The interviews were transcribed, and relevant codes were categorized into themes, following an inductive approach to analysis (with no pre-determined codes). Thus, the teachers' perceptions were assessed from an emergent, bottom-up perspective that could identify drivers and barriers toward the use/implementation of OSRSs in emergency remote teaching environments.

Results

Quantitative Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the UTAUT survey. The table revealed that the UTAUT components' means were relatively high. The highest component mean is found in *effort expectancy* (x = 4.38), which suggests that participants held positive views toward the perceived effort needed when adopting and using OSRSs. This trend is similar to *behavioral intention*, as teachers seemed very open to using OSRSs in their classrooms (x = 4.32). Similarly, *performance expectancy* yielded a high mean score (x = 4.27), which indicates that teachers regard OSRSs as valuable tools in their online classrooms, which help them accomplish their teaching tasks more efficiently. Perceptions toward the *facilitating conditions* component (x = 3.89) reveal that these teachers consider they have the necessary conditions (i.e., access to computers, good Wi-Fi connection, and training courses) to implement OSRSs; however, this mean score is one of the lowest in the set. Finally, the lowest mean score component is *social influence* (x = 3.75), which suggests that external factors, such as the opinions of peers in the educational community, play a less significant role in using OSRSs when compared to the other components.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics UTAUT survey (N = 30)

	Minimum	Maximum	*M*	*SD*
Performance expectancy	3.00	5	4.27	.59
Effort expectancy	2.75	5	4.38	.57
Social influence	2.25	5	3.75	.66
Facilitating conditions	2.50	5	3.89	.64
Behavioral intention	2.25	5	4.32	.70
Total UTAUT	3.25	4.9	4.12	.44

Although none of the components yielded low mean scores, low scores on specific items show that participants held more positive views towards particular aspects of OSRSs. For example, for *facilitating conditions*, the item "A specific person or group is available for assistance when using the OSRS" displayed the lowest mean (x = 2.8).

OSRS Frequency Data

The questionnaire included specific questions about the types of OSRSs used in the classroom and their frequency. As shown in Figure 1, the two most frequently used OSRSs were Kahoot! and Google Forms, both used by 27 out of the 30 participants (90%). They were followed by Wordwall and Quizziz, with 14 teachers each (46%); Mentimeter, with eight teachers (26%); and Nearpod, with five teachers (16%).

Teachers also reported their OSRS frequency use in their online classrooms. Two teachers (6.7%) stated they used OSRSs in every class, 13 teachers (43.3%) reported using them five times a month or more, six teachers (20%) said three or four times a month, seven teachers (23%) stated they used them once or twice a month, and two teachers (6.7%) rarely used them in the semester. These results reveal that most of these teachers were familiar with several types of OSRSs and that 93.3% of them used OSRSs at least once or twice per month.

Qualitative Results

Demographic information for the interview participants (two women and six men) is provided in Table 2, which includes participants' pseudonyms, gender, age, type of school, online teaching experience, and types of OSRSs they use.

Figure 1. Main Types of OSRSs Used by Teachers

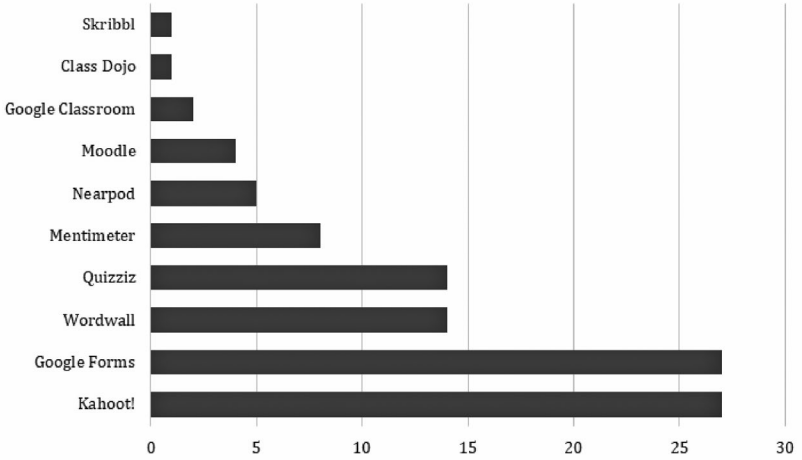

Table 2. Demographic Information for Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Type of school	Online teaching experience	Type of OSRS experience
Juan	Male	28	Subsidized	One year	Nearpod, Google Forms, Mentimeter, Moodle
Alberto	Male	26	Subsidized	More than a year	Kahoot!, Google Forms
Luis	Male	26	Public	More than a year	Kahoot!, Google Forms, Google Classroom
Andrea	Female	28	Corporation	More than a year	Kahoot!, Google Forms, Class Dojo, Google Classroom
Carlos	Male	28	Public	One semester	Kahoot!, Wordwall
Angelo	Male	25	Public	More than a year	Kahoot!, Wordwall, Google Forms, Mentimeter
Rodrigo	Male	27	Corporation	More than a year	Google Forms, Mentimeter
Luisa	Female	29	Private	One year	Kahoot!, Wordwall, Google Forms, Quizziz

In the interviews, several drivers and obstacles to using OSRSs were identified. The themes identified as drivers were *ease of use*, *student engagement*, and *relevance of feedback*. The obstacles identified were *internet connection issues*, *lack of training*, and *distractive elements*.

OSRS: Drivers

Ease of Use. Teachers noted how easily new users could learn to master OSRS resources appropriately.

> We check the results and tell students where the mistake was or what the weak parts were, which lightens up work a bit. (Juan)
>
> I feel very comfortable [using OSRSs]. I find that it's not difficult for me to use them appropriately. (Andrea)
>
> I also check tutorials. Well, I rarely use them because I think these systems are straightforward to use. It took me a couple of days to assimilate what to do, but I could make it work in the end. (Alberto)
>
> [With OSRSs], we can give feedback online. Kids can log in through their phones, join the activity through their cellphones, and see new updates about the class. (Luisa)

The participants agree that the ease of use of these platforms positively influences their perceptions and is crucial when implementing them in the classroom. These teachers also notice a learning curve at the beginning of the process; according to Alberto, it can be easily overcome with practice. In addition, Luisa affirms that access to online tools may be relevant to achieving more effective use of OSRSs.

Student Engagement. Teachers reported feeling motivated to use OSRSs, as they perceived that the platforms allowed them to increase student engagement with the lesson.

> Usually, students don't participate a lot, but when I tell them that we will start a game [with an OSRS], they all come back online, as it catches their attention. (Juan)
>
> OSRSs motivate students who are not very participative because these activities don't require them to answer a very complex problem orally. (Carlos)

Teachers focus on their students as the center of their pedagogical choices involving OSRSs in the online classroom. For example, Juan goes on to state that students nowadays require new methodologies in the classroom:

> I think I had to learn [to use OSRSs] because of students. Old ways of teaching are becoming more obsolete with each passing year and, nowadays, students are the focus of the lessons. We have to adapt to them and how they learn.

Relevance of Feedback. One of the most relevant features of ORSRs, as perceived by these teachers, was the immediate, automatic, and remote access to feedback that the platform provides.

> OSRSs support what we do at the end of the class. Students see the activity as a game where they can express their ideas, and, at the same time, it gives me an insight into the knowledge they have acquired during the lesson. (Juan)
>
> The immediacy of feedback is essential, more so to us teachers, because we have little time to review due to the number of students we teach in each group. With 45 students per class, these tools alleviate the feedback process. (Rodrigo)

Instant, positive, and constructive feedback is a positive aspect of OSRSs, as it allows the teacher to evaluate knowledge of a particular topic by considering individual and group responses. It facilitates the work of the teacher, which they highly regard.

OSRSs: Obstacles

Internet Connection Issues. Facilitating conditions concerning inadequate internet connection impinge upon how these teachers regard OSRSs, as they are crucial for creating and maintaining remote learning.

> I usually hear teachers say that their classes didn't work because they couldn't connect their computers. That's also why my class didn't work. So, I get feelings of self-sabotage and negativity…the idea that it's not working. (Juan)
>
> All the students have a smartphone, but not all have an internet data plan to use them. So, I believe that a critical problem is the internet connection. (Rodrigo)
>
> The issue is connectivity. Unfortunately, we live in a more rural place where internet connections are weak. We have Wi-Fi, but it fails more often than it works. It's a problem for online lessons. (Luis)

The lack of facilitating conditions when using OSRSs is mainly related to internet connection issues, hindering the platform's successful application and the lesson itself. Luis points out that it can be more common in less connected places than in large cities.

Lack of Training. Interview data revealed that teachers might not perform adequately in emergency remote teaching settings if they are not appropriately trained in using OSRSs. For the participating in-service teachers, this training can be part of the courses they take at university, or it can be provided by the institution where they work. These teachers graduated without proper training to manage online technologies in emergency remote teaching contexts, as revealed in their responses.

> At first, it was hard to use [ORSRs] because I was unfamiliar with them. I used to do everything manually. (Juan)
>
> The introduction of ORSRs affected my colleagues negatively. Most of them are older adults, and the pandemic and online classes affected them greatly. I feel there was no support for teachers unfamiliar with technology. [At university] we were never shown a video teaching how to use this stuff. (Angelo)
>
> The only problem I have with [the use of ORSRs] is that there is no training. Older teachers are not used to the systems. I have taught my colleagues how to use the new platforms the school requires us to use. An older colleague takes considerably more time to learn these tasks. (Rodrigo)

These participants stated that inadequate training in using OSRSs and new technologies could affect how teachers prepare and deliver a lesson. Furthermore, teachers who know how to use the platforms must spend valuable time helping other teachers navigate them.

Distractive Elements. Despite how valuable ORSRs may be in the classroom, their gamified components can present students with distractive features that prevent them from fully committing to a learning activity.

> The computer and the phone are distracting elements. Unfortunately, unlike regular face-to-face classes where a teacher knows what the students are doing, we're all behind a screen in an online lesson, which prevents us from knowing what our students are doing. (Juan)
>
> I believe we must always face the risk of the students getting distracted [with OSRSs]. They can forget the assignment or the specific language aspect being asked. (Andrea)
>
> I see that students use them, and they know how, but they get distracted too easily. It is hard for them to use a phone and not get distracted while completing a task. (Luisa)

Carlos regards OSRSs as a less strict approach to learning. Thus, the gaming element in OSRSs influences his perspective on the impact of the platform:

> Students might enjoy these [OSRS] activities a lot because they only see the gaming elements in them, to the point that they don't feel like participating in class once the activity has concluded. My students usually ask me to add more of these games to the lessons, but I have time slots assigned for each class section, games included. For this reason, I also need to make them work more seriously, so we can work effectively.

Discussion

Quantitative Discussion

Results revealed that teachers' perceptions toward implementing OSRSs were positive in the different

components of the UTAUT survey. *Effort expectancy* was the highest-rated component as perceived by these teachers, a finding that is in contrast with Mahande and Malago's (2019) study, where this component was the fourth lowest mean among the five constructs with a medium score. Participant teachers reported that they could implement OSRSs with ease and valued their usefulness, in line with Lee et al. (2015). These authors found that the young South Korean preservice teachers in their study did not need to make extra efforts to use new technologies because they had a higher digital literacy. These results also agree with Cancino and Capredoni (2020). They reported that preservice teachers were highly acquainted with technology, which positively influenced their perceptions of the usability of an OSRS.

Regarding *performance expectancy*, teachers considered OSRSs useful in their classrooms and thought they could improve their teaching productivity, which mirrors Mahande and Malago (2019). Users who form positive expectations toward technology due to its features may continue to use it in the future (Zhou, 2011). *Social influence* was the lowest component mean score, which suggests that it was not the most prevalent aspect determining OSRS acceptance and use. As stated by Venkatesh et al. (2003), the influence of peers and the social environment may substantially impact older individuals using new technologies. The young adult teachers in this study have been exposed to a wide array of technological gadgets, which has characterized their positive perceptions of using OSRSs more directly than by the influence of peer feedback. The high mean score regarding *facilitating conditions* confirmed the importance of online connectivity and computer access, as they can affect the value of technological platforms in EFL settings (Cancino & Capredoni, 2020).

The high mean scores for all the components highlight these teachers' positive attitudes toward using OSRSs. The high frequency and the type of OSRS used by the teachers confirm their positive attitudes toward their implementation in foreign language educational settings.

Qualitative Discussion

The themes identified in the analysis suggested that these teachers had drivers and obstacles influencing their perceptions toward using OSRSs. First, teachers acknowledged that OSRSs are easy to use, in line with the UTAUT survey results, where most teachers agreed on their usability. These results align with Yapıcı and Karakoyun (2017). They found that teachers' perceptions of an OSRS were positive, that the platform was attention-grabbing and enhanced motivation, and that it improved the teaching process. These teachers' positive perceptions of usability also mirror EFL findings focused on Kahoot! (Chiang, 2020) and Socrative (Cancino & Capredoni, 2020). Indeed, technology is regarded by EFL teachers as an essential ally, as students in their classrooms accept it as ubiquitous and typically prefer more interactive approaches to learning, in line with research reported beyond the language classroom context (Phillips & Trainor, 2014).

The positive views of the teachers regarding OSRSs may also be influenced by how they believe that gamified approaches increase students' engagement (Huotari & Hamari, 2013). Implementing OSRSs boosts creativity and meaningful learning, as they include technology-driven components that separate them from traditional learning methods, which students appreciate. Most of these teachers believed that students could manage technology efficiently, which can be used to grab their attention with creative approaches (Muir et al., 2020; Phillips & Trainor, 2014). Thus, gamified devices such as OSRSs can create environments that support learning and are more engaging (Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020). Finally, the ability to provide instant feedback to evaluate individual and group performance in specific tasks was a feature of OSRSs that the teachers well regarded. These findings are mirrored in other learning contexts (W. Wang et al., 2018). The facilitating feedback features of OSRSs are a positive aspect identified by these EFL teachers. Their absence in the EFL classroom may negatively impact EFL learners' perceptions of their engagement and learning while using OSRSs (Cancino & Capredoni, 2020).

Regarding the obstacles faced by the teachers when implementing OSRSs in their emergency remote teaching classrooms, the first theme that emerged was related to the problems that arise when facilitating conditions are lacking, particularly concerning poor internet connection. The teachers pinpointed internet connection issues as a central obstacle since it is necessary to implement gamified approaches such as OSRSs. Their absence can hinder learning and engagement in the classroom (Sánchez-Mena & Martí-Parreño, 2017). Teachers agreed that technological tools are imperative to organize modern lessons requiring remote teaching; however, students must have proper access to at least updated mobile devices with a data plan. The lack of OSRS training is another aspect related to facilitating conditions. As Sánchez-Mena and Martí-Parreño (2017) argue, not having proper training programs addressing OSRS use can hurt the teachers who do not know how to properly use the media and the teachers who did receive training, as they must spend time training their colleagues. Facilitating conditions become even more crucial in EFL contexts, as learners must follow instructions on using the gamified platforms and simultaneously understand the second language used in the instructions and activities.

Finally, another obstacle identified by the teachers was the distracting components in OSRSs. If teachers are not aware of the potential outcomes of using game-like elements when evaluating or delivering knowledge, learners will get distracted, and teachers will struggle to regain their attention (Licorish et al., 2018). EFL teachers can benefit from accepting the gamified aspects of the applications and regarding them as a significant feature that can support learning, since they can prevent learners from losing concentration and prompt them to focus on task completion.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore 30 EFL teachers' perceptions of the implementation of OSRSs in emergency remote teaching classrooms. Through mixed-methods research, it was found that these technological tools are helpful for teachers who have been forced to teach remotely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Most teachers regarded OSRSs as easy to use and believed that the gamified components in OSRS increased engagement. These beliefs were found to be more influenced by the features of OSRSs, rather than by social influences. Interview data revealed drivers and obstacles concerning OSRS use in the selected learning environment. Drivers of OSRSs were the ease of use of the platform, the impact of OSRS on students' engagement, and the advantage of providing immediate feedback. Although these teachers perceived adequate facilitating conditions in their institutions in the quantitative instrument, in the interviews, they identified obstacles related to issues with internet connection and the lack of proper training in OSRS use. In addition, the presence of distractive elements in OSRSs was seen as a further obstacle. These results characterize the perceptions of EFL in-service teachers toward OSRSs in online classes that have been spontaneously implemented in many learning contexts and reveal similarities with findings in other educational settings (Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020; Muir et al., 2020).

Implications

It can be helpful for pre- and in-service teachers to understand how other practitioners use and implement OSRS platforms and the areas that can be improved to make these tools less challenging for them. A pedagogical implication of this approach points toward acknowledging the perceptions, drivers, and obstacles that teachers face when using OSRSs, as they can nurture awareness of their impact when they are applied in EFL classrooms (Cancino & Capredoni, 2020). One of the biggest hurdles that need to be overcome while implementing gamified approaches in general, and OSRSs in particular, is giving EFL teachers the adequate tools to take advantage of them. Educational institutions

can benefit from providing preservice teachers with courses focusing on these technologies as part of their undergraduate teaching programs. As for in-service teachers, training courses can indeed give teachers the possibility to adopt gamified technologies and face emergency remote teaching in primary and secondary learning settings. The courses can also focus on maximizing OSRS use in the classroom, monitoring learner performance using feedback, addressing potential issues derived from using OSRSs (such as competitiveness), and maintaining learners' engagement and focus. Thus, teachers who struggle with finding ways of coping with emergency remote teaching might consider OSRSs to boost learning in such settings.

There are some limitations in the present study. The number of participants who agreed to participate in the study (N = 30) was somewhat small compared to the total number of teachers contacted (160). It also impacted the selection of profiles for the qualitative interviews, as we expected to identify different profiles based on the quantitative findings. This selection process was not feasible due to having fewer participants agreeing to be interviewed. An unforeseen negative impact of emergency remote teaching has been the difficulty for researchers to access participants and the issues with implementing experimental studies. Further studies should strive to include a higher number of teachers as the use of OSRSs unfolds in emergency remote teaching settings.

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https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.98510

EFL Teachers' Beliefs About Listening and Their Actual Listening Instructional Practices

Creencias y prácticas pedagógicas de docentes de inglés en torno a la destreza de la escucha

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This paper reports a mixed-method study on listening instructional practices and beliefs of 50 EFL teachers of public and private universities in Cuenca, Ecuador. The study aimed to provide empirical evidence of listening teaching practices and determine teachers' beliefs about listening. Data were gathered through a questionnaire and structured class observations. Results evidenced that instructional practices emphasize task completion rather than listening development, are oriented towards the product rather than the process and lack decoding.

Keywords: English language teaching, listening beliefs, listening practices, teaching listening, teacher cognition

Este artículo reporta un estudio de métodos mixtos sobre las creencias y prácticas pedagógicas de la destreza de la escucha de 50 profesores de inglés de universidades públicas y privadas de Cuenca (Ecuador). El propósito del estudio fue proporcionar evidencia empírica acerca de los enfoques pedagógicos usados para la enseñanza de la escucha y de las creencias de los docentes al respecto. Para la recolección de datos se empleó un cuestionario y observaciones estructuradas. Los resultados evidencian que las prácticas pedagógicas enfatizan el completamiento de tareas en lugar del desarrollo de la escucha, están orientadas hacia el producto de la escucha en lugar del proceso y no fomentan el desarrollo de la descodificación.

Palabras clave: creencias sobre la escucha, prácticas de escucha, enseñanza de la escucha, cognición docente

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This article is based on the dissertation completed by Abad (2020).

How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Abad, M. (2023). EFL teachers' beliefs about listening and their actual listening instructional practices. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 113–127. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.98510

This article was received on September 16, 2021 and accepted on May 24, 2022.

Introduction

Listening comprehension constitutes the bedrock for language learning (Vandergrift, 2007), and, at the same time and in comparison to other language skills, it is perceived as a difficult skill to learn (Graham, 2003) and to teach (Cauldwell, 2013). In the field of second language teaching, listening tends to be neglected, and learners are usually not instructed to develop or improve this skill; instead, they are evaluated on how well they understand oral speech (Field, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), a teaching approach that Field (2008) coined as the *comprehension approach*. Learners are expected to develop this skill through an osmosis process that only requires tremendous exposure to oral material (Cauldwell, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Assuming that the more learners listen to verbal material (extensive listening), the better they develop decoding skills, some researchers still need to consider that learners may first need to acquire these decoding skills to benefit from extensive listening (Field, 2008).

Research on second language listening has mainly centered on the role of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies; decoding processes; affective factors; the role of previous and linguistic knowledge; learners' listening problems, among others (Brown, 2017; Goh, 2017; Vanderplank, 2014). This research has yielded the following principles considered suitable for listening development: (a) listening skills need to be taught because they do not develop by themselves, (b) both top-down and bottom-up strategies contribute to listening comprehension, (c) metacognitive strategies aid listening comprehension, (d) focusing on chunks instead of isolated words is more effective, and (e) prediction activities must be verified (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014).

Nevertheless, the primary debate has focused on the priority that listening comprehension strategies should be given during instruction. In other words, if top-down strategies (such as prediction and previous knowledge activation) should be emphasized so that learners can maximize their limited resources and gain confidence while they build their linguistic knowledge and skill, or if more teaching effort should be devoted to bottom-up strategies (such as speech perception training) since class time is usually limited (Vanderplank, 2014). Therefore, even though there is a considerable amount of good practice evidence—due to the controversy above and the fact that research results are inconclusive—listening teaching continues to be a problematic area (Vanderplank, 2014), which needs a more significant number of studies on how teachers deal with listening instruction (Brown, 2017).

Literature Review

According to Borg (2003), teacher cognition refers to "what teachers know, belief, and think" (p. 81), which exerts an impact on their pedagogical decisions. Nevertheless, teachers' beliefs are not always reflected in teaching practices since there are other influencing factors: "teachers' experiences as learners," teacher education, classroom practice, and contextual factors, among others (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Due to the strong connection between beliefs and practices, research in the area of language teacher beliefs has experienced a significant increase over the last 20 years (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017). However, research is very scant regarding teachers' beliefs and practices in second language listening (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014). It mainly suggests that teachers are less prepared to teach listening than they are to teach grammar and other language skills and that they do not consider listening as a skill that needs to be taught and developed since it is instead seen as an exercise for practice (Graham & Santos, 2015; Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014; Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2011).

Bottom-up listening strategies have been left out of listening pedagogy research (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). According to Siegel and Siegel (2015), the listening

pedagogy has focused mainly on top-down strategies and questions to verify comprehension, leaving aside bottom-up approaches, especially phoneme recognition and parsing skills. Teachers tend to predominately employ activities that verifyunderstanding of the content of oral texts (Siegel, 2013), neglecting the teaching of how to listen and the process of listening (Goh, 2017). Additionally, Renandya and Hu (2018) claim that, although research and pedagogical interest in listening skills have increased, teachers are generally not better able to make use of that knowledge in their teaching practice due to a lack of access to the literature (which prevents them from keeping up with the latest developments in the teaching of listening), conflicting views in the literature about the main factors affecting oral text processing and how best to teach listening (which can confuse and disorient teachers who have access to the literature), and lack of access to listening materials and the Internet.

Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) designed a questionnaire to determine secondary teachers' stated beliefs about listening instruction, their stated classroom listening practices, and the extent to which these beliefs and practices were related to the literature about L2 listening. The results indicate that these teachers believe that effective listening is tantamount to task completion and that factors such as the text, the national curriculum, and educational standards influence their teaching practices.

The knowledge of the relationship between teachers' beliefs about listening in a second language and their pedagogical practices can serve as a foundation for teaching practice improvement (Graham & Santos, 2015), especially when comparing teachers' practical knowledge with theoretical knowledge (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014). Accordingly, a thorough understanding of how teachers approach listening instruction is paramount to identifying how listening is operationalized in second language classes since the scarce existing studies are based on anecdotic evidence; thus, empirical evidence is crucial (Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2011). As an attempt to contribute with empirical evidence from a Latin American context to a scarcely researched area, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What beliefs about listening instruction do English as a foreign language (EFL) university teachers hold?
2. What listening pedagogical practices do they use?

Method

An explanatory, sequential, mixed-method design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011) was used for the study. Quantitative data were collected utilizing a questionnaire and, to get a deeper understanding of these data, qualitative data were gathered through class observations. As survey research highly depends on participants' self-report on their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (what they report feeling or believing instead of what they really feel or believe, which can make them sometimes choose answers more acceptable or desirable; Mertens, 2015), class observations were included to collect direct information and not only self-reported accounts (Dörnyei, 2007).

The researcher assumed the role of a non-participatory observer and used an observation scheme for the structured observations; nevertheless, extra notes were taken so as not to miss essential details. Structured observations can reduce the complexity of a situation when focusing only on predetermined categories (Dörnyei, 2007).

For analyzing data from the open-ended items of the questionnaire, a textual transcription of all the answers was prepared and read several times to identify emerging categories, which were ordered and counted every time each category was mentioned. This categorization was done three times at a five-day interval, after which the categories obtained in the three analyses were compared and adjusted.

Participants and Context

This study was carried out in March–July 2018. Fifty EFL teachers from six universities in Cuenca, Ecuador (the total number of universities in this city: two public and four private) voluntarily and anonymously completed a questionnaire about their listening instructional practices. Only eight teachers volunteered to be observed while teaching listening (coincidentally, they worked at the same university).

The teacher participants are primarily women (64%), and their average age is 39.8 years (SD = 9.1). Their mother tongue is Spanish (94%), followed by English, Italian, and Russian (6%). Their average EFL teaching experience is 14.6 years (SD = 7.9), and their levels of reported English proficiency are C2 (24%), C1 (50%), and B2 (26%). Moreover, 70% of the teachers have an EFL teaching degree, 46% a master's degree, and 6% a PhD.

General English is taught in all these universities so that students develop the four fundamental language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to a B1 or a B2 level of proficiency, which is a graduation requirement.

The eight teachers who voluntarily agreed to be observed teach students at different levels of English proficiency (A1, A2, B1), five hold a master's degree in teaching EFL, and all stated having a high English proficiency level (C1 or C2).

Data Collection Instruments

Listening Questionnaire

The listening questionnaire developed by Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) was used for this study. The questionnaire consists of 10 items that address beliefs and practices regarding listening instruction. Although the questionnaire was designed for secondary English as a second language teachers, it was chosen because the items aim to capture general information about the theoretical principles responsible for effective listening

For questionnaire completion, teachers were contacted via email; however, due to the low response rate, a printed version of the questionnaire was also handed out. In the end, only 50 teachers filled it out.

Class Observation Scheme

To observe teachers' listening practices, Part A of the communicative orientation of language teaching (COLT) observation scheme (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) was used. This scheme classifies the instructional segments of a class into activities and episodes; an activity can be made up of several episodes, and each episode is considered a unit of analysis in which the different categories have to be recorded. This instrument was used because it enables a systematic recording of instructional practices and procedures that occur during a class, which can lead to the identification of differences in teaching, and also because the percentage of class time spent on different activities and episodes can be calculated to make comparisons among the observed classes (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). After an informed consent form was signed, each teacher was observed once, and the class was also audio recorded. The observation time depended on the time they spent teaching listening.

Results

Beliefs and Practices Reported by Teachers (Listening Questionnaire)

A total of 18 categories of reported procedures and 16 categories for the justifications behind those procedures were identified (see Tables 1 and 2). As shown, the most reported teaching procedure is to *clarify or explain the activity*, while the most reported justification is to *make sure students understand what to do*.

Table 1. Teaching Procedures Reported by Teachers

Procedures	P1	P2	P3	P4	Total
Clarify/Do the activity	23	6	6		35
Play/Listen to the audio	1	17	8	1	27
Make students focus on specific information		9	9		18
Make students focus on the audio context	12	4			16
Check answers/Provide feedback			10	4	14
Make students focus on general ideas	4	8	1		13
Pre-teach vocabulary	7	3	1		11
Stimulate prediction	5	5	1		11
Develop pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary		2	3	2	7
Make students focus on keywords		6	1		7
Pause the audio		4	1		5
Develop other skills (speaking, writing) in follow-up activities			3	2	5
Make students focus on the activity	3		1		4
Check predictions		1	1		2
Combine listening and speaking			2		2
Combine listening and reading			2		2
Make inferences			2		2
Make students talk about the difficulties faced during the activity			1		1

Note. Each participant had to rank four procedures in order of importance (1 = *most important*, 4 = *least important*). The codes represent the element ranked and its level of importance (e.g., P1 = most important procedure, P4 = least important procedure).

Table 2. Justifications Behind Teaching Procedures

Justifications	J1	J2	J3	J4	Total
Make sure students understand what to do	23	4	3		30
Make students get familiar with the topic or audio context/Activate prior knowledge	9	9			18
Evaluate students' performance		3	15		18
Facilitate comprehension	1	9	3		13
Make students focus on specific ideas		7	4		11
Facilitate concentration	2	6	2		10
Develop linguistic knowledge (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) in the post-listening phase	2	3	5		10
Make students get familiar with the vocabulary they will hear	5	3	1		9
Develop skills (inferencing, active listening, higher-order thinking)	2	3	3		8
Understand main ideas	6				6
Predict	5				5
Develop other skills (speaking, writing)			4		4

Justifications	J1	J2	J3	J4	Total
Motivate students	2	1			3
Identify keywords		3			3
Because I follow the book	1	1	1		3
Check predictions		1			1

Note. Each participant had to rank four justifications in order of importance (1 = *most important*, 4 = *least important*). The codes represent the element ranked and its level of importance (e.g., J1 = most important justification, J4 = least important justification).

Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) rank teachers as oriented toward the listening process (when they advise on strategies to listen better, provide feedback on activity performance, and focus on communication and learners' autonomy) or the listening product (when they advise on how to do the task, give feedback on the answers, refer to teachers' control to pause audios, or eliminate difficulty). Similarly, the teacher participants were classified based on their responses to the teaching procedures and justifications. A number was allocated between 1 and 5 according to a Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to a teacher very inclined toward the listening process, while 5 is towards the listening product. As presented in Table 3, most teachers orient their practice towards the product of listening, which focuses mainly on delineating the demands of the tasks to be performed, pausing or repeating the audio, and reviewing responses to verify understanding.

Table 3. Process-Focus or Product-Focus Teachers (*N* = 50). Based on Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy's (2014) Scale

	n	%
Very strong focus on process (1)	0	0
Strong focus on process (2)	0	0
Some process, some product focus (3)	1	2
Strong focus on product (4)	10	20
Very strong focus on product (5)	35	70
Did not answer	4	8

The teacher participants indicated that they work on listening twice (48%) or thrice a week (28%). Moreover, they consider that teaching speaking poses the most difficult compared to other skills, so they emphasize this skill (see Table 4).

Table 4. Degree of Difficulty and Emphasis for Teaching Language Skills

		M	*SD*
Degree of difficulty[a] in teaching language skills	Listening	2.6	1.0
	Speaking	3.4	0.7
	Reading	1.6	0.8
	Writing	2.6	1.1
Emphasis[b] placed on teaching language skills	Listening	2.2	1.0
	Speaking	3.5	0.8
	Reading	1.8	1.0
	Writing	3.0	0.9

[a] The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 1–4 scale (1 = *least difficult*; 4 = *most difficult*). [b] The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 1–4 scale (1 = *least emphasis*; 4 = *most emphasis*).

As shown in Table 5, before listening to an audio, the teachers reported that they frequently remind their students of vocabulary related to the topic they will hear, introduce vocabulary items that will be heard, and sometimes ask them to predict vocabulary they might hear. Comparing these results with the reported procedures (Table 1) confirms that pre-teaching vocabulary is part of teachers' practices; however, it was not evident if teachers ask students to think of ideas that are likely to be discussed on the audio or if they ask

students to discuss possible answers to comprehension questions (which is frequently done).

During listening, the teachers stated that they require students to focus on keywords and verify their predictions (however, these categories are non-recurring in the teaching procedures in Table 1). They only sometimes paused the audio the first time their students listened or the second time. After listening, the teachers often asked students to report their chosen answers, asked them to use specific English words or phrases to respond, and advised students how to deal with difficulties the next time they perform a listening activity (although this procedure was mentioned only once in Table 1). The teachers said they sometimes ask students what they did to complete the activity or how they felt doing so, an aspect that appears only once in Table 1.

Table 5. Activities Teachers Report Doing Before, During, and After Listening

		M	*SD*
Before listening	I remind learners of vocabulary linked to the topic.	2.10	0.76
	I give pupils vocabulary items that will be used in the passage.	1.76	0.82
	I ask learners to think of ideas and facts that might be discussed in the passage.	1.64	0.96
	I ask pupils to discuss possible answers to the questions.	1.52	0.97
	I ask learners to predict vocabulary they might hear (e.g., verbs, nouns).	1.36	0.83
During listening	I ask pupils to focus on keywords.	1.96	0.99
	I ask pupils to verify their predictions.	1.70	1.05
	When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of natural speech boundaries.	1.36	0.98
	When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of each speaker.	1.28	0.97
	When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of each question.	1.22	1.04
	I pause the tape/CD only when the passage is played for the second time.	1.20	0.86
	I pause the tape/CD when the passage is played for the first time.	1.04	1.05
After listening	I ask learners what answers they gave.	2.22	0.95
	I ask learners to answer using target language words/phrases.	1.96	0.81
	I advise learners on how to deal with difficulties next time.	1.82	0.87
	I ask learners to use language/structures used in the passage in a productive follow-up task.	1.78	0.97
	I tell learners what the answers are.	1.62	1.28
	I ask learners how they felt about the task.	1.34	0.98
	I ask learners what they did to complete the task.	1.22	0.86

Note. The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 0–3 scale (0 = *never*; 3 = *always*).

Teachers' beliefs regarding how listening should be taught are shown in Table 6. Teachers mostly agree with the statement that *it is possible to teach how to listen more effectively.* At the same time, less agreement is shown with the statement that *lack of background knowledge about the passage topic is the main difficulty for learners.*

Table 6. Teachers' Beliefs About Teaching Listening

	M	*SD*
It is possible to teach learners how to listen more effectively.	4.22	0.97
Listening should be taught differently depending on whether learners are in their first or subsequent years of learning.	4.10	1.07
Learners who do not understand a word should work out its meaning from the context.	4.08	0.94
Learners who do not understand a word should work out its meaning from the words/phrases that precede or follow the unknown word.	4.02	0.82
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from their lack of vocabulary.	3.86	1.07
I introduce new vocabulary to learners orally in connected speech.	3.82	0.90
It is more important for learners to use the context of the passage to understand than to listen carefully to what is said.	3.80	1.07
Learners who do not understand a word should work out its meaning from their linguistic knowledge.	3.44	1.03
After listening, students should discuss how they completed the listening activity.	3.32	1.11
Learners' main problems lie in identifying where word/phrase/sentence boundaries are.	3.26	1.10
After listening, students should discuss how they felt about the listening activity.	3.02	1.10
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from a lack of grammatical knowledge.	2.94	1.08
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from a lack of background knowledge about the passage topic.	2.88	0.96
I introduce new vocabulary to learners orally as individual items.	2.84	1.25

Note. The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 1–5 scale (1 = *totally disagree*; 5 = *totally agree*).

As can be seen, the statements are related to top-down and bottom-up listening strategies, the necessity and feasibility of teaching listening as a skill, and the use of metacognitive strategies. The results indicate that teachers agree that effective listening instruction is possible and needs to be done according to the learners' level; however, the procedures reported by the teachers do not show a teaching variation depending on the different levels, but rather a constant practice aimed at performing listening tasks and obtaining the correct answer. Also, they somewhat agree with the usefulness of metacognitive strategies and are most inclined to use context and co-text as comprehension strategies (top-down strategies). In contrast, bottom-up strategies are considered less important (corroborated by the results of the listening activities used). Teachers also consider that the most significant difficulty for learners' listening comprehension is their lack of vocabulary, while identifying the limits of words, phrases, and sentences is deemed less problematic. Lastly, even though the teacher participants agree with introducing new vocabulary orally in connected speech, this practice does not appear in the reported teaching procedures.

Teachers' beliefs regarding the purpose of doing listening tasks are indicated in Table 7. The teachers consider that listening tasks serve primarily to increase students' opportunities to practice this skill and to teach students how to listen more effectively while evaluating listening is not considered as necessary; however, one of the most frequent teaching procedures they reported doing is to check answers.

Table 7. Teachers' Beliefs About the Purpose of Listening Tasks

	M	*SD*
To increase learners' opportunities to practice listening	3.78	1.33
To teach learners how to listen more effectively	3.38	1.58
To provide learners with a model of pronunciation	3.04	1.09
To assess how well learners can listen	2.76	1.59
To extend learners' vocabulary	2.56	1.30

Note. The mean and standard deviation correspond to a 1–5 scale (1 = *least important*; 5 = *most important*).

Since this item of the questionnaire also prompted teachers to add other vital purposes, two other purposes emerged after analyzing all the responses: to develop speaking and to introduce a topic.

The different listening activities that the participants reported using with students at different levels are shown in Table 8. Following the analysis by Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014), the *yes* answers were merged, and the valid percentage was calculated. The most commonly used activity is *to ask students to listen for specific details* (100%), followed by the general, central, or essential idea (98%), as well as filling in blanks (98%) and focusing on keywords (95.9%). This data corroborates the teaching procedures in Table 1.

Table 8. Listening Activities Teachers Report Doing and Not Doing

I ask learners to	Yes, I do this		I never do this	
	n	Valid %	*n*	Valid %
listen out for specific details	49	100	0	0
listen out for the gist of the passage	48	98	1	2
fill in gaps	48	98	1	2
listen out for keywords	47	95.9	2	4.1
identify the tone of voice/emotion	45	90.0	5	10
match what is heard to a written paraphrase	41	83.7	8	16.3
listen out for marker phrases	41	82	9	18
focus on intonation patterns	41	82	9	18
distinguish one speaker from another	38	76	12	24
listen out for/distinguish between individual sounds	35	70	15	30
listen cooperatively (in pairs)	34	69.4	15	30.6
recognize groups of words that occur together	34	68	16	32
listen for verb endings	34	68	16	32
listen out for how individual words change in connected speech	34	68	16	32
follow a transcription while listening	34	68	16	32
think about how to work out/deal with unknown words	31	64.6	17	35.4
listen out for words learners predict they may hear	31	62	19	38
recognize/listen out for words from different word classes (e.g., verbs, adjectives)	31	62	19	38

I ask learners to	Yes, I do this		I never do this	
	n	Valid %	*n*	Valid %
listen to a text read out by me	30	60	20	40
make sound-spelling links	30	60	20	40
identify word boundaries	25	51	24	49
transcribe everything they hear	24	48	26	52
use peer-designed listening activities	24	48	26	52
keep a listening log about how they approach listening tasks	22	44	28	56
keep a listening log about how they feel about listening	18	36	32	64

The analysis of the frequency with which teachers use listening activities from textbooks indicates that most teachers (60%) always use listening activities from textbooks. In comparison, only a few teachers use them sometimes (10%) or rarely (24%). This item of the questionnaire also includes an open question to provide explanations about not always using the listening activities from textbooks. The main reason reported is to provide students with authentic material.

Lastly, after conducting a content analysis of the responses about the positive and negative aspects of listening tasks found in textbooks, the two most important categories that emerged as positive aspects were the direct connection of activities and audios to the content of the unit and the fact that audios and activities are graded according to the learners' level. On the other hand, the negative aspects mostly reported by teachers are related to the inclusion of non-authentic material that has been modified and simplified in a way that does not resemble authentic discourse and repetitive activities that usually use the same format and are relatively simple.

Analysis of Teacher Practices (Class Observations)

Only eight teachers agreed to participate in class observations, while others seemed reluctant to the idea; one teacher even said that for the listening activities, he just played the audio twice and checked the answers, implying that there was not much to observe.

During class observations, activities and episodes from the COLT observation scheme were completed at the time they occurred. The researcher also took notes of relevant aspects to avoid missing important details that could emerge. The other categories of the scheme were completed after the class observation using the class audio recording. The listening stages pre-, during, and after listening were considered activities, while all the procedures performed in the class were episodes.

The activities and episodes were further categorized using the categories in Table 1 to determine how often teachers followed each procedure. Table 9 shows that the activities mainly carried out by the teachers are to play the audio, check answers, and make students focus on general ideas.

When comparing these results with the reported procedures in Table 1, it can be observed that the categories *Make students focus on specific information* and *Make students focus on general ideas* are not among the first categories in the observed practices because these two categories were registered only when the teacher explicitly told the students to do so. However, since almost all textbook activities include instructions to make students focus on general ideas and specific information, the teacher participants implicitly included such activities when they clarified instructions.

Table 9. Frequency of Observed Teaching Procedures (T = Teacher)

Procedures	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	Total
Play/Listen to the audio	6	6	6	6	9	8	7	2	50
Check answers/Provide feedback	6	5	9	2	10	6	4	1	43
Make students focus on general ideas	4	9	4	3	3	4	3	4	34
Develop pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary	2	1	4	2	1	1	6		17
Pre-teach vocabulary		1		7	5	1		2	16
Make students focus on the audio context	2		1	5	1	5		1	15
Pause the audio	5				3	3			11
Develop other skills (speaking, writing) in follow-up activities	1	1	1		2				5
Combine listening and reading	1					1	2		4
Make students focus on keywords		1			2				3
Make students talk about the difficulties faced during the activity					2		1		3
Stimulate prediction					1		1		2
Make students focus on specific information		2							2
Make students focus on the activity				1					1
Make students focus on general ideas		1					1		2
Check predictions									0
Combine listening and speaking									0
Make inferences									0

The duration of each activity and episode and the percentage of class time spent on each observation scheme category, was calculated (by adding the time spent on each category of the scheme and dividing this figure by the time spent on the whole listening class). As shown in Table 10, all the teachers engaged learners in pre-listening activities and spent much time introducing the topic, the context, and teaching vocabulary. For instance, Teachers 4, 5, and 8—who spent much time in the pre-listening stage—focused primarily on presenting or reviewing vocabulary. Most of the teachers spent more time on the during-listening phase, mainly playing the audio several times (up to four times) and checking answers. Checking answers was considered part of the during-listening phase, although it is more common to consider this activity part of the after-listening phase; however, this decision was made because several teachers checked answers of only a section of the activity and then continued with the audio to check more answers and so on until the entire activity was finished. Thus, it allowed identifying whether teachers carried out other activities, besides checking answers, during this stage.

Table 10. Time Percentage Spent on Listening Stages (T = Teacher)

	Pre-listening	During listening	After listening
T1	13	83	4
T2	19	55	26
T3	15	81	4
T4	45	55	0
T5	51	42	7
T6	28	72	0
T7	9	78	13
T8	60	40	0
M	30%	63%	7%

The after-listening phase receives the least attention from teachers. For instance, three teachers did not include it. The rest spent very little time on it to ask learners' opinions about the topic they heard, which were primarily answered in one or two words, being the teacher who ended up speaking the most.

The analysis of the category *participant organization* revealed that most classes have the teacher at the front interacting with students, who worked most of the time individually, especially to listen to audios or watch videos. Then they worked in groups (usually in pairs) to complete activities and compare answers.

The *content* category analysis showed that teachers spend less time (10%) on *procedures* (giving instructions or clarifying the activity to be carried out). A more significant percentage of time (23.2%) is spent on *language*, mainly vocabulary. Half of the teachers spent time (25.87%) on the *narrow meaning* (when teachers ask whether the instructions are understood or when they ask for answers). Most teachers spent most of their class time (40.65%) on the *broad meaning* (when students listen to audios on unfamiliar topics).

The next category, *student modality*, refers to language skills. Listening predominates (61%), but students were also observed practicing speaking (19%) when comparing their answers, although most did so using Spanish. Reading (3%) was practiced when reading instructions aloud or silently. Regarding writing (25%), only two teachers included activities to develop it. Teacher 1 invested 24% of class time in the combination of listening and speaking to ask students for answers or check students' understanding; however, as mentioned above, students predominantly responded with one or two words, and it was the teacher who spoke most of the time to check answers and give feedback. Furthermore, in all the classes, it was observed that only two or three students responded or interacted with the teacher.

The class time percentage spent on the *content control* and *materials* categories was not calculated. It was observed that in all classes, the subject, tasks, and content of the activities and episodes were selected by the teacher, who was guided by the textbook. Similarly, only Teacher 4 used authentic material from the Internet briefly to introduce the subject, while all the other teachers used the textbook.

Discussion

The findings reveal that the instructional practices reported by the teachers emphasize task completion rather than listening development and are oriented towards the product of listening since they mentioned procedures aimed primarily at obtaining the correct answer (which were verified in the class observations). To this end, the teachers ensure students know exactly what they are expected to do; teach or review vocabulary; ask students to focus on specific ideas, general ideas, and sometimes keywords; play the audio, and check answers. When teachers report performing procedures that involve strategy instruction—such as making students focus on specific information or stimulating prediction (which are the most mentioned procedures)—they refer to asking students to do such activities instead of teaching them how to develop such strategies. The only instructional activities that could be observed were usually vocabulary teaching (to make it easier for students to obtain the correct answer) and, rarely, pronunciation teaching. Vocabulary teaching focused on the meaning of words, and only Teacher 7 emphasized vocabulary recognition in connected speech and some pronunciation rules. These results constitute empirical evidence of what Cauldwell (2013) claimed about teaching listening being synonymous with doing comprehension exercises focused on evaluating students. They also evidence learners' evaluation of their understanding or lack of understanding instead of being trained to develop listening skills (Field, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Likewise, the results are similar to those of Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) in England with high school teachers, which adds to the evidence that the comprehension approach is the

most widely used pedagogy for teaching listening (Field, 2008). Moreover, the fact that most teachers indicate working on listening (making students do listening exercises) twice a week or less without emphasizing listening teaching corroborates what Vandergrift and Goh (2012) have said regarding the development of listening in second language teaching not receiving the necessary attention.

The fact that teachers consider top-down strategies (such as the use of context and co-text) essential for understanding and give very little importance to bottom-up strategies confirms Field's (2008) assertion that the emphasis on understanding has led to the belief that the use of context is a central element for listening comprehension. Therefore, teachers do not focus on teaching speech perception based on the assumption that subject knowledge will facilitate understanding and help solve ambiguity problems. Nevertheless, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) asserted that many learners' comprehension problems stem from decoding issues. The findings also confirm Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy's (2014) and Siegel's (2013) claims that teachers rarely incorporate activities that favor the development of bottom-up skills since they think effective listening means completing listening tasks with the correct answers.

Also, the teachers reported that the most crucial purpose of listening activities is to increase practice opportunities, which is in line with the most used pedagogy nowadays (comprehension approach) that emphasizes listening to a series of audios (one after the other) to increase the number of listening experiences, which is believed help learners improve their listening competence (Field, 2008). This is learning by osmosis, which assumes that learners will acquire decoding skills similar to native speakers only by listening as much as possible (Cauldwell, 2013). However, as Field (2008) argued, learners who do not understand a significant amount of input tend to stop doing listening activities or use context-based compensatory strategies to guess the meaning, which can trigger demotivation to engage in listening activities and the reinforcement of inefficient strategies to deal with such activities. As observed in the classes, many students did not understand the audios, yet the teachers did not try to improve their ability to perceive speech after providing the correct answers. Therefore, the after-listening phase received the least attention. Once the answers were checked, the teachers moved on to another activity to develop a different language skill (usually speaking), underusing valuable listening material that could have been exploited to develop decoding skills (Cauldwell, 2013). It is worth wondering how much the students benefited from such listening activity or whether it only made them aware of their limitations in understanding speech. Similarly, as Cauldwell (2013) contends, teachers generally use listening activities not to develop this skill but for other purposes; for example, most teacher participants used listening activities to develop speaking or introduce a topic.

For the participating teachers, it is clear that textbooks guide teaching (only three teachers said they use them rarely) and can be responsible for teachers using the comprehension approach since the books focus primarily on understanding general ideas and details and pre-listening activities but lack addressing the development of the listening skill. In addition, the tests included in the textbooks (which only present one or two listening questions that test the understanding of general ideas and specific details) can also influence the use of the comprehension approach because, as Field (2008) points out, one of the advantages of this approach is that it prepares students to pass international exams that consist mainly of comprehension questions. Thus, the results also align with Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) in that teaching reflects the demands of institutional contexts. The teacher participants indicated that the central negative aspect of textbooks is the modified speech that does not represent actual discourse; nevertheless, it was noted that, for many students, this modified speech is

tough to understand. Hence, it seems that the teachers are aware of the need to practice using real audio, and probably when they do not use the textbook, they may look for this type of material; however, if this material is underused, students would not benefit from that effort.

Similar to the findings in Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014), the teachers did not demonstrate having theoretical or methodological knowledge that guides their instructional practice. Justifications for performing the reported teaching procedures are practical in nature, and many represent the procedure's objective.

Conclusion

This study provided empirical evidence of university EFL teachers' stated beliefs and pedagogical practices about teaching listening. For them, teaching listening means doing comprehension activities whose primary purpose is to select the correct answers. This creates a class environment where only two or three students participate by providing those answers. After this, even though teachers acknowledge learners' lack of understanding, they move on to another activity to develop a different skill without providing any help for listening comprehension improvement, that is, assisting students to go beyond answering predetermined questions—a limited aspect of comprehension—to grasping the meanings behind the verbal message—in-depth comprehension. Teachers, who lack a solid theoretical underpinning that guides their practices, usually rely on textbooks that adhere to the comprehension approach (Field, 2008). They do not encourage working with sound substance to foster decoding skill development. Accordingly, teacher training on effective listening practices is crucial to embrace research-based pedagogical strategies that harness learners' listening process development. Such training can take place in workshops or any continuous teacher education programs. The effect of such training, as well as the effect of decoding-based instruction on learner listening skill development, can be worth exploring in further research.

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https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101156

Comparing L2 Teachers' Practices With Learners' Perceptions of English Pronunciation Teaching

Comparación de las prácticas de profesores de L2 con las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre la enseñanza de la pronunciación del inglés

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The present study compares the pronunciation practices of three English instructors (two teaching in Australia and one in Japan) with the perceptions of their learners (n = 49). A student questionnaire, semi-structured teacher interviews, and classroom observations were used to collect data. The findings show that the learners strongly desire to be taught and improve their pronunciation, and the teachers' provision of oral corrective feedback meets the students' preferences. However, the use of primarily controlled (teacher-centred) techniques and subsequent lack of opportunities for communicative pronunciation practice suggest some incongruity between teachers' practices and students' perceptions. Factors such as the curriculum, instructors' beliefs about second language learning, and their confidence play a role in this discrepancy.

Keywords: English teaching, language learners, learner perceptions, pronunciation

Este estudio compara —mediante encuestas de estudiantes, entrevistas semiestructuradas de los profesores y observaciones de clase— las prácticas de pronunciación de tres profesores de inglés (dos trabajan en Australia y uno en Japón) con la percepción de sus estudiantes (n = 49). Se encontró que los estudiantes quieren aprender y mejorar su pronunciación, y que la provisión de correcciones orales de los profesores cubre sus preferencias. Sin embargo, las técnicas de control (centradas en el profesor) y la falta de oportunidades para practicar la pronunciación sugieren incongruencias entre las prácticas de los profesores y la percepción de los estudiantes. Factores como el currículum, las creencias de los profesores sobre el aprendizaje de lenguas y la autoconfianza explican esta discrepancia.

Palabras clave: aprendices de inglés, enseñanza del inglés, percepción del estudiante, pronunciación

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Burri, M. (2023). Comparing L2 teachers' practices with learners' perceptions of English pronunciation teaching. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 129–145. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101156

This article was received on February 22, 2022 and accepted on September 19, 2022.

Introduction

In the last two decades, pronunciation has become an important part of communicative second language (L2) teaching (Levis, 2021). Nevertheless, despite this significant growth, the relationship between what L2 instructors do and what their students think about their teachers' pronunciation practices is an area that has received relatively little empirical consideration to date. The present study investigates both of these areas by examining L2 instructors' pronunciation practices and their learners' perceptions of these practices, then exploring the relationship between these two aspects. This study will, therefore, make a significant contribution by generating new understanding of what teachers do, what L2 students desire and think about these practices, and to what extent these two aspects align.

Literature Review

Pronunciation Teaching in the Second Language Classroom

The growth of research on pronunciation in L2 instruction has led to a better understanding of several pedagogical issues. First and foremost, such research has established that explicit pronunciation instruction enhances L2 learners' pronunciation (Thomson & Derwing, 2015). At the same time, a balanced approach, one that addresses both segmentals (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, and intonation), is seen as facilitating pronunciation improvement (Sicola & Darcy, 2015). Researchers are suggesting that the aim of pronunciation teaching in the L2 classroom needs to be intelligible (i.e., clear) speech rather than the unrealistic notion of attaining native-like pronunciation (Thomson, 2014).

Research has also shown that pronunciation instruction—compared to other skill areas—is still given relatively infrequent attention and inadequate instructional time in the L2 classroom (Foote et al., 2016; Huensch, 2019). In many cases, this reflects the lack of pronunciation-specific training available to L2 instructors, with teachers typically feeling reluctant and anxious about teaching pronunciation in the classroom (Baker, 2014; Couper, 2017; Foote et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2012). Instructors' reluctance and anxiety about pronunciation instruction have been raised for two decades (see Macdonald, 2002, for some early work on this). Still, it continues to be a problem that needs to be addressed. Research has also demonstrated that pronunciation instruction tends to be mostly teacher-centred (Baker, 2014; Burri, 2021; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010), providing limited opportunities for learners to practice target features in a communicative environment. Besides the use of controlled (i.e., teacher-centred) teaching, in many cases, pronunciation instruction is unsystematic and ad hoc (i.e., unplanned) in response to learner errors (Couper, 2017). Meanwhile, L2 instructors often perceive segmentals as easier to teach than suprasegmentals (Foote et al., 2016; Wahid & Sulong, 2013) because of a common lack of confidence and training in teaching suprasegmental features (Foote et al., 2011). Further limiting pronunciation instruction in the classroom is the substantial impact of contextual factors—such as curricular and time constraints, textbooks, and colleagues—on teachers' practices, beliefs, and knowledge about pronunciation (Bai & Yuan, 2018; Burri, 2021; Burri & Baker, 2020, 2021).

One area of pronunciation instruction that has received considerable empirical attention is oral corrective feedback (OCF). In particular, recasts—defined as "the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error" (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 46)—have been frequently researched among the many feedback strategies available to L2 instructors (e.g., repetition, explicit correction, clarification requests, metalinguistic information, elicitation; Ellis & Sheen, 2006). As for classroom-based research, Baker and Burri's (2016) study, for instance, showed that L2 instructors used recasts to address errors even though they viewed recasts as being ineffective in helping students overcome their pronunciation issues. Several other studies have

demonstrated that pronunciation instruction is often limited to teachers' use of recasts in the L2 classroom (Bao, 2019; Foote et al., 2016; Ha & Murray, 2020; Nguyen & Newton, 2020), lending further support to the notion that pronunciation is perhaps the most challenging element of a language to teach (Setter & Jenkins, 2005).

These studies have provided valuable understanding of pronunciation teaching in the L2 classroom, but the majority—if not all—of them have been done in one country and with one specific group of teachers. Research is, therefore, needed that examines pronunciation instruction across two (or possibly more) countries to see if there is a difference in the type of instruction provided in specific teaching contexts.

Second Language Learners' Perceptions of Pronunciation Teaching and Learning

Research on L2 students' perceptions of pronunciation is relatively scarce. The few available studies have shown that L2 students value and desire pronunciation teaching (e.g., Baker, 2011, Dao, 2018; Derwing & Rossiter, 2002), and they appreciate receiving OCF in the classroom (Ha & Nugyen, 2021; Ha et al., 2021). Learners often find pronunciation challenging to acquire (Cenoz & Garcia-Lecumberri, 1999) but are generally motivated to improve with the aim of attaining native-like pronunciation (Nowacka, 2012; Smit & Dalton, 2000). Also, students do not necessarily want native-speaking teachers but instead value knowledgeable and proficient instructors (Levis et al., 2017), while advanced learners tend to express stronger concerns for pronunciation than their lower-level counterparts (Huensch & Thompson, 2017). Other research has established the reluctance of L2 learners to strive for native-like pronunciation in fear of facing social pressure due to ethnic group affiliation (Gatbonton et al., 2005). It has also been suggested that when students feel anxious about their pronunciation, they are less likely to engage in communication (Baran-Łucarz, 2014). In an often-cited study by Derwing and Rossiter (2002), adult immigrant students in Canada reported not receiving enough beneficial pronunciation instruction in the classroom and using strategies such as paraphrasing, self-repetition, spelling/writing, and adjustment of volume to overcome communication breakdowns.

This line of inquiry has provided important insights into L2 learners' perceptions of various pronunciation issues, but according to Levis (2021), more research is urgently needed to understand better L2 students' thoughts and feelings (i.e., perceptions) about pronunciation.

Levis's call for more research on students' perspectives of pronunciation can also be extended to inquiry into the comparison of L2 learners' perceptions with their teachers' practices. Several studies have explored the relationship between L2 students' perceptions and their teachers' beliefs, goals, attitudes, and practices (e.g., Graus & Coppen, 2017; Mackey et al., 2007; Ruesch et al., 2012; Yoshida, 2010; Zhou et al., 2014); yet, thus far, research on the connection between students' perceptions and their instructors' pronunciation practices has only been examined in the Vietnamese context. Findings suggest that Vietnamese learners of English and their teachers both value explicit, systematic, and communicative pronunciation teaching (Nguyen & Hung, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021), and, generally, they hold favourable views towards explicit feedback provision (Ha & Nguyen, 2021; Ha et al., 2021). These studies have provided important insights into the Vietnamese context. However, research examining the relationship between L2 learners' perceptions and their teachers' pronunciation teaching practices must also be conducted in other countries to obtain a more in-depth understanding of a vastly unexplored area.

Aim of Present Study and Research Questions

The above literature review illustrates that the connection between L2 teachers' practices and learners'

perceptions is poorly understood. Thus, this study aimed to explore the relationship between three L2 instructors' practices and their students' perceptions of pronunciation teaching taking place in three intact (i.e., real-life) classrooms (Thomson & Derwing, 2015), with two instructors teaching migrant and refugee students in Australia and one teaching junior high school students in Japan. Selecting instructors teaching in two countries was hoped to shed further light on insights generated by similar studies done in Vietnam (e.g., Nguyen & Hung, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021).

The following research questions guided the study:

- What pronunciation teaching techniques and types of OCF do three experienced L2 instructors use in their classrooms?
- What are the perceptions of L2 learners towards their instructors' pronunciation teaching practices, including the use of techniques and OCF?
- What relationships exist between the instructors' practices and their L2 learners' perceptions?

Method

Teacher-Participants

As mentioned previously, three L2 instructors teaching in two countries (Australia and Japan) were included in the current study. The selection of the three participants was a sample of convenience, for the teachers were part of a larger research project examining the longitudinal process of learning to teach English pronunciation (Burri & Baker, 2021). The teacher-participants were highly experienced instructors and possessed an MEd with a specialisation in TESOL from an Australian university.

Linda (52 years of age) taught in an Intensive English Center (IEC) in Australia for five years and held two administrative positions (assistant head teacher and integration network coordinator) for 1.5 years. Before working at the IEC and studying for her MEd, she was a primary and high school teacher for 20 years. The theme of the two lessons observed was "ancient Egypt," requiring students to use all four skills in learning about the history of Egypt.

Adil (32), from Iran, worked as an L2 instructor and administrator in an English language program at a vocational institution in Australia. His full-time job included 1–2 days of teaching speaking/listening or reading/writing courses per week, curriculum design, and coordination of the entire program. Preceding his move to Australia to enrol in an MEd program in 2012, Adil had taught English at the tertiary level in Iran for eight years and ran his own language school. Practicing simple past tense (through the use of all four skills) was the focus of Adil's lesson that was observed.

Aya (35), from Japan, taught general English courses at a private junior high school in Japan for four years. Before commencing her MEd studies in Australia in 2012, Aya had taught English at a Japanese senior high school for five years. The goal of the two observed lessons was to have students practice "can" vs "can't" through speaking, listening, and reading.

It must be noted that the instructors were aware of the focus of the research, and the classes they taught were part of general skills courses without a specific focus on pronunciation teaching.

Student-Participants

As with the three instructors, selecting the student participants was a sample of convenience. Linda had 16 students in class at the time of data collection. The learners were predominantly migrants and refugees with significant schooling gaps and trauma-related issues. Their residency in Australia ranged from one to 14 months. They were between 12 and 18 years old and came from Burma, China, Congo, Eritrea, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Syria, and Thailand. The average English proficiency of the learners was at an intermediate level. Adil taught 16 Middle Eastern migrant and refugee students. Some of Adil's learners

were long-term residents of Australia (6+ years), while others had been in the country for just a few months. Adil's learners, who spoke Assyrian or Arabic as their first language, were in their 40s or above, with mostly beginning-level English proficiency. Lastly, Aya taught 17 junior school students who were 13 years old. The length of their English studies in Japan varied from six months to over six years, but they all possessed pre-intermediate English proficiency.

Data Collection

To obtain insights into the instructors' pronunciation teaching practices and, ultimately, to compare this data set with their students' perceptions, video footage from classroom observations and a 45-minute semi-structured interview were used. Linda was observed twice (each observation lasted 105 minutes). Adil was observed once for 120 minutes,[1] and Aya's two observed lessons were 45 minutes each. The video camera was positioned so that only students that provided consent were included in the recording.

Richards's (2011) teaching competence framework, comprising a holistic and sociocultural perspective on L2 pedagogy, informed the creation of the interview questions. Linda was interviewed in her office, Aya at a local coffee shop in Tokyo, and Adil on Skype. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim upon the completion of the data collection. Transcribing the video footage was deemed unnecessary, given that the analysis of the classroom observation data included counting the number of pronunciation teaching techniques and instances of OCF provision (see data analysis below).

The questionnaire Baker (2011) developed in her research was utilized and modified to elicit L2 learners' perceptions of pronunciation teaching and learning.[2] Due to logistical difficulties, the researcher could not visit the classes before observations, so the instructors were asked to give the questionnaire to the students who had consented to participate. While this is not ideal, it shows the challenges of conducting research in intact classrooms. The anonymous questionnaire contained three multiple-choice items on general pronunciation instruction, four multiple-choice items on error correction/OCF, and four open-ended questions that asked the students to provide short written answers about their instructors' pronunciation practices (see Appendix).

It must also be noted that the timing of the data collection varied due to the teacher participants' availability and the researcher's ability to travel and visit the research sites. In Linda's and Aya's cases, the two classroom observations, the semi-structured interviews, and the student questionnaire were conducted within a week (Linda in June 2019 and Aya in October 2018). The questionnaire was administered before the interview and the classroom observations to ensure that students reported on practices before the researcher observed any teaching. However, due to family-related circumstances, Adil's situation was more complicated, so he was interviewed in December 2018, six months before his students completed the questionnaire, and the researcher carried out the observation in May 2019.

Data Analysis

While coding the observation data, the researcher watched each video footage several times and identified and counted instances (i.e., instructors' use) of language awareness, controlled, guided, and free techniques. As Baker (2021) explains, language awareness serves for a teacher to facilitate her learners' phonological awareness of target features (e.g., listening discrimination activities). Controlled techniques allow learners to produce target

1 He only taught one day per week when the researcher visited him in May 2019.

2 For the junior high school students in Japan, the questionnaire was translated into Japanese to ensure that the students were able to answer the questions. The learners studying in Australia were considered proficient enough to complete the questionnaire in English.

features, with the instructor continuing to exert a dominant role in students' production (e.g., drills, reading aloud). Guided techniques enable students to practice features in a less teacher-centred environment (e.g., pair work and information-gap activities), and free techniques provide students with opportunities to produce language more creatively with no or little influence by the instructor or materials (e.g., games, discussions).

Besides the coding of techniques, all instances of OCF were counted in the video footage. Once done, the students' responses to the multiple-choice and open-ended questionnaire items were collated in an Excel spreadsheet to obtain an overview of the perceptions of all 49 student participants. Themes were noted, and each questionnaire was explored separately to examine differences between the three classes. Lastly, each interview script was read several times and coded thematically according to the techniques and OCF identified in the observation data and themes in the students' questionnaire responses. This process enabled the researcher to attain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between the instructors' practices and their learners' perceptions of pronunciation teaching and learning.

Findings

The observation and interview data analysis showed that all three instructors taught pronunciation. However, as shown in Table 1, the techniques were primarily controlled in nature, and few communicative opportunities (i.e., guided and free techniques) were provided for students to practice target features. Of the techniques employed, 81% (or 68/84) were classified as controlled (e.g., repetitions and drills, reading aloud). Language awareness (e.g., teacher read out words containing target sounds and students circled—on their handout—the words they heard), guided techniques (e.g., elicitation of target sound), and free techniques (e.g., students asked each other questions to practice target sounds) made up the remaining 19%. These findings closely align with previous research (Baker, 2014; Burri, 2021; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010), suggesting that pronunciation instruction tends to be mostly teacher-centred.

Table 1. Types of Techniques

Techniques	Observed instances	Percentages
Language awareness	5	6%
Controlled	68	81%
Guided	8	9%
Free	3	4%
Total	84	100%

Additionally, and resembling Huensch's (2019) and Foote et al.'s (2016) research, the instructors provided three types of OCF in their classrooms: "recasts (repetition of a student's utterance, minus the error), explicit corrections, [and] prompts (feedback encouraging students to reformulate the error on their own)" (Foote et al., 2016, p. 186). As can be seen in Table 2, 113 instances of OCF occurred in the three classrooms, with more than half (54%) of them being recasts. These recasts typically included the instructors repeating sounds, words, and the occasional sentence that students mispronounced. Explicit correction made up 12% (14/113) and was used by the instructors to point out and explain—to the whole class or to individual students—problems with specific sounds, words, and intonation. Prompts occurred 34% (38/113) of the time and entailed using gestures, simple questions, or a slight and intentional cough by the teacher to draw students' attention to a problematic feature and help them self-correct. More than half of the instances being recasts supports previous research suggesting that they are the most commonly used oral feedback strategy in the L2 classroom (Brown, 2016; Foote et al., 2016; Ha & Murray, 2020).

Table 2. Types of Oral Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback	Observed instances	Percentage
Recasts	61	54%
Explicit correction	14	12%
Prompts	38	34%
Total	113	100%

Shifting to the learners, the analysis of the questionnaire data demonstrated the students' positive perceptions towards pronunciation instruction and error correction. As the first three rows in Table 3 depict, all learners expressed a strong desire to improve their pronunciation; almost all (94%, 44/47) wanted to be taught pronunciation, and 98% (48/49) believed that their instructor taught pronunciation.[3] As evident in the two bottom rows of Table 3, learners (80%, 38/47) also expressed a strong desire for error correction, and 89% (42/47) believed that their teachers corrected their pronunciation.

Table 3. Learners' Perceptions of Pronunciation Teaching

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
I want to improve my pronunciation skills in English.	37	12	0	0	0	49
I want my teacher to teach pronunciation.	31	13	3	0	0	47
My teacher teaches pronunciation.	38	10	1	0	0	49
I want my teacher to correct my pronunciation.	29	9	9	0	0	47
My teacher corrects my pronunciation.	28	14	5	0	0	47

Overall, the findings showed that most learners in this study wanted opportunities to work on their pronunciation have their errors corrected. The teacher-participants, by and large, provided the desired pronunciation instruction, albeit in a mostly controlled way. However, a closer examination of the teachers' and their students' data sets revealed a much more nuanced picture, with each teacher-participant's case featuring its unique characteristic.

Linda

As shown in Table 4, Linda used 28 techniques, with 97% (27/28) of them being controlled in nature. These controlled techniques were repetitions/drills, explanations, modelling, and reading aloud, most targeting segmental sounds in newly learned vocabulary.

In the interview, Linda explained that "in the actual teaching practice in the classroom, it's the segmentals that are important," especially "final consonant sounds" and "medial vowel sounds." The only instance of guided practice occurred when she asked the class about the vowel sound in the stressed syllable of the word "archaeology." As for her use of OCF, 85% of 40

3 The inconsistency of the total number of responses in the right-hand column is the result of some students skipping some of the questionnaire items.

instances (34/40) were recasts of segmental sounds in target words taught during the two observed lessons (plus 5% explicit corrections and 10% prompts). Almost all of these recasts were provided during two oral reading tasks in which individual students were asked to read out in front of the class several sentences from the textbook. As such, the majority of these explicit recasts can be classified as didactic recasts because they refer "to a reformulation of a student's utterance in the absence of any indication of a communication breakdown" (Ha & Murray, 2020, p. 3).

Table 4. Techniques and Oral Corrective Feedback Used by Instructors

	Techniques				Oral corrective feedback type		
	Language awareness	Controlled	Guided	Free	Recasts	Explicit correction	Prompts
Linda		27 (97%)	1 (3%)		34 (85%)	2 (5%)	4 (10%)
Adil		4 (67%)	2 (33%)		17 (31%)	4 (7%)	34 (62%)
Aya	5 (10%)	37 (74%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	

Nonetheless, the questionnaire data showed that all of Linda's students wanted her to correct their pronunciation, while 12/16 students preferred correction in front of the class and 14/15 as a group. The findings, therefore, provided evidence that her students' preferences for receiving corrective feedback aligned with Linda's practices. Yet, the incongruity between her predominantly teacher-centred approach to pronunciation instruction and her students' desire to improve their pronunciation and their goal of using spoken English in their daily life (16/16) and in their future university studies (11/16)—warrants further examination.

The interview data suggested that the curriculum and Linda's beliefs about L2 learning were reasons for the incongruence between her practices and her students' perceptions. The objective of the curriculum was for students to produce academic texts, and Linda believed that too much content to cover and subsequent time constraints hindered her ability to teach pronunciation in the classroom. As the following statement demonstrates, she also believed that pronunciation learning was a long process and was, therefore, of limited priority to her students:

> If it's an issue where I think they're not going to be getting it in a hurry, say for example, a Thai student, I will let it go, because their language learning journey is a long one. It may be five, 10, 15 years before they actually are going to be able to replicate that sound so why harp on about it now, because what we're wanting them to do a whole lot of things; we're wanting them to speak and write correctly, in sentences, and really, the aim of the IEC is for them to be able to produce academic texts. That's what we're aiming for…So, if they can't quite nail that little sound, or that particular word, and if they're constantly saying that particular word wrong, maybe that's just not a priority right now.

Adil

Adil, who also taught in Australia, used fewer techniques[4] but more instances of OCF than Linda (see Table 4). A total of six techniques included four controlled (three reading-aloud tasks and one explanation) and two guided techniques (elicitation of the word ending

4 Observing Adil twice may have revealed a few more pronunciation techniques.

"-ed" and a discussion with the class about the sounds /p/ and /b/ occurring in English and Arabic). As for his provision of OCF, a total of 55 instances were counted. Except for six instances, all of the OCF occurred during the reading-aloud tasks, but unlike Linda, Adil mainly used prompts to address his students' errors. Thirty-four of the 55 instances were prompts, with 26 questions to have students self-correct their pronunciation (e.g., "Do you mean 'spend' or 'spent'?"). Besides prompting, and somewhat similar to Linda, he also mainly used didactic recasts (17/55) and explicit correction (4/55), focusing on "accuracy problems rather than communication breakdowns" (Ha & Murray, 2020, p. 20). Overall, his OCF targeted mostly segmental sounds, which was done individually between the teacher and the student. The questionnaire data suggested that this matched his students' preference: 14/15 liked error correction in front of the class. Nonetheless, given that all of his students expressed a strong desire to be taught and improve their pronunciation (11/14 wanted their teacher to correct their pronunciation, and 15/16 indicated that they used English in their daily lives), the potential discrepancy between the students' perceptions and their teacher's somewhat limited approach to pronunciation—at least from a communicative point of view—requires further inquiry.

As in Linda's program, the curriculum appeared to play a substantial role in contributing to this incongruity. Besides Adil's OCF provision being aligned with the program outcome of having learners self-correct their pronunciation issues, he explained in the interview that the lower levels focused on grammar and pronunciation was therefore thought to be of less importance:

> At this stage, it's enough for [students] to be able to make a correct sentence grammatically rather than being able to pronounce it correctly; as long as it does not make any other meanings or bad meaning, it should be fine. As long as everyone understands [them], that's the correct pronunciation.

Aya

Notably different from Linda and Adil's ad hoc (i.e., unplanned) and reactive approach (Couper, 2017; Foote et al., 2016; Nguyen & Newton, 2020), Aya's pronunciation instruction (provided in Japan) was predominantly pre-planned and phonics-based to help her students "understand the connection between pronunciation and also spelling." As seen in Table 4, she used 50 techniques in her two lessons, with 74% (37/50) being classified as controlled. Of these 37 controlled techniques, 28 were repetitions/drills, with almost all directed at the whole class rather than individual students, which supports previous research suggesting that Japanese junior high school teachers frequently use "listen and repeat" in their English classrooms (Uchida & Sugimoto, 2018). However, the data analysis also revealed that Aya employed a more expansive repertoire of techniques than the other two participating teachers. Besides the controlled techniques, she used five language awareness techniques (e.g., songs, teacher-read sentences, and students circled correct word on the handout), five guided techniques (e.g., elicitation of sounds/sentences, pair work), and three free techniques (e.g., students asking and answering questions about a picture in the textbook). These techniques more or less gradually progressed from language awareness to less teacher-controlled techniques, suggesting that Aya was perhaps aware of her learners requiring extra scaffolding in learning pronunciation due to their relatively low English proficiency level. Few techniques allowed the students to practice the target features (stress and rhythm) in a communicative context, but all her students indicated in the questionnaire that they would be using English in Japan and not in English-speaking contexts; therefore, fluency development was probably less of a priority at this point.

While Aya used a wider variety of techniques than Linda and Adil, the observation data also revealed that she provided fewer instances of OCF than the other two instructors (see Table 4). A total of 18 ins-

tances (10 recasts and eight explicit corrections) were identified, and, except for one recast, all of the OCF was directed at the entire group of students, not at individual learners, as in Linda's and Adil's cases. This whole class-based approach to feedback provision mirrored her use of repetitions/drills, but it appeared to align with her students' preferences: Eight of the 17 students indicated in the questionnaire that they did not like to be corrected individually or in front of the class, and six were somewhat uncertain about whether they wanted the teacher to correct their pronunciation. Nevertheless, even though Aya's OCF provision appeared to accommodate her students' preferences, the following interview excerpt demonstrates that the rare occurrence of OCF in Aya's classroom was most likely the result of her doubts about her ability to correct her students' pronunciation. When asked how she corrected her students' errors, she replied: "I'm not [a] skilful pronunciation teacher, so that's my challenging point. I don't even know how to do it correctly, so I'm still struggling." The lack of OCF provision is problematic given Saito and Lyster's (2012) proposition that corrective feedback is needed in conjunction with preplanned form-focused instruction for pronunciation work to be effective with Japanese learners of English. Nonetheless, the findings suggested that Aya's practices aligned with her learners' perceptions more closely than with Linda and Adil. It is, of course, speculative, but Aya's general English course in which speaking featured more prominently than in Linda's and Adil's courses, and the fact that she shared the same L1 with her students and, therefore, most likely possessed a more in-depth understanding of the students' needs and goals (Cook, 2016), may have contributed to this closer alignment.

Teachers' Practices Versus Students' Perceptions

As this study illustrates, the relationship between the teachers' practices and their learners' perceptions of English pronunciation is complex. On the one hand, the learners in all three classes strongly desired to be taught and improve their pronunciation. However, the observation and interview data showed that all three teachers used predominantly, albeit to a varying degree, controlled (i.e., teacher-centred) techniques that provided learners with few opportunities for communicative pronunciation practice. On the other hand, while the limited range of pronunciation techniques highlighted an incongruity between the students' perceptions and their teachers' practices, the teachers' OCF provision appeared to meet the students' preferences.

Adding to the complexity was the notable variation among the teachers' use of techniques and OCF, with the students indicating in the questionnaire that their instructors successfully spent ample time teaching pronunciation. However, as shown in Table 5, the perceived time of pronunciation instruction varied widely among students, ranging from 3–50 minutes (Linda's and Aya's students) to 3–4 hours (Adil's students) per lesson, but some of these numbers did not match the amount of pronunciation instruction that was observed (and coded) in the study. The students also considered a broad range of activities to help improve their pronunciation (e.g., reading aloud, listening to music, videos, homework, pair work, body language, tests, correction, speaking, stories, handouts, textbook, repetition). At the same time, the observation data showed that all the activities the students mentioned in the questionnaire were used in their classrooms. Furthermore, as Table 5 illustrates, the large majority (44/49 or 90%) felt optimistic about their teachers' approach to pronunciation instruction (e.g., "I feel good/happy when the teacher teaches pronunciation," "I feel like I am learning something," "I like it," and "very easy to understand and it motivates me to study pronunciation more"), with only three students expressing mixed feelings or difficulties with pronunciation. Therefore, the

findings derived from the questionnaire suggested that L2 students desire pronunciation instruction irrespective of the type of delivery provided in the classroom. Yet, as Linda's following remark implies, the relationship between instructors' pronunciation teaching practices and their students' perceptions of classroom occurrences is a complex issue and, therefore, in need of more research:

> I spend plenty of time on pronunciation, in their view, but I think I don't spend that much time. But they saw it differently; they saw it as when I read to them, or when they read to me, or when they listen to a reading text, they get the opportunity to practice pronunciation. They look at it differently, so what you understand as pronunciation instruction and what they understand as pronunciation instruction is different.

Table 5. Learners' Perceptions of Time Spent on Pronunciation and Their Feelings Towards Pronunciation Instruction

	Time devoted to pronunciation per lesson (learners' perspective)	Learners' feelings towards pronunciation instruction			
		Positive	Mixed feelings or difficult	Negative	No answer
Linda	3–48 minutes	14	1		1
Adil	3–4 hours	15			1
Aya	5–50 minutes	15	2		

Discussion

The findings demonstrated that the teachers' approach to pronunciation instruction varied to some extent, but overall, it mainly consisted of controlled techniques, and recasts were the most commonly used OCF strategy to address learners' pronunciation issues. Similar to research conducted in Vietnam (e.g., Ha et al., 2021; Nguyen & Hung, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021), the findings also showed that most learners desired pronunciation instruction, and they felt positive about their instructors' way of teaching pronunciation. L2 learners desiring pronunciation instruction, irrespective of age, L1 background, and amount and type of delivery occurring in the classroom, suggests that what students believe and what teachers do in their classrooms is not a straightforward relationship. As illustrated in Linda's statement above, the students believed they were taught plenty of pronunciation, but Linda disagreed with their perspective, highlighting the multifaceted relationship between students' perceptions and their teachers' beliefs and practices. At the same time, classroom observations revealed the teachers' excellent rapport with their learners and exceptional classroom management skills. The case could, therefore, be made that the learners' desire for any pronunciation instruction reflected the strong connection between the teachers' enthusiasm and their students' enjoyment and willingness to learn (Dewaele et al., 2018).

From a second language acquisition point of view, the question remains whether the teachers' practices will lead to eventual pronunciation improvement. The OCF provided by the three instructors was immediate, consisting primarily of recasts and prompts. Saeli's (2019) research suggests that immediate OCF enhances L2 students' learning of lexical stress and sentence intonation (as opposed to delayed OCF), but Yoshida (2010) found that learners of Japanese as an additional language occasionally fail to recognize immediate feedback provided by their instructors. Nonetheless, the fact that the learners felt the pronunciation instruction

they received was adequate suggests that they were noticing, at least to some extent, the immediate feedback they received from their teachers. Noticing this feedback (i.e., increased learner awareness) may have eventually contributed to the students' pronunciation development (Ranta & Lyster, 2007).

Another area of interest is the notable differences between instructors' approaches to pronunciation teaching. Factors such as the curriculum and teacher-participants' confidence and beliefs about their students' needs, including grammar being perhaps more important than pronunciation, appeared to shape each instructor's way of teaching pronunciation to their particular L2 learners. Nonetheless, the findings revealed no apparent differences between the pronunciation instruction provided by the instructors teaching in Australia or Japan.

Instead, this present study shows that pronunciation teaching is unique to each instructor and shaped by several contextual factors, regardless of the country or context in which an instructor teaches. It could be that the role of an instructors' L1 background is also a determiner of one's willingness to teach pronunciation, although Levis et al.'s (2016) research suggests that this may not be the case. This area requires further investigation, but the study has provided some intriguing insights into how contextual factors shape the individual nature of pronunciation instruction.

At the same time, these factors likely contributed to discrepancies between what teachers did in the classroom and what their learners desired. Similar findings were reported by Ha and Nguyen (2021) in that the need to adhere to teaching objectives and perceived students' needs can cause a "dissonance between the views of the teachers and [their] students" (p. 8). Therefore, this present study provided additional evidence of the contextual nature of pronunciation instruction (see also Bai & Yuan, 2018; Burri, 2021; Burri & Baker, 2020, 2021; Lim, 2016) and highlighted the distinctive nature of each classroom setting.

As this study generated valuable insights into L2 learners' perceptions of pronunciation and how they relate to their teachers' practices, the findings have important pedagogical implications. It is encouraging that there was some alignment between the instructors' practices and their students' perceptions, especially as the findings showed that the participating teachers had the confidence to address pronunciation directly in the classroom (as opposed to previous research showing neglect to do so). Yet, their approach would be even more beneficial for learners if they were given more opportunities to practice and gradually improve their pronunciation in more communicative learning activities. As such, pronunciation instruction should go beyond controlled techniques, while OCF provision needs to extend past recasting and prompting during reading-aloud tasks to help L2 learners improve their pronunciation, which is not a new proposal, with scholars and researchers suggesting a scaffolded approach to pronunciation instruction to improve learners' pronunciation (e.g., Baker, 2014, 2021; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). The present study's findings showed the need for more guided and free techniques (i.e., a less teacher-centred approach to pronunciation instruction) and a broader range of OCF strategies with L2 learners. Granted, this is not a simple undertaking, but Aya's example of pre-planning pronunciation instruction and then gradually moving from a teacher-centred phase (i.e., language awareness) to more communicative phases provides a useful and systematic approach to teaching pronunciation.

The findings further imply that L2 teachers need to understand better their students' perceptions of pronunciation teaching and learning. The teachers in the present study did not seem overly concerned with their learners' preferences and views, which may have widened the incongruity between their practices and perceptions. One possible way to address this issue is for teachers to give their students a short pronunciation questionnaire at the beginning of the semester or course

(Huensch & Thompson, 2017). Gaining insights from surveying their learners may help teachers adjust their practices, which, in turn, might lead to better alignment with their students' perceptions, expectations, desires, and goals. In the interview, Aya suggested that such a questionnaire would indeed help increase her understanding of her Japanese junior high school students' needs: "I think the questionnaire is good idea to know [the students'] needs, so maybe we should do it sometime…to understand their needs or what they feel about pronunciation."

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between L2 instructors' pronunciation teaching practices and their students' perceptions of pronunciation instruction and learning. A future study should include interviews with students so that a richer understanding of L2 learners' perceptions of pronunciation can be attained. A more fine-grained questionnaire than the one used in the present study should also be developed to examine students' differences (Suzukida, 2021), including their motivation (Saito et al., 2018) and "various social factors—ethnic group affiliation, gender, peer group networks, and contact with L2 speakers" (Hansen Edwards et al., 2021, p. 45). Using a more nuanced questionnaire seems to be especially important given Ha et al.'s (2021) suggestion that female L2 learners are more appreciative of OCF than their male counterparts and that students who focused on passing high-stakes exams are perhaps more positively inclined towards receiving OCF than students who study English for communicative purposes. Additionally, using a larger number of teachers and students in different contexts and more than two countries would certainly extend the present study's findings. Future research should also examine the connection between students' actual pronunciation improvement, their perceptions, and their instructors' pronunciation teaching practices. However, for now, the findings of this study provided further evidence that learners desire pronunciation instruction and thus validated Levis' (2021) call for more research on L2 learners' perceptions of pronunciation teaching and learning.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the teachers and their learners for participating in the study. I would also like to express my gratitude to Amanda Baker for providing feedback on an earlier draft of this paper and to Alfredo Herrero de Haro for translating the title, abstract, and keywords into Spanish.

Appendix: Student Questionnaire

Please respond to each statement below using a check (√).

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I want to improve my pronunciation skills in English.					
My teacher teaches pronunciation.					
I want my teacher to teach pronunciation.					
My teacher corrects my pronunciation.					
I want my teacher to correct my pronunciation.					
I like it when my teacher corrects my pronunciation in front of the class (when the class can hear what s/he says).					
I like it when my teacher corrects our pronunciation as a group in class (s/he does NOT focus on me individually).					

Other questions:

- How much time does your teacher spend on pronunciation in your class?
- What activity (or several activities) has your teacher used that is most helpful for improving your pronunciation?
- How do you feel when your teacher teaches pronunciation?
- Where will you **use** spoken English in the future? (Check all that apply)
  - — In my home country.
  - — At university.
  - — In my daily life.
  - — Other. Please explain:
  - — I don't expect to use spoken English in the future.

https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.99190

Functions of Teachers' Narratives in EFL Classroom Contexts

Funciones de las narraciones de los profesores en contextos de clase de inglés como lengua extranjera

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Although narratives have been widely used and investigated in the second/foreign language literature, studying narratives in authentic classroom contexts and their functions has received comparatively little attention. To fill this gap, the present study examines the narratives produced naturally by teachers within English-as-a-foreign-language classroom contexts to find out what functions these narratives serve. The participants were five Iranian teachers teaching general English courses in a private language institute. Following the principles of qualitative research in data analysis, 30 hours of naturally occurring data were first transcribed, then their narratives were identified. After analyzing the 23 determined narratives in the dataset, three functions of narratives emerged, namely, moral, pedagogical, and intercultural.

Keywords: intercultural function, functions of narratives, moral function, pedagogical function, teachers' narratives

El estudio de las narraciones en contextos reales de aula y sus funciones han recibido comparativamente poca atención. En un esfuerzo por llenar este vacío, el presente estudio examina las narraciones producidas naturalmente por profesores en contextos de la clase de inglés para averiguar qué funciones cumplen aquellas. Los participantes fueron cinco profesores iraníes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Siguiendo los principios de la investigación cualitativa en el análisis de datos, primero se transcribieron 30 horas de datos que ocurrieron naturalmente y luego se identificaron las narraciones en ellos. Después de analizar las veintitrés narraciones identificadas en el conjunto de datos, surgieron tres funciones de las narrativas, a saber: moral, pedagógica e intercultural.

Palabras clave: funciones de las narraciones, función intercultural, función moral, función pedagógica, narraciones de los profesores

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Rahmani Doqaruni, V. (2023). Functions of teachers' narratives in EFL classroom contexts. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 147–160. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.99190

This article was received on October 25, 2021 and accepted on September 4, 2022.

Introduction

Narratives have attracted the attention of many researchers in the field of education. This interest is because narratives have the power to access the voices of the main stakeholders involved in education (i.e., teachers and students) more directly. It has also been proposed that, compared to quantitative and qualitative research, narratives offer "deeper, sensitive and accurate portrayals of experience" (Swidler, 2000, p. 553). In other words, narratives are a way of expressing human beings' ideas and revealing their most profound beliefs about different issues.

This view of narratives is in line with the recent movement in second/foreign language (L2) teacher education which asks for outgrowing a simplistic behaviorist notion of instruction and instead studying teachers' cognitive and social views in L2 teaching contexts (Johnson, 2009). Concerning this new belief, L2 teachers are "active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). In line with assigning this new role to teachers, it is essential to gain insights into teachers' experiences to understand their views. A narrative is a reliable tool to this end; it can reveal teachers' personal experiences (Levinson, 2006) and help us understand how teachers' knowledge is structured (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Despite such importance, narrative studies have been criticized for their detachment from natural contexts in which narratives occur. For example, Schegloff (1997) argues that "storytelling abstracted from its interactional setting, occasioning, and uptake is an academically hybridized form" (p. 104) and criticizes the "artificial environment of the academic elicitation" (p. 105). It has been suggested that narratives should be studied in their naturally occurring context to avoid their decontextualization rather than interview-elicited forms, mainly focusing on their setting and the interaction between all participants in a narrative (Rühlemann, 2013). Even though narratives are considered a valuable way to understand people and learn from each other (Son, 2008), one can only appreciate the value of narratives by investigating how people use stories to make sense of their experiences in particular contexts from their perspectives.

Although narratives have been widely used and investigated in the L2 literature (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2008, 2010, 2016; Golombek & Johnson, 2004, 2017, 2021; Johnson & Golombek, 2002, 2011; Kalaja et al., 2008; Liu & Xu, 2011; Nunan & Choi, 2010; Swain et al., 2011; Tsui, 2007), studying narratives in authentic classroom contexts and their functions has received comparatively little attention. In other words, studies on teachers' narratives in L2 teacher education have predominantly used interviews or prompts to make teachers produce narratives (Golombek & Johnson, 2004), and investigating teacher narratives within particular teaching and learning contexts has been overlooked in previous literature (Warren, 2020). So, instead of analyzing the linguistic or sociolinguistic features and functions of teachers' narratives in the natural context of their use, the term narrative often refers to teachers' autobiographies, written reflections, and journal writings (Vásquez, 2007). As Vásquez (2011) points out,

> the predominant mode of narrative research in TESOL—following the trend in educational research, as well as in other social sciences—has clearly been that of narrative inquiry, with its concomitant privileging of autobiographical big stories, or researcher-elicited narratives. In contrast, narrative analysis, with its focus on the specific details of small stories (i.e., stories told in everyday conversational contexts) remains much rarer in the field. (p. 536)

To fill this gap, the present study examines the narratives produced naturally by teachers within English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom contexts. Analyzing these spontaneously occurring narratives

in classrooms is hoped to show what functions they serve. The following research question was posited to achieve the present study's aim: What are the functions of narratives produced by EFL teachers in their classroom context?

Before we go any further, two caveats are in order. First, the terms *story* and *narrative* are used interchangeably throughout the paper, as they are "synonymous terms associated with lay and expert contexts respectively" (Thornborrow & Coates, 2005, p. 16). Second, this paper does not aim to look at narratives as a form of inquiry which scholars have emphasized in both educational (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2007; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Rex & Juzwik, 2011) and L2 (Barkhuizen, 2016; Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004, 2017, 2021; Johnson & Golombek, 2002, 2011) research and practice to understand and document teachers' professional development. Nevertheless, when the term narrative is used in this article, it is meant a form of a story told by teachers in their natural classroom context. Narrative researchers use the terms *big stories* and *small stories* to highlight the differences between these two traditions in narrative studies. Big stories are defined as "the grander narratives we tell ourselves, the big retrospectives elicited from interviews" (Watson, 2007, p. 371), while small stories, in contrast, refer to the "ephemeral narratives emerging in everyday, mundane contexts" (Watson, 2007, p. 371). Although the narrative is defined in its classical form in both traditions as a text that connects events, actions, and experiences across time and that, moreover, evaluates these events and experiences (Labov, 1972), the methodological way in which it is approached is different. The former is more of an etic view, and the latter more of an emic one. While the first one tries to deal with a specific aspect of teachers' behavior or thought, the second one does not start with any hypothesis but with the aim to explore with a pure mind, that is, without imposing any presuppositions.

Literature Review

Why should a person tell a story in the first place? There are various reasons for telling personal experience narratives from a sociolinguistic perspective. For example, considering gender, it has been argued that men and women tell narratives to achieve different aims: Men portray some contest through their narratives, and women try to foster a sense of community by telling stories (Johnstone, 1993). It has also been proposed that people pursue morality in their stories (Walton & Brewer, 2001). In these narratives, a moral worldview is projected by emphasizing an incident in which a protagonist violated social expectations and norms. The narrator seems to try to clarify, reinforce, or revise their beliefs and values by recounting the violation and revealing their moral stance toward it (Ochs & Capps, 2001). However, another function of narratives, perhaps the most important, is attributed to identity construction (e.g., Bamberg, 2004a, 2004b; Georgakopoulou, 2006a, 2006b). In other words, the point of a story is, from a broader perspective, the sense that people can make of it; more specifically, what the events reported indicate concerning personal and cultural values and expectations. Hence, more importantly than just telling stories, a narrative operates as "a type of discourse through which we configure identity and self" (Bamberg, 2004a, p. 332). Summarizing the functions of narratives in the field of sociolinguistics, Thornborrow and Coates (2005) state that

> stories can be told to entertain (jokes, folktales, anecdotes), to justify and explain (accounts, and descriptions of events), to instruct (the 'cautionary' tale, fables), and to establish social norms (gossip). But even more importantly, stories tell us who we are: they are central to our social and cultural identity. (p. 7)

In line with sociolinguists, teacher educators have also identified various functions of narratives. For example, it has been shown that a critical function of narratives is gaining insight into teachers' complex

processes of learning to teach (e.g., Doyle & Carter, 2003; Richert, 2002). According to Schultz and Ravitch (2013), narratives "reveal how teachers engage in the construction of narratives about themselves in the context of their schools, classrooms, and communities, as well as the current political context of their teaching and learning to teach" (p. 37). Olson and Craig (2009) distinguish between small stories and mega-narratives to emphasize the critical function of local and particularized stories in the field of education in revealing the interactions between teachers and students. Previous literature has also shown that another important function of narrative is constructing teachers' understandings of their profession (Craig, 2007; Rex, 2011).

Even though studying the functions of narratives forms an essential part of narrative research in general education, this strand of research has been overlooked in L2 education. A few of such studies have analyzed the functions of teachers' narratives in settings other than real classroom contexts. For example, Richards (1999) investigated English as a second language (ESL) teachers' narratives in a staffroom at a language school. The data consisted of teachers' casual chats during their work breaks, which can be considered small stories. It was found that as teachers had many joint experiences and concerns, their narratives served two essential functions: first, reinforcing personal and professional relationships, and second, constructing a collaborative culture. The theme that emerged most frequently in teachers' narratives was their interactional problems with individual or group students. Other themes implicit in narratives included "assumptions about the qualities associated with effective language learning, the bounds of acceptable classroom behavior, and the legitimate concerns of a committed language teacher" (p. 170). It was concluded that functions of day-to-day professional stories need to be taken more seriously and further investigated.

Vásquez (2007) also explored workplace narratives of a group of novice language teachers in post-observing meetings. The data were collected from a small university-intensive ESL program over two years. A total of 15 narratives were identified; their infrequency in the data was attributed to the goal orientation of such meetings, which discussed the class observed. The narratives were divided into two broad categories: four reflective narratives and 11 relational narratives. The former reveals a speaker's internal states or cognitive processes, while the latter highlights the interaction between two or more people. Furthermore, although it was revealed that moral stance interacts with narratives, it was concluded that "the moral stance in narratives told by novices tends to be considerably less stable, less certain or less consistent" (p. 671).

In a recent study, Warren (2020) investigated language teacher–learners' forum discussions in a graduate-level online course to understand the functions of their narratives. The course included topics about the theory and practice of writing instruction for language learners, and teachers had weekly forum discussions based on the topics of each week's readings. Discursive psychology was used to investigate narratives of professional experience shared in the course. It was found that narratives of professional experience had accountability functions for teachers as they were enabled "to warrant specific claims in response to questions posed about the readings, as well as to justify their stance-taking, even for potentially controversial claims" (p. 415).

As reviewing the L2 literature shows, functions of teachers' narratives have been studied in settings other than the real L2 classroom contexts (such as staffroom, post-observing meetings, and forum discussions). Though these studies are valuable in revealing teachers' feelings, beliefs, and experiences in their workplace, more studies need to be carried out on teachers' narratives inside L2 classroom contexts to gain a deeper insight into their functions. The present study is an attempt to accomplish this goal.

Method

Theoretical Foundation

Although the narrative is studied from various perspectives and approaches to narrative considerably vary (for a comprehensive review, see Tomaščíková, 2009), this study is based on the functionalist theory of examining narratives. In this regard, "narrative is used as a theory to explain what goes on in an existing institutional, workplace or everyday setting" (Threadgold, 2005, p. 262). More specifically, following this theory, the researcher observes and identifies narratives that involve either the individual or collaborative telling of stories within the real contexts to delve into the particular functions of these narratives. In essence, this narrative analysis theory attempts to identify the purposes behind telling narratives and tries to answer the question, "what does this story *do* as a result of its telling?" (Allen, 2017, p. 1069; emphasis in the original).

Participants

The participants were five Iranian EFL teachers (pseudonyms Sohrab, Bijan, Kaveh, Jamshid, and Fereydoun) teaching general English courses in a private language institute in Mashhad city, northeastern Iran. Convenience sampling (i.e., using participants who were convenient data sources) was used in the present study. The teachers were all men, and their ages ranged from 23 to 27. They all had less than three years of teaching experience, which means they are considered inexperienced teachers concerning previous literature (e.g., Rahmani Doqaruni, 2017a, 2017b; Tsui, 2003, 2005). The reason for choosing only inexperienced teachers rather than experienced teachers is that the former are more likely to use narratives in their classroom contexts than the latter (Rahmani Doqaruni & Najjari, 2017). All the teachers had completed their BA in English language teaching and gone through teacher training courses in the language institute they were teaching. The participants were aware of the voluntary nature of the study and consented to participate in the research project.

Sohrab, the youngest participant (23 years old), had one year of teaching experience and taught 12 hours a week in the institute. He focused on speaking, listening, and writing exercises during the observations. Ten male students in his class were mostly 12 years old. Bijan was 25 years old with around a year and a half of teaching practice and a weekly workload of 10 hours. His class mainly concentrated on speaking and reading activities in the sessions observed for this study. Eight learners, who were mostly 13 years old, attended his class. Kaveh was also 25 years old, with two years of teaching experience and 16 hours of weekly workload at the time of data collection. Reading and listening comprehension were the main classroom activities in the observed sessions. His students were 12 learners and were mostly 14 years old. Jamshid was 26 years old, with three years of experience and a weekly workload of 20 hours. Pronunciation practice, listening comprehension, and grammar activities occupied most of his class time during the observed sessions. His class consisted of 11 students who were 12 years old. Fereydoun, the oldest of the participants, was 27 years old with three years of teaching experience. He had a weekly schedule of 16 hours of instruction. The observed classes focused on teaching collocations, listening comprehension, and reading texts. There were ten students in his class, and they were mostly 13 years old.

One class at the intermediate level was selected from each teacher. Each class consisted of eight to 12 male language learners aged between 12 and 14. The classes met two times a week with two-hour sessions each time. All classes were homogenized in terms of several variables to control their possible effect on teachers' narratives. For example, the same course book series, *Touchstone*, was used in all the classes observed. In addition, the five teachers followed the communicative approach to teaching, as required by the institute. The classes were further parallel in

terms of their content focus, and all concentrated on the learners' development of the four language skills.

Teaching Context

Generally, two rival groups compete to teach EFL in Iran, namely the private and public sectors (Iranmehr & Davari, 2018). Due to the lack of efficiency of public schools in meeting the EFL learners' needs, an increasing number of learners have been attracted by private institutes in Iran (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017). The main reason is the methodology used in private language institutes, which follow a communicative approach and apply the latest standards of teaching English communicatively. Learners' needs and interests are taken care of by paying attention to the four language skills simultaneously in these institutes compared to public schools, which mainly focus on grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, compared to public schools, which use local textbooks published by the Ministry of Education to meet their purposes, nearly all private language institutes use commercial textbooks developed and published by international publishers. Students are more interested in these textbooks as they contain various tasks, learner-centered activities, and exciting topics. These international textbooks make students capable of achieving their communicative goals as they are designed based on real-life situations (Baleghizadeh & Motahed, 2010), providing students with more opportunities to practice communication in authentic contexts and become familiar with the target culture. In addition, teachers in private institutes are more proficient and communicatively competent than their colleagues in public schools (Baniasad-Azad et al., 2016; Ganji et al., 2018). While public school teachers are mainly interested in teaching grammar (Baleghizadeh & Farshchi, 2009), teachers in private institutes would instead develop EFL students' communicative skills by encouraging communication in real-life settings.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

The data of the present study were collected from 15 classroom sessions (three sessions for each teacher), considered a reasonable sample size (Seedhouse, 2004). The researcher observed the classrooms as a non-participant to collect the data and made audio recordings from three lessons of each teacher. Two MP3 recorders were used in the present study, one for making the audio recordings of the whole class interaction and the other for recording the teacher's voice more clearly. Thirty hours of naturally occurring data were obtained from the five participating teachers using the abovementioned method.

This qualitative study aims to record, analyze, and interpret naturally occurring data in authentic classroom contexts. Since research in the qualitative paradigm tries to gain insight into a phenomenon (teachers' narratives in this study) as it emerges dynamically and socially in the natural context by the actual participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), variables are not manipulated, and performance is not predicted. Hence, following the principles of qualitative research in data analysis, the audio recordings were first transcribed, then their narratives were identified. The entire corpus was read and re-read several times so that narratives told by the teachers were identified. In order to identify and extract narrative units of discourse from more extensive stretches of teacher talk, Labov's (1972) well-known structural narrative model was used in the present study. According to this model, a narrative includes at least two temporally and sequentially linked parts, namely *complication* (i.e., relating sequence of events) and *resolution* (i.e., how the events sort themselves out). Moreover, a narrative must include some *evaluation* (i.e., indicating why the story is told).

In addition to these necessary parts, a narrative may also include other optional sections, such as an *abstract*

(i.e., presenting the plot in a nutshell), an *orientation* (i.e., setting the scene for the listener), and a *coda* (i.e., bridging the gap between narrated and narrating time). The present study focused on the functions of teachers' narratives within their classroom context. The following guiding question was used during the data analysis procedure: What do the teachers aim to accomplish with their narratives?

Findings and Discussion

Following Labov's (1972) structural narrative model, several readings of the transcripts yielded a total of 23 narratives. It is worth noting that Fereydoun used only one narrative in his classrooms; Bijan and Jamshid happened to tell narratives in some of their teaching sessions, while Sohrab and Kaveh told two or more narratives in every single session. In this regard, different factors, such as teachers' characteristics, their relationships with students, and their level of L2 proficiency, might have affected the number of narratives each teacher produced. Although most of the narratives identified in the data were relatively short and compressed, they should not be viewed as mere reports (Marra & Holmes, 2004) or recounts of events in the past (Vásquez, 2007). Instead, these narratives serve as a rich and previously unexplored source of data that can be used to reveal and examine their specific functions in EFL classroom contexts.

After analyzing the 23 narratives in this dataset, three functions of narratives emerged, namely, moral, pedagogical, and intercultural. Moral narratives—the most frequent, with 11 instances—reflect teachers' concerns with the principles of right and wrong behavior and share with students the lesson derived from their story. The aim of pedagogical narratives—the second most frequent, with eight instances—is to teach students strategies and skills needed to learn English more effectively and encourage them to do their best to overcome the barriers of learning a foreign language. Finally, the purpose of intercultural narratives (four instances) in the data set is to raise the students' awareness of the differences between their culture and the target culture. Although one single narrative can have multiple functions simultaneously (Marra & Holmes, 2004), the labels assigned to the narratives in the present study are not supposed to be definite, as any given narrative may have some aspect of all three functions.

The following extracts from the data set, which delineate the three functions of narratives, were selected based on the following criteria: Their contextualization is minimal, which is of particular importance, as most narratives identified in the data were so embedded in surrounding discourse that it would be less likely to understand them easily out of context. In addition, the chosen narratives exemplify the three functions clearly and, in many respects, are typical of the function of the narrative they represent. Moreover, the length and readability of narratives were also considered.

Moral Function

Extract 1 clearly shows the moral function of narratives. This narrative begins by answering a question in the textbook as a pre-reading task to prepare the students for a text about the unhealthy effects of smoking. The sequence begins with a self-narrative expression (i.e., "let me tell you something"); thus, the teacher makes the learners aware of the relevance of the coming story by making explicit the connection between the question and his personal experience. Then, the teacher's story continues, functioning as a revelation of his moral stance toward the topic (i.e., "smoking is harmful") and closing with his assessment of the issue (i.e., "be brave and say no to such offers in your life").

Extract 1

1. Teacher: [asks the student to read the exercise from the book] all right, so, and the last one
2. number eight.
3. Learner: Do you smoke?
4. Teacher: Aha, please be honest.

5. Learner: Yes, *hubble-bubble* once a week.
6. Teacher: I've heard that, eh…it will damage more than cigarettes.
7. Learner: I don't smoke; it's bad.
8. Teacher: Of course, it's bad, but why do people smoke? Is it fine?
9. Learner: No.
10. Teacher: I've heard different reasons
11. that some of them are interesting.
12. Let me tell you something
13. I had a classmate who smoked
14. he said, "when I use cigarette in my hand
15. even when I don't light it
16. —light here means turn it on—
17. when I keep it in my hand
18. and I do this action [the teacher shakes his hand]
19. OK? when eh…it is finished
20. you will clean it more
21. this makes me comfortable or relax
22. it makes me calm down."
23. Some people think like this.
24. Learner: Younger people because they want to say I'm uh…
25. Teacher: I'm an adult.
26. Learner: I'm an adult.
27. Teacher: Yes, I agree,
28. and even teenagers nowadays
29. they smoke, and I don't know why.
30. Smoking is harmful
31. you should be so careful,
32. especially in choosing your friends.
33. Most of the times, bad friends offer cigarettes to you.
34. You should learn to say no in such situations
35. don't feel ashamed to say no to smoking.
36. It's a life-or-death situation;
37. be brave and say no to such offers in your life

Following Labov's model, Lines 10 and 11 act as the abstract as they indicate that the teacher will talk about why people smoke and is trying to spark the learners' interest. The teacher narrates the main event in Lines 12 to 22, which aligns with Labov's third phase: complication. Line 23 is consistent with the fourth phase of Labov's model (evaluation), in which the narrator mentions why the narrative was told. The teacher concludes the whole story in Lines 28 to 30, the same as Labov's resolution. Finally, Lines 31 to 37 act as Labov's coda, where the teacher points out the story's relevance by connecting it with the students' everyday life.

As the extract shows, the teacher is trying to establish morality in his narrative by warning his students about the harmful effects of smoking. It should be noted that teaching is a moral act. As Sanger (2008) points out, "there is a consensus among educational scholars that teaching is by its very nature a moral endeavor, which suggests that all classroom teachers are, in some sense, engaged in moral work" (p. 169). Narrative can be regarded as an effective tool teachers can use to teach morality to their students because "the way stories are told and interpreted are always positioning tellers and audiences within a moral framework: Characters are 'good' or 'bad.' How we tell stories and react to them positions us as 'good' or 'bad' people" (Rymes & Wortham, 2011, p. 37). This moral framework establishes a shared sense of good and bad between teachers and learners. It can be argued that education flourishes as students' lives are improved by helping them become better human beings, considering this narrative aspect. It seems that teachers in the present study are fully aware of the power of narratives in teaching morality to their students, as they have used narratives for such a purpose more frequently than other reasons.

Pedagogical Function

Extract 2 demonstrates the pedagogical dimension of the narratives. The teacher explains the final exam and asks the students to study harder and be prepared, especially for the listening part. He tells the students to transcribe the audios in their textbook and not to worry if they do not understand some parts of the

listening exercises. Meanwhile, he tells a narrative about his problem with a translation project when he was a university student.

Extract 2

1. Teacher: I don't know I told you or not, eh…
2. I had a project at university
3. I had a project, eh…
4. it was something
5. we had to translate
6. a news, OK?
7. It was from BBC or CNN
8. or something like that
9. I got the news,
10. but there was one sentence
11. a complete sentence that I couldn't understand that
12. seven words, OK?
13. I showed this to my teacher
14. he said that…so this is this
15. he said the sentence to me, OK?
16. This is why he knows
17. because he practices, yes?
18. because he listens to different things again and again
19. a lot of times
20. so your ears should get used to English
21. you should listen to it a lot
22. don't worry if you don't understand one word
23. listen again and again
24. finally, you'll get it

Line 1 acts as the abstract as the teacher tries to attract the students' attention. In Labov's terms, Lines 2 to 8 serve as orientation as the teacher gives the learners information about the story's setting. The teacher narrates the events in Lines 9 to 15 (complication). Lines 16 to 19 (evaluation) refer to the reason the narrative is being told. The teacher indicates that the story has come to a close in Lines 20 and 21 (resolution). Finally, the teacher tries to relate his narrative to his students' current problem in Lines 22 to 24 (coda).

Concerning this extract, the teacher is trying to encourage his students to practice English by narrating a personal story of the same problem his students might have. It has been argued that employing narrative as a pedagogical tool helps enhance student learning and engagement (Diekelmann, 2001; Smith, 2012). Narrative pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that stems from teachers' personal experiences concerning their understanding of events and incidents and how they make sense of phenomena (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The power of narrative for teaching can be attributed to two factors. On the one hand, a narrative employs the same strategies and procedures used by the brain to learn. As the brain grasps information by simultaneously perceiving both the detail and the big picture (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2010), a narrative embeds pedagogical details within the large-scale story. Thus, when students need to recall later, they can work through the narrative to remember the entire picture and the pieces that made it.

On the other hand, a narrative activates affective motivation, which is considered essential for learning (Boekaerts, 2007; Pekrun et al., 2007). As a narrative is told, affectively charged structures and patterns are activated, which make students instinctively respond to and interact with that narrative (Smith, 2012). Thus, a narrative is a powerful learning activation tool from mental and emotional perspectives. In addition, it should be noted that non-native teachers are considered excellent role models for their students as they have completed a challenging job (i.e., learning a foreign language) that their students wish to achieve. So, the students find their teachers' pedagogical narratives of particular importance as they can see how their teachers have dealt with the difficulties of learning a foreign language. The findings of the present study point to the fact that teachers have realized the importance of narratives of their personal experiences in encouraging and motivating their students for pedagogical purposes.

Intercultural Function

Extract 3 deals with the intercultural dimension of narratives. Before the teacher told the narrative, the students read a text about the benefits of sports. As the students discussed the contents of the text in a post-reading exercise, the teacher drew their attention to the following narrative by a self-narrative expression (i.e., let me say you something [*sic*]). The intercultural function of the narrative is highlighted by telling a story about a famous swimmer from the target culture (i.e., Michael Phelps).

Extract 3

1. Teacher: Let me say you something
2. as you know
3. you know Michael Phelps?
4. Learners: Yes.
5. Teacher: The winner
6. the champion
7. American swimmer
8. eh…one night
9. he was smoking in a bar
10. it was marijuana,
11. and they fined
12. they found him
13. and fined him
14. it means
15. they said OK
16. you smoke?
17. all right
18. because you're a famous athlete
19. you cannot smoke illegal drug.
20. Learner: Three months banned.
21. Teacher: Yes
22. for three months
23. he was forbidden
24. you are a good athlete,
25. but you shouldn't smoke marijuana
26. everyone is equal in front of law,
27. but I don't think the same is true in our country
28. I mean, sometimes famous people
29. like politicians or athletes get round law.

In this extract, the abstract is clear in Line 1, where the teacher tries to draw the students' attention to the story he will tell. Lines 3 to 7 are orientation, as the teacher introduces the story's main character. The complication phase is evident in Lines 8 to 23, where the sequence of events is narrated. Lines 24 and 25 (evaluation) illustrate the story's point that indicates why the story is told. The teacher makes a general conclusion in Line 26, which, in Labov's terms, can be called the resolution of the narrative. In the end, Lines 27 to 29 act as coda and bridge the gap between the narrated and narrating time.

This narrative aims to make students aware of the differences between L1 and L2 cultures. To use an L2 efficiently, it is not enough to have only linguistic competence, as the primary goal of L2 learning is to communicate with other people from different cultures (Tural & Cubukcu, 2021). Hence, intercultural competence is an essential part of L2 education. According to Byram et al. (2002), L2 teaching and learning should include "intercultural competence, i.e., ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality" (p. 10). So, increasing L2 learners' intercultural competence to understand the worldviews of the people of another culture and be understood by native speakers of the target language is particularly important, especially in this globalized world. In this regard, teacher narratives can play an essential role in making L2 learners aware of intercultural differences and drawing their attention to discrepancies between their culture and the target culture due to the teacher acting as the authentic primary source of L2 knowledge and the entertaining power of narrative, making references to intercultural differences more appealing.

Conclusion

Narratives are in the nature of every human being. People most often tell stories in their daily lives. However, telling stories to achieve a specific purpose

in an educational context is a skill that needs to be investigated in more depth. The importance arises from the fact that teachers tell stories to "make sense of the worlds they inhabit, the tasks they are encountering, and the problems they face" (Swidler, 2000, p. 553). Good teachers are already engaged in this kind of practice, and reflections on narratives in the present study are hoped to contribute to their efforts.

Through an analysis of teachers' narratives of personal experience in an EFL context, this study has started understanding the contribution such narratives make in an educational context. More specifically, the findings revealed that narrative approaches to teaching are pretty effective in achieving moral, pedagogical, and intercultural functions. However, it should be noted that "without training, teacher stories are infrequent and lack key components associated with narrative effectiveness" (Miller-Day et al., 2015, p. 618). Although the teachers in the present study used narratives from time to time, they were never aware of their importance in achieving particular functions. It is then suggested that theory and research on narratives in L2 education should be expanded and include natural classroom contexts as an uncharted territory in narrative studies so that researchers and teachers can gain a deeper insight into the relationship between narratives and their educational functions.

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https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.95379

The Influence of Emotions and Word Frequency in First and Second Language Processing: Evidence From the Emotional Stroop Task

La influencia de las emociones y la frecuencia de las palabras en el procesamiento de la primera y la segunda lengua: evidencia de la tarea Stroop emocional

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First (L1) and second (L2) language speakers process information differently. The current study explores whether L1 and L2 English language speakers process the emotional connotations of high and low-frequency words using the emotional Stroop task. With this task, we measure the reaction time required to name the color of words with positive, neutral, and negative valence. The sample was 100 participants, 50 L1 English speakers and 50 L2 English speakers. Our results show that L2 English speakers process words slower than L1 English speakers do. L1 English speakers processed positive words faster than negative words, but L2 English speakers displayed a reversed pattern, which indicates L2 emotional attenuation for negative words.

Keywords: emotional response, emotional Stroop task, second language learning, word frequency, word recognition

El presente estudio explora si hablantes nativos y extranjeros de inglés procesan de forma diferente las connotaciones emocionales de las palabras de alta y baja frecuencia, utilizando una tarea de Stroop emocional. Analizamos los tiempos de reacción ante palabras con valencia positiva, neutra y negativa. La muestra total fue de 100 participantes, 50 angloparlantes nativos y 50 angloparlantes extranjeros. Nuestros resultados muestran que los angloparlantes extranjeros procesan las palabras más lentamente que los angloparlantes nativos. Además, tanto los hablantes nativos como los extranjeros procesaron más rápido las palabras de alta frecuencia que las de baja frecuencia. Los hablantes nativos de inglés procesan las palabras positivas más rápido que las negativas, pero los hablantes extranjeros de inglés muestran un patrón inverso.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje de segundas lenguas, frecuencia de palabras, reconocimiento de palabras, respuesta emocional, tarea de Stroop emocional

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Lizarazo Pereira, D. M., Roberts, F., & Tamayo, R. M. (2023). The influence of emotions and word frequency in first and second language processing: Evidence from the emotional Stroop task. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 161–175. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.95379

This article was received on April 29, 2021 and accepted on July 4, 2022

Introduction

A quarter of the world's population (1.75 billion people) uses English. There are at least three learners of English as a second language (L2) for each native speaker (L1; Maybin & Swann, 2010). Consequently, a substantial body of research aims to identify differences in understanding L1 and L2. One of the most interesting findings is the discovery of emotional differences in how L1 and L2 speakers process the meaning of words. The present study aims to investigate how the emotional connotation of words and word frequency influence processing speed for L1 and L2 speakers of English using an emotional Stroop task (EST). Previous research pointed out that L1 speakers tend to display stronger emotional reactions to negative and positive words than L2 speakers (i.e., Caldwell-Harris, 2015; Keysar et al., 2012). This so-called *foreign language effect* apparently leads to high emotional resonance in L1 and emotional attenuation in L2. In most cases, L1 speakers also display enhanced automaticity and speed in processing emotional words, whereas L2 speakers display decreased emotional automaticity and emotional attenuation (Pavlenko, 2012).

A fundamental explanation for emotional differences in L1 and L2 processing might reside in dual-system accounts of cognition (i.e., Kahneman, 2011; Parra & Tamayo, 2021, for a review). Dual system theories suggest that two different modes operate in parallel to process linguistic information. On the one hand, the implicit system is fast, automatic, and intuitive. On the other hand, the explicit system is slow, analytical, and rational. Accordingly, L2 information, predominantly processed by explicit mechanisms, demands more significant cognitive load and effort than L1, primarily processed by implicit strategies (Costa et al., 2014). Additionally, information implicitly acquired seems more persistent over time than explicit memories (Mitchell, 2006; Tamayo & Frensch, 2007, 2015).

Emotional Differences in L1 and L2

Today, the study of emotional differences between L1 and L2 processing involves behavioral (e.g., lexical decision task, EST), psychometric (e.g., questionnaires), neurophysiological (skin conductance responses, SCRs), and neuroimaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Research concerned with emotional differences between L1 and L2 has suggested some interesting ways in which the emotional attenuation typically observed in L2 can facilitate the accuracy of moral judgments, reduce biases involved in decision-making, and increase the speed of single-word processing (Altarriba & Mathis, 1997; Costa et al., 2014; Keysar et al., 2012; Pavlenko, 2017).

One pioneer piece of research compared emotional processing in L1 and L2 (Bond & Lai, 1986). The researchers interviewed participants regarding embarrassing topics in their native and foreign languages. They found that the length and detail of answers in L2 were more significant than in L1, which suggests that talking about embarrassing topics is easier in L2 than in L1. Similarly, Dewaele (2004) reported a sizeable multilingual study (N = 1,039) including participants with different language backgrounds. He assessed the perceived emotional weight of swear words. The results showed that the perceived emotionality of swear words was higher in L1 and weaker in languages learned subsequently. Additionally, implicit physiological measures, such as SCRs, show that emotional activation is slightly higher when taboo words are processed in L1 than in L2 (Harris, 2004; Harris et al., 2003).

Interestingly, proficiency and experience seem to modulate emotional reactivity. For instance, studies about lying in L1 and L2 have shown that participants subjectively perceive higher emotionality in L1 than L2, but objective SCRs were greater in L2 than L1 (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği-Dinn, 2009). Thus, physiological reactions can depend on language proficiency. On the

one hand, early learners and highly proficient speakers do not show differences in physiological measures. On the other hand, late learners and low-proficient individuals display increased SCRs. The reason is that it could be harder to respond in L2 than in L1, thus increasing participants' anxiety and emotional reactivity (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği-Dinn, 2009; Harris, 2004).

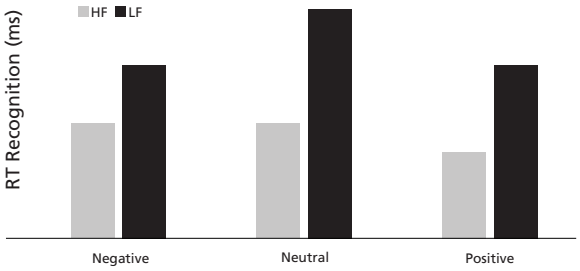
Emotional Word Processing

Researchers soon recognized that multiple variables (experience, motivation, competence, fluency, etc.) affect information processing in L1 and L2. Consequently, some scholars have focused on a more straightforward scenario, the processing of single words. Words differ from morphemes (the smallest unit in a language that can be assigned a meaning) because they can have a meaning uttered in isolation. All words have a form linked to a sound (a phonetic and a phonological code) and a grapheme (orthographic code). Additionally, every word has a meaning (semantic code) that can provide information about comprehensive knowledge of words (the generic form and function) and what the word refers to (the reference). Form and meaning are two intertwined systems representing a single word in our minds (Traxler, 2012). In this way, when we perceive a word, it can activate a cognitive meaning and trigger an emotional response related to the meaning (de Houwer & Hermans, 1994). Within this cluster of research, emotions are typically measured along two key dimensions: (a) valence, ranging from pleasant to unpleasant; and (b) arousal, ranging from calm to excited (Bradley & Lang, 1999).

Single-word processing studies have shown contradictory results in emotional processing. For instance, lexical decision task (LDT) studies that included positive words found faster processing for positive words than for neutral and negative words (Kuchinke et al., 2005; Recio et al., 2014). However, studies comparing L1 and L2 report faster reaction times (RTs) in processing emotional words (positive and negative) than neutral words for both L1 and L2 (Conrad et al., 2011). These differences are attributable to the rules used to construct non-words needed for most LTD experiments, which require similar construction schemes in L1 and L2 but affect the participants' ability to differentiate among them. In our view, this points out one shortcoming of LDT experiments: they require creating non-words based on a specifically predesigned set of rules. One reason for using an alternative experimental task in our study is that the EST (see below) does not require a lexical decision between words and non-words.

Notwithstanding, extant LDT studies have also investigated the relationship between emotion and word frequency. These experiments are relevant to the present study, although most are not necessarily centered on L1 and L2 differences (Kuchinke et al., 2007; Méndez-Bértolo et al., 2011; Nakic et al., 2006; Scott et al., 2009). High-frequency negative words are recognized faster than low-frequency and neutral words. Low-frequency negative words are recognized faster than low-frequency neutral ones, but there are no significant differences between high-frequency neutral and negative words (Méndez-Bértolo et al., 2011). Low-frequency words are processed slower than high-frequency, and highly negative words are processed faster than low-frequency negative and neutral words (Nakic et al., 2006). Additionally, when positive valence takes part in these studies, an advantage to high-frequency positive words relative to low-frequency words was found. High-frequency positive words are processed faster than high-frequency neutral and high-frequency negative words, whereas low-frequency positive and low-frequency negative words are processed more quickly than neutral ones (Kuchinke et al., 2007; Scott et al., 2009). Figure 1 presents a simplified summary of these findings.

Figure 1. Schematic Summary of Empirical Findings Reporting Advantages on Recognition Speed According to Emotionality and Word Frequency



Note. The Y-axis depicts reaction time (RT) of word recognition in milliseconds. The X-axis depicts type of word according to emotion and frequency. HF = high frequency, LF = low frequency.

Sheikh and Titone (2016) conducted an eye-tracker study focused on differences between L1 and L2. They found an interesting advantage in processing positive emotional words in L2 compared with neutral words but not for negative words and an emotional advantage in high-frequency positive words compared to low-frequency words. These results suggest an apparent effect of frequency: faster processing of high-frequency words compared to low-frequency ones.

Emotional Stroop in L1 and L2

As mentioned above, researchers use various measures to evaluate emotional processing. In the present study, we use the EST to assess emotional interference involved in word processing (Williams et al., 1996). In a typical EST, participants must name as quickly and accurately as possible the color of emotional words (e.g., *cancer*, *war*, *kill*) and neutral words (e.g., *street*, *lift*, *spoon*) printed in assorted colors. Typically, participants slow down when they name the color of emotional words compared to neutral words. Emotional words activate automatic connotations, divert attention from the printed color, and so slow participants' reaction time (Algom et al., 2004; Frings et al., 2010; Mackay et al., 2004). However, an earlier monolingual study has shown interference effects in the EST only for low-frequency negative words and null effects in high-frequency negative ones (Kahan & Hely, 2008).

The EST has also been used to compare the automaticity of word processing in L1 and L2 (i.e., Eilola et al., 2007; Fan et al., 2016; Sutton et al., 2007; Winskel, 2013). For instance, Sutton et al. (2007) focused on the emotional Stroop effect using only negative and neutral words in highly proficient Spanish-English bilinguals. They found similar levels of interference for both English and Spanish word processing. Eilola et al. (2007) assessed the processing speed of neutral, positive, negative, and taboo words in proficient Finish-English bilinguals. They found interference in both languages when negative and taboo words were presented, slowing the RT compared with neutral words. Neutral and positive words did not display this effect. Besides, there were no differences in the size of cross-interference between languages.

The studies above did not find critical differences between L1 and L2 in automatic word processing. Nevertheless, recent studies contested these results, reporting a critical difference between negative and neutral words in proficient Thai-English bilinguals. An emotional Stroop effect was found in L1 (slow RT in emotional words) but not in L2 (Winskel, 2013). According to Winskel (2013), this difference

> is attributable to the proficiency levels in English of the Thai-English bilinguals and the context in which they had learned English, predominantly as a foreign language. For example, only 57% of the Thai participants had spent a brief period overseas, whereas 100% of the Finnish participants in Eilola et al.'s (2007) study had spent time overseas, and 44% of them had lived in an English-speaking environment for a year or longer. (p. 1096)

These findings suggest that higher expertise with L2 can lead to emotional reactions similar to those observed for L1.

More recently, EST effects were reported in a face-word Stroop paradigm in both L1 and L2 (Fan et

al., 2016). This study showed higher interference for bilinguals' dominant language, which supports the view of emotional attenuation in L2. Using a different task to measure automaticity in word processing (the rapid serial visual presentation), L1 was more emotional than L2, apparently, due to an attention blink in L2 for English speakers (Colbeck & Bowers, 2012). In sum, previous EST studies have shown that proficiency, the context of learning, and expertise with L2 are critical variables involved in emotional interference in word processing (Costa et al., 2014; Eilola et al., 2007; Fan et al., 2016; Sutton et al., 2007). All these studies suggest that emotional words can lead to higher reactivity in L2 only after an extensive or an immersive experience with the non-dominant language. The shared explanation for this particular effect points to a higher degree of automaticity and fluency of emotional words achieved after extensive experience with L2.

There is a clear need to evaluate the influence of word frequency in the automaticity of emotional word processing for L2, considering the evidence summarized above. Mainly, word frequency can quantify a priori the amount of experience from L2 learners with specific words simply because frequent words can be assumed to be more familiar than infrequent words for L2 learners. Further, it is required to analyze the role of L2 exposure in emotional processing because none of the studies above has used the emotional Stroop paradigm to evaluate frequency effects in L1 and L2 as a complementary variable to understand the cognitive processing of words; although those previous studies indirectly suggest that frequency is an important variable that could influence emotional word processing in an EST paradigm. Therefore, we suggest assessing emotional differences between L1 and L2, considering the frequency of words. This is relevant to the field because previous EST studies concerning L1 and L2 differences did not simultaneously consider word frequency and emotion (negative, neutral, and positive). As mentioned above, some studies have considered the difference between L1 and L2, taking into account proficiency and expertise with the L2 (i.e., Winskel, 2013) but have yet to simultaneously consider word frequency. Others have studied word frequency (i.e., Kahan & Hely, 2008) but have yet to simultaneously analyze the influence of L1 and L2. However, others have considered all three factors (emotion, proficiency, and L1 and L2) but using a different methodology, such as an eye-tracker (i.e., Sheikh & Titone, 2016).

The Current Study

The current study considers: (a) emotion (positive, neutral, and negative), (b) word frequency (low, high), and (c) L1 and L2 as variables that influence English word processing in an EST experimental paradigm. Therefore, we intend to provide further insights into how emotion and frequency interact for L1 and L2 word processing. We recruited native English speakers (L1) and English as foreign language (EFL) learners (L2) living in the USA at the time the experiment took place. Consequently, our EFL speakers had a diverse L1 background, which minimizes the influence of the type of L1 on the experiment and emphasizes the influence of L2 exposure on word processing.

Question 1: Do high-frequency English words increase the emotional load and consequently differently slowdown RTs for L1 and L2 speakers? Based on previous evidence from the LDT paradigm (see Figure 1 for a summary), we hypothesize a slowdown in the RT for high-frequency words relative to low-frequency words.

Question 2: Do emotional words (negative and positive) slow down RTs compared to neutral words? Do L1 and L2 display the same pattern? We hypothesized an interference effect for emotional words (negative and positive), at least in the L1 group (i.e., Eilola et al., 2007). However, we do not predict a specific pattern for the L2 group because word frequency may play a more decisive modulating role than valence for word processing in L2 (see Sutton et al., 2007; Winskel, 2013). Emotional low-frequency words exert less influence on L2 participants

because presumably they can easily ignore the emotional connotation of unfamiliar (low-frequency) words.

Method

Participants

One hundred students enrolled at Purdue University participated in this research. Fifty L1 English speakers (women = 27, mean age 20.4) and 50 L2 English speakers (women = 18, mean age 22.7). There were 66% Asians, 24% Latinos, and 10% other ethnicities in the L2 group. Their L1 was Mandarin (n = 18); Spanish (n = 13); Hindi (n = 6); Korean (n = 3); two Arabic, Bengali, French, and Marathi speakers; one Farsi and one Japanese. The average self-reported English skills on a 1–6 scale were writing (4.68), reading (4.92), listening (4.96), and speaking (4.66). All L1 and L2 were first- and second-year college students.

Participants earned extra credit for their participation. All participants had a normal or corrected vision and reported no color blindness. They provided written informed consent before participation in the study. The study and recruitment had approval from the IRB committee (Human Research Protection Program) at Purdue University.

Experimental Design and Materials

We used a mixed 2 x 2 x 3 design with language as the between-subjects factor (native, foreign) and word frequency (low, high) and emotion (positive, negative, and neutral) as the within-subjects factors.

Word stimuli varied according to valence, arousal, and word frequency. According to the British National Corpus, we selected 120 English words as stimuli, 60 high-frequency words, and 60 low-frequency words (https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/). For each of these categories, we selected words according to their valence and arousal normative scores: 20 positive, 20 negative, and 20 neutral words (see Appendix). Closely modeled after Scott et al. (2009), we took valence and arousal values from the Affective Norms for English Words (Bradley & Lang, 1999)—a database of 1,000 words providing normative ratings both for arousal, ranging from 1 (*low*) to 9 (*high*), and for valence, ranging from 1 (*negative*) to 9 (*positive*). Based on Scott et al., we selected *emotional* words with arousal values greater than 6.0 and neutral words less than 5.45. Valence ratings greater than 6.0 for positive words and less than 4.0 for negative words. We took neutral words with valence values between 4 and 6.

Apparatus

We invited participants to the Brian Lamb School of Communication Laboratory at Purdue University. We used Inquisit software web version 5.0 for data collection. We also adapted the EST described by Smith and Waterman (2003) using the manual keyboard responding variant for the present study. Additionally, we included a demographic questionnaire. Participants sat at a viewing distance of approximately 65 cm from the screen monitor. Keyboard responses were A, S, K, and L keys on a standard QUERTY keyboard. Stimuli appeared on a white background in low case. A fixation cross appeared before each word for 500 ms; after each wrong response, a red cross emerged for 400 ms.

Procedure

Participants voluntarily took part in the study through a research participation system website. This system offers students extra credit in registered courses for participation in research. Other students were recruited through flyers on campus. Initially, participants received general instructions about the nature of the experiment. Subsequently, participants followed the instructions on the screen by themselves. The instructions prompted participants to respond as fast and accurately as possible by pressing the corresponding key color of each word.

Words had four colors (green, blue, red, and yellow). Participants had to press keyboard keys mapped onto

each color to register their response to each stimulus. Depending on the word color, participants had to press a specific key. For example, the word "joy" was printed in green, and the green key was mapped onto the "A" key. Therefore, the participant had to press the key "A" to match the color of the word. The RT for each response was recorded in milliseconds. The task had three parts. First, a practice block presented numbers from 1 to 10 printed in four colors to familiarize participants with key-color mapping. Second, there was an experimental block in which participants had to respond to the target stimuli. The experimental software assigned each word to four colors and randomly presented a different order for each participant in a single block. Finally, in the third block, participants had to complete a brief survey with questions about their expertise in the English language.

Results

Fifty L2 English speakers participated in this study. Regarding immersion in an English-speaking country, 18 reported having lived less than one year in an English-speaking country (36%), 21 lived between one and five years (42%), and 11 reported having lived more than five years (22%). Concerning the age of acquisition (AoA), 17 said it started before six years (early learners, 34%), and 33 reported their AoA after six years (late learners, 66%). Regarding English language proficiency, all L2 participants obtained 80 or higher scores in the TOEFL iBT (a general undergraduate admission requirement for Purdue University). Additionally, we asked participants to rate their reading English proficiency subjectively: 12 reported an intermediate English proficiency (24%), 21 reported an advanced English level (42%), and 17 were not sure about their proficiency (34%). Regarding language preference, 36% of participants preferred to use English in their daily lives, and the remaining percentage preferred to use their native language. Finally, about the use of English, 28% of participants reported spending less than half of their daily life using the English language, whereas 72% of participants reported using it most of the time in their everyday life.

We performed a linear regression to explore correlations between the above variables with RTs. There was a significant negative correlation between the immersion time and RT. The more time living in an English-speaking country, the faster the RT (R = -.341, P = (.065, 90%). Besides, there was a positive correlation between AoA and the RT; the later the learning of L2, the slower the RT (R = -.351, P > 0.001). Finally, there was a negative correlation between English and the RT; the more use of English, the faster the RT (R = -.366, P > .001). There was no correlation between language preference and the RT (R = .008, P = .511). These results suggest that higher exposure and use of L2 leads to faster word processing.

Analysis of Errors

We also analyzed the proportion of errors for each cell of our experimental design (see Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of Errors in Each of the Six Categories of Stimuli for L1 and L2

	L1		L2	
	HF	**LF**	**HF**	**LF**
Negative	3.9	2.9	3.9	3.0
Neutral	3.6	4.5	2.9	3.9
Positive	3.9	4.4	3.8	4.5

Note. The error accounted for 3.8% of the total data (L1 = 3.9%; L2 = 3.7%). HF = high frequency, LF = low frequency.

We ran a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for errors with category and group as factors. There were no statistically significant category differences (emotion, frequency) $F(5, 433) = 1.745$, $p = .121$ or group $F(1, 433) = .283$, $p = .595$.

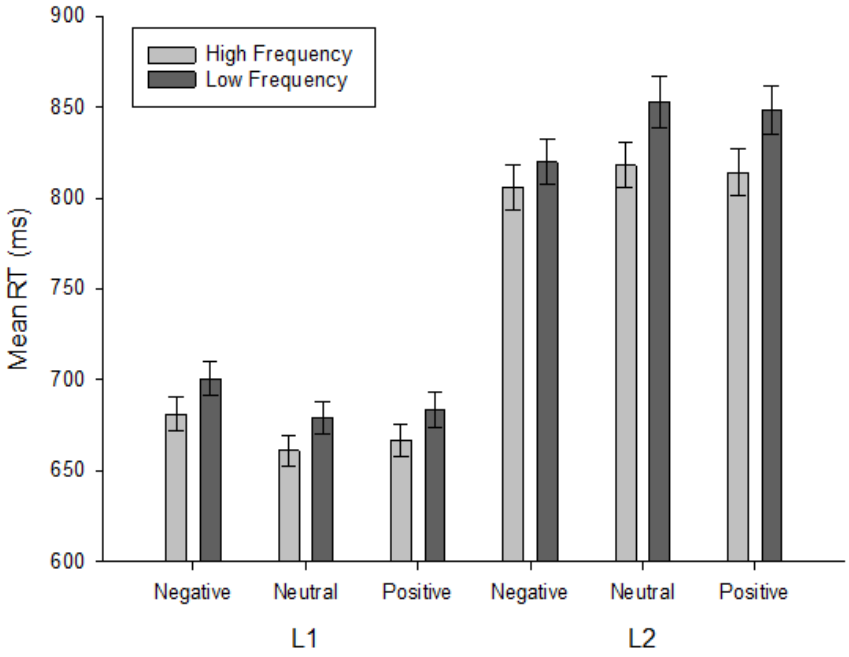
Analysis of Response Latencies

We excluded all errors for further analysis (3.8%). Additionally, RTs from practice trials and RTs slower

than 2.5 and faster than 2.5 standard deviations, and RTs < 250 ms were removed. We conducted a repeated-measures ANOVA and a linear regression model for the primary analysis. The main effect of the group was significant, $F(1, 98) = 44.35$, $p < .001$. L1 responses were faster (M = 658 ms) than L2 (M = 801 ms). This result confirms a cognitive advantage in speed processing for L1 vs. L2 speakers. There was also a significant main effect of frequency $F(1, 98) = 13.565$, $p < .001$. High-frequency words were processed faster (M = 719 ms) than low-frequency words (M = 740 ms). This finding supports the frequency effect: Processing high-frequency words was easier than low-frequency ones. This result suggests that despite high-frequency words being experienced more frequently, their possible emotional connotations do not produce interference effects in the EST. Finally, there was no significant difference between group and frequency, $F(1, 98) = .75$, $p = .784$.

Valence was no significant per se, $F(2, 196) = 57$, $p = .564$; however, there was a significant main effect of valence and group, $F(2, 196) = 6.74$, $p < .001$. L1 speakers processed negative words slower (M = 667 ms) than neutral (M = 658 ms) and positive words (M = 647 ms). The RTs for negative words were marginally more prolonged than for neutral words (+8.9 ms). Conversely, L2 speakers responded faster to negative words (M = 787 ms) than neutral (M = 807) and positive words (M = 808). The average difference between negative and neutral words was -19.8 ms. This finding suggests an opposite effect in processing emotional words in both groups. Plainly, whereas L1 speakers show a marginal emotional interference for negative words, L2 speakers display relative facilitation in color naming. Thus, L2 speakers invert the interference effect. The overall interaction between frequency, valence, and group was not significant. Figure 2 summarizes these findings.

Figure 2. Main Results for Reaction Times



Note: Mean Reaction Time (processing speed) in the emotional Stroop task for high frequency vs. low-frequency words according to emotional valence (negative, neutral, and positive) for L1 and L2 speakers of the English language. Error bars depict +/- 1 standard error of the mean.

Discussion

The present study investigated how L1 and L2 English speakers process individual words according to their emotional valence and frequency in the EST. We expected to find an emotional Stroop effect for high-frequency words due to greater familiarity and, thus, higher emotional interference than low-frequency words, especially for the L1 group (Costa et al., 2014). This hypothesis was not supported. The frequency of words was more relevant than the emotional influence. As the frequency effect suggests, participants processed high-frequency words faster for both L1 and L2. Therefore, although high-frequency words are experienced more frequently, their possible emotional connotation does not produce interference effects, as assessed through the EST.

Additionally, we predicted longer RTs for the L2 group than for the L1 due to the foreign language effect (i.e., Caldwell-Harris, 2015; Keysar et al., 2012). Indeed, L2 English speakers were slower, while L1 English speakers had faster RTs. The overall difference between RT in L1 and L2 can be explained by a combination of the dual-system theory (Kahneman, 2011) and the trade-off between L1 and L2 processing. From this point of view, System 1, which is automatic and faster, was predominantly used by L1 speakers because words present in their L1 enhanced their automated processing. On the other hand, System 2 was mainly used by L2 speakers because words presented in a less automatized language required more cognitive recourses and, thus, led to slower RTs.

More importantly, we found a Stroop facilitation for negative words in the L2 group compared with the L1 group. This result supports the view of a unique mechanism for accessing the lexical meaning of negative words in L2, probably related to other emotional attenuation effects reported for L2 (i.e., Keysar et al., 2012). From our sample of 50 L2 English speakers, only 14 had the Latin alphabet in their native language (13 Spanish and one French), and none of them spoke Germanic or Nordic languages as L1, which probably minimized the influence of cognates as an intervening variable and facilitated the expression of emotional attenuation in our sample.

In contrast with Sutton et al. (2007) and Eilola et al. (2007), our results show a difference in L1 and L2 processing in the emotional Stroop paradigm. However, their studies focused on highly proficient bilinguals, while our sample had both early and late AoA, wider differences in proficiency, different L1 backgrounds, and various immersion times in L2. Additionally, our results contradict previous research that found substantial interference in L1 (Fan et al., 2016; Winskel, 2013). Although present, our study found slight interference of negative words for L1 speakers mainly driven by low-frequency words, a result previously reported but challenging to explain with current models of lexical and emotional access (see Kahan & Hely, 2008).

However, we found strong facilitation for negative words for L2 speakers. Our findings suggest a difference in automatic word processing in L1 and L2. On the one hand, L1 facilitated faster and automated color naming across all emotional word categories (negative, neutral, and positive). Negative emotional words slowed down reaction time more than neutral and positive words. On the other hand, L2 involves less automatic emotional processing. We believe that negative words pose an unavoidable attentional demand for all participants. However, L2 speakers can more quickly deal with the color and neglect the negative emotional connotation because fewer automatic cognitive resources are available in L2 to process negative emotional words, which would explain why the processing of negative connotations was faster by L2 speakers than by L1 speakers.

Regarding frequency effects, a previous study reported that monolinguals process low-frequency negative words slower than high-frequency negative words (Kahan & Hely, 2008). In the present study, we found the same directionality but did not replicate a similar statistical significance. However, both results

are consistent with the Parallel Distributed Processing Model. When a low-frequency word is processed, the cognitive system needs more time to get all the lexical information. At this point, semantic activation will have more time to influence word processing and, thus, increase interference effects (Cortese & Schock, 2012).

In the present study, we also tested the influence of word frequency on L2 speakers. While we found slower processing speed in low-frequency negative words for L1 speakers, low-frequency negative words were processed faster by L2. Following the bilingual cognitive advantage hypothesis (i.e., Bialystok, 2001), bilinguals usually tend to outperform interference effects in a standard Stroop paradigm compared with monolinguals. According to this perspective, bilinguals activate both languages in parallel; however, cognitive mechanisms must exert control over the non-necessary language leading to an enhancement in the executive process that improves the overall performance in cognitive tasks.

Additionally, the bilingual L2 lexical disadvantage hypothesis predicts a lexical disadvantage in the less dominant language (L2). According to this hypothesis, the difference in negative word processing in both high-frequency and low-frequency by L2 speakers can be explained by the fact that information processing in L2 has weaker lexical access than in L1. Therefore, the meaning of words would not be easily accessible, and consequently, it would imply a more negligible or null emotional interference. Compared to L1, L2 would produce a negative shift in interference effects, facilitating the processing of emotional words and, thus, faster responses (Coderre et al., 2013; Gollan et al., 2008). According to the prediction of the bilingual L2 lexical disadvantage hypothesis, L2 participants had facilitation on the processing of negative words. L2 speakers have weaker lexical access to L2 representations, also more inefficient access to semantic code, hence fewer interference effects.

Although these previous hypotheses explain why there was a shift in negative word processing in both groups, it does not explain why it occurred only for negative words but not for positive words. The mobilization-minimization hypothesis (Taylor, 1991) suggests that faster physiological, cognitive, emotional, and social responses to negative stimuli are followed by a minimization stage intended to reduce unpleasant reactions and dampen the negative stimuli's impact. Additionally, this hypothesis proposes an asymmetry in negative–positive events: a weaker and less common association in memory for negative words but an easier recognition and processing fluency for positive words. Both variables, frequency and valence, contribute to differential word processing. In a previous study on the effects of valence, arousal, and frequency, positive valence speeds up word processing in LDT. It implies slower RTs for negative words and faster RTs for positive ones (Kuperman et al., 2014). Positive words thus would automatically facilitate word recognition. Relative to negative words, elaborating positive information is easier because it links semantic and lexical codes that broaden the scope of the cognitive-emotional system (Kuchinke et al., 2005). The enhancement of automaticity for positive words would not lead to interference costs because the lexical connections are already well established.

Finally, concerning the role of L2 exposure, we observed a negative correlation between RT and high proficiency, immersion time, and L2 daily use. Hence, the higher proficiency, immersion, and use of English, the faster the processing of English words. Conversely, the later the age of English acquisition as L2, the slower the processing of English words. Longitudinal studies suggest that different cerebral pathways process L1 and L2 lexical and affective features during early learning stages (Sianipar et al., 2015), but that with increasing L2 exposure, lexical and semantic networks become strongly interconnected across L1 and L2. Therefore, more prolonged exposure to L2 can enhance the processing speed of L2 to a level similar to the processing speed of L1.

In sum, the current work used an EST to identify differences in emotional valence and frequency for

L1 and L2 speakers. As predicted, we found critical cognitive and emotional differences between both groups. L1 speakers displayed faster processing than L2 speakers. There was a significant effect on word frequency: overall, our participants processed high-frequency words faster. Nevertheless, there was no significant interaction between the L1 and L2 groups. Our correlation analyses support the view that RTs become faster with greater exposure to L2.

The main finding of the present study was a significant difference between group and valence. Whereas L1 speakers showed a regular Stroop interference effect, L2 speakers showed an opposite effect: no interference effect; alternatively, we observed facilitation in negative word processing independently of the word frequency. This opposite effect is consistent with the bilingual L2 lexical disadvantage hypothesis. It suggests weaker lexical access in L2 that leads to weaker semantic access to L2 and a reverse pattern in interference when the task demands the participant to focus on the color of words but not on their meaning, speeding up negative word processing. We confirm with an alternative method (the EST) that L2 speakers are less sensitive to negative emotional connotations than L1 speakers. Future research should aim to replicate the present findings with other implicit cognitive measures and to keep word frequency as a variable of interest.

The present study had some fundamental limitations. First, the conclusions of the present study are hardly generalizable to other tasks (affective priming, flanker, Simon tasks, etc.) and domains (e.g., full sentences, spoken vs. written words). For instance, it is unclear if complete emotional vs. neutral sentences in L1 and L2 are also susceptible to the facilitation effect we report here.

Second, a recent EST study (Crossfield & Damian, 2021) reported no interference effects in monolinguals when emotional stimuli matched conceptual variables such as contextual diversity and sensory experience. Therefore, it remains an open question to investigate the involvement of this kind of conceptual variable in L1.

Finally, our study suggests two important implications for teaching English as a second language. On the one hand, teachers can take advantage of the reported fact that beginner and intermediate L2 students might learn faster and remember more accurately the meaning of words involving strong positive and negative emotional connotations.

On the other hand, we consider that L2 students should also be made explicitly aware of the fact that, in real-world interactions, L1 speakers tend to interpret negative words more strongly than L2 learners and that it might take some time to read the adequate context and usage of emotional expressions.

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Acknowledgments

We thank Dr. Juan Diego Velasquez for supporting the academic exchange between Purdue University and Universidad Nacional de Colombia. We would also like to thank professors Robert Proctor and Erinn Hennes at Purdue University for their advice. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the help provided by David Camilo Aguirre for programming the experimental task.

Appendix: Details of Word Stimuli Used in the Emotional Stroop Task

	High frequency			Low frequency		
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Neutral**	**Negative**
	joy	odd	mad	lust	hawk	demon
	fun	book	gun	fame	muddy	rage
	car	tool	war	champ	truck	venom
	win	wine	rape	thrill	wamp	annoy
	sex	rock	hate	dazzle	rattle	tumor
	kiss	cold	fear	riches	limber	betray
	song	glass	panic	elated	clumsy	sinful
	happy	clock	angry	aroused	icebox	insult
	heart	hotel	fight	affection	coarse	hatred
	lucky	paint	pain	ecstasy	whistle	leprosy
	couple	shadow	danger	intimate	pamphlet	wicked
	pretty	avenue	horror	treasure	skeptical	hostile
	passion	market	guilty	sunlight	nonsense	intruder
	travel	gender	trouble	fireworks	repentant	slaughter
	memories	journal	tragedy	nude	trumpet	outrage
	romantic	teacher	victim	astonished	sheltered	disloyal
	birthday	fabric	accident	triumphant	nonchalant	assassin
	success	context	disaster	flirt	lighthouse	humiliate
	holiday	medicine	nervous	millionaire	trunk	cockroach
	beautiful	reserved	suspicious	intercourse	thermometer	unfaithful
Length	6	6	6	7	7	7
Frequency	62	66	50	8	7	8
Valence	8	5	2	8	5	3
Arousal	7	4	7	7	4	7

Note. Mean values. Length in the number of letters, frequency in occurrences per million, arousal rating range 1 (*low*) to 9 (*high*), valence rating range 1 (*negative*) to 9 (*positive*)

https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101568

Sensitizing Citing Practices of Graduate Students of TEFL in Academic Summary Writing

Sensibilización de las prácticas de citación para la redacción de resúmenes académicos en estudiantes de posgrado de enseñanza del inglés

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This study investigates how sensitizing graduate L2 students about source-text use might affect their citation practices. Two summary writing tasks involving two similar published articles, one irrelevant and one pertinent to source-text use, were assigned individually to 16 graduate English language teaching students from Iran. After completing the tasks, the students participated in retrospective interviews about their source-text use. Recursive thematic data analysis indicated that while they were inclined towards more direct source-text use in the first summary, they opted for more indirect and academic source-text use that involved their contribution and interpretation in the sensitizing task. The paper discusses the significance of sensitizing students to source-text use.

Keywords: citing practices, graduate students, L2 academic writing, sensitization, source texts, source-text use

Este estudio muestra cómo la sensibilización sobre el uso de textos fuente modificó las prácticas de citación de dieciséis estudiantes de posgrado de enseñanza del inglés iraníes. Los participantes hicieron resúmenes escritos de dos artículos: uno relacionado con el uso de textos fuente y el otro no. Tras esto, se preguntó a los participantes sobre su uso de las fuentes. El análisis temático de los datos reveló que los participantes hicieron un uso más directo de las fuentes para la elaboración del primer resumen mientras que para el segundo, y tras la actividad de sensibilización, optaron por un uso indirecto y académico que incluía su interpretación y contribución personal. Se discute la importancia de sensibilizar a los estudiantes sobre el uso de los textos fuente.

Palabras clave: escritura académica en segunda lengua, estudiantes de posgrado, sensibilización, textos fuente, uso de los textos fuente

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Rezvani, R., & Miri, P. (2023). Sensitizing citing practices of graduate students of TEFL in academic summary writing. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 177–192. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101568

This article was received on March 10, 2022 and accepted on September 28, 2022.

Introduction

For the academic community and scholarship, writing from source texts has long been part of the focus of researchers' interest, contributing to a growing body of writing literature (Wette, 2010). This crucial academic practice—involving the complex processes of accumulation, comprehension, evaluation, contextualization, and inference—is far from merely selecting and incorporating the relevant sources into one's text (Hirvela & Du, 2013). However, engagement with the source texts has been shown to confound and, at times, frustrate novice student writers incapable of adhering to the academic conventions and their standard practices and perspectives. Textual complexities and personal factors (e.g., academic experience, cultural and linguistic background, rhetorical limitations; Chandrasoma et al., 2004) can lead students to disregard source texts, which may give rise to questionable practices. The incidence and practice of deliberate or inadvertent academic plagiarism are high, particularly among second language (L2) writers not fully initiated into the nature of source-text use (STU) and the critical components of academic knowledge construction and attribution (Pecorari, 2003).

Citing Practices

An issue of concern and interest regarding university students' STU has been the strategies deployed in citing a source text (Keck, 2014) and whether they are intended to display knowledge or transform understanding (Hirvela & Du, 2013). To either present knowledge "as discrete information bits" (McCarthy-Young & Leinhardt, 1998, p. 25) or construct transformative knowledge and content, writers draw on citation practices and STU strategies to differing extents. For instance, paraphrasing, as one of the most valued academic discourse strategies, involves rewriting and recreating a new passage that is usually as complex as the original text (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). It is achieved not only through the lexico-grammatical transformation of the essential constituents of a sentence to restate similar ideas but also through the addition of lexicalized expressions or phrases to infer those ideas (Keck, 2010). Summarizing also demands critical response and transformation of the components, analyzing the content, and making deductions or connections, mainly amounting to passage reduction and reformulation (Yamada, 2003). Partial, inaccurate paraphrases that comprise sentence rearrangement and lexical or phrasal substitution are, however, characterized as patchwriting, which, despite researchers' interpretation as a bona fide practice and a natural intermediate stage in the writers' academic development, constitutes plagiarism by some strict disciplinary stipulations and plagiarism policies (Howard, 1999). According to Pecorari (2003), patchwriting is critical to the social construction of identity and discourse and needs to be dealt with pedagogically.

Citing Challenges

Many researchers (e.g., Howard, 2001; Wette, 2017) concur that cognitive and linguistic difficulties and poor comprehension skills may account for the university students' poor scholarship and patchwriting. Novice university students will likely struggle with weaving the sources and ideas smoothly into their writings to contextualize their arguments and findings, drawing a line between their ideas and those of the source texts (Abasi & Akbari, 2008). They are also concerned with indicating whether findings and arguments from various authors and sources cohere together well and, if so, how to establish a conceptual connection between them (Luzón, 2015). Another problem in the students' STU, mainly if they are from an L2 background, is their tendency to overuse direct quotations when they can represent the information differently in their words using summarizing or paraphrasing (Luzón, 2015). Such a tendency prevents students from self-presenting and establishing their authorial stance. They might even often prefer to be the voice of privileged authors (Abasi &

Akbari, 2008). STU is generally recognized as a common challenge across L1 and L2 students, although it is more frequent in L2 source-based writing (Keck, 2014; van Weijen et al., 2019). In the face of this problem, L2 writers—as compared to their L1 counterparts—tend to cite less commonly, use more exact and near copies (T. A. Hyland, 2009; Keck, 2006; Shi, 2004), and write less authoritatively using rhetorical analysis of the source text concepts (Starfield, 2002).

Healthy but obsessive observation of the principle of citing the owners and their knowledge and ideas may discourage university students from noting the rhetorical considerations of using multiple supporting and conflicting references and voices to back up their research claims and to generate new disciplinary meanings (Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011). Their limited cognitive repertoire may also lead them towards fumbling for words or composing narrowly focused content and monologic paraphrases drawn from single sources (Wette, 2017). Some students also lack an understanding of developing a meaningful relationship with the texts and readers (K. Hyland, 2005) and of the cumulative or incremental state of knowledge, that is, of using existing scholarship to establish their territory and ethos and support their hypotheses and positions (Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011). Novice university students, in addition, barely tend to be critical of the sources they read and integrate into their texts to either confirm or confront the arguments and interpretations offered by other authors, however authoritative they are (Penrose & Geisler, 1994).

Academic practices, expectations, and instruction significantly influence university students' academic writing and citational development (Abasi & Akbari, 2008), which also includes negative impacts, mainly originating from the instructors' unrealistic expectations, such as proficiency and creativity demands, excessive workloads, and time-constrained assignments. Then, students may forgo academic and legitimate citations and resort to copying and patchwriting (Abasi & Akbari, 2008), which reinforces "careless study habits" (Pennycook, 1996, p. 223). Some university instructors may also push students lacking cognitive flexibility and experience with knowledge bases of the topic to construct citations replete with circumlocutory responses and presuppositions (Abasi & Akbari, 2008). They tend to direct the students' attention to essentially linguistic aspects of STU so that its "rhetorical effect of arguability" (S. H. Lee, 2010, p. 200) is ignored, giving rise to the loss of meaning, coherence, and authorial intention. Such professors' attitudes and instruction, more specifically, might lead the students to superficial modifications and decontextualized paraphrases and make their transition into rhetorical communication and transformation of scholarly knowledge problematic (Hirvela & Du, 2013). This is also why many L2 students (as evidenced in the literature, e.g., Abasi & Akbari, 2008; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Mori, 2018; Pennycook, 1996) have resorted to more readily to direct quotations, fearing that their interpretations and intentions may not be correctly negotiated.

Pedagogical Approaches to Citing

Given the students' common problems in STU and academic writing, researchers such as Klein and Samuels (2010), McCarthy-Young and Leinhardt (1998), McDonough et al. (2014), Storch (2012), and Wette (2010) have attempted to provide instructional interventions with focused exercises on the essential components of STU and then track the students' development in STU and academic literacy skills. Together, the results of the studies, using either implicit or explicit interventions, have reflected a significant decrease in the students' reliance on direct STU or copied strings of various lengths and an improvement in their source incorporation using explicit references and text-modifying strategies such as paraphrasing and summarizing. However, some less accomplished uses, such as copying shorter combinations of words

verbatim (McDonough et al., 2014), seamless integration of the claims and ideas, and citing secondary sources firsthand, were also reported (Wette, 2010), suggesting that students need more practice and professionalism in their STU.

Viewed as an assignment genre providing access to cumulative literature and its discursive and linguistic constructs (Howard, 1992), summary writing has been widely used in the literature to examine college students' source text documentation and incorporation skills (e.g., Keck, 2014; McDonough et al., 2014; Shi, 2004). Macbeth (2006), for instance, in her study of L2 students' summary writing, found that the students' attempt at meeting cultural demands—or what she called their "curriculum of judgments"—of completing the assignment limited their critical understanding of the source text, the application of appropriate integration approaches, and the function of summary writing. However, Macbeth's 2010 summary study of L2 students was guided by a "skeleton model." She found that the intervening model contributed to a better selection of the source text excerpts and arrangement of the ideas; however, it failed to assist the students in their attribution and academic writing practices. Similarly, Johns and Mayes (1990) followed Kintsch and van Dijk's (1978) summary framework to analyze the summaries produced by high and low-proficiency L2 students. The model, which comprised the interaction of two basic idea units: micro- and macro-propositions, involved cognitive realization and mental activation of deletion, generalization, and construction processes. During summarization, the key concepts should be identified and synthesized to develop the central theme, then contextualized and supported by extra information provided by the reader's deduction and points of view. The results indicated that the low proficiency group replicated the single propositions directly while the high proficiency group produced a coherent synthesis of the different clauses or propositions. In another study, Keck (2014) found that both L1 and L2 student writers commonly cited some sentences and ideas, perhaps because these conveyed well the reduced gist of the text. They summarized the source texts strategically and rhetorically, paraphrasing the ideas instead of copying them verbatim. However, Keck posited that the expository nature of the assigned readings might have induced the student writers to think that source-text ideas had to be paraphrased or copied sequentially.

Sensitization in writing and its impact were also studied in the instructional literature. Castillo and Rojas (2014), for instance, investigated a cohort of L2 students' sensitization to the development of academic "content" and "language" in writing by introducing creative writing strategies that involved "recognizing facts," "reflecting on them," and "proposing a solution to a problem." The sensitizing strategy led to a conceptual and critical understanding of the context. The students made significant progress in their writing; they learned to merge their voices and individualize their views. They also, specifically, improved sentence organization and extended more care concerning conjunctions and linking words.

Shih (1986) examined the students' development of academic writing and researching skills by incorporating a content-based module comprising content-based minicourses, academic literacy courses, content-based English-for-special-purposes courses, and multiskill and individualized courses. She found that the sensitizing module contributed to the extensive incorporation of thinking and rhetorical processes in academic writing. Content curriculum and instruction lent further support to the expansion and interpretation of "core content," which enabled the students to reflect and transfer their understanding to new subject areas and generate a growing perception of writing as a situated social and individual practice.

A pedagogical technique in teaching writing, mainly STU documented in the citation-based literature, is modeling illustrative resources and papers. For example, using exemplary documents, McCarthy-Young and

Leinhardt (1998) monitored the students' academic practices and citation progress. Their study indicated that consulting literacy models and scholarly exemplars allowed coherent integration and reasoned interpretation of the content and enabled the students to construct arguments by "weaving local casual chains into their list structure or specify factors and arguments bits into their casual structure" (p. 58). Similarly, Merkel (2019) examined how undergraduate L2 writers develop proficiency in academic writing and citation construction by getting students to juxtapose and check their citations against exemplary texts. This modeling approach assisted the students in locating reliable digital content and sources to cite and use, constructing interpreted content and paraphrases, and citing the key terminology appropriately.

Despite these sporadic efforts, no previous research uses sensitization as a consciousness-raising approach to examine the MA students' STU and citation development. Given the graduate students' common challenges in academic writing from the source texts in an L2 context, this study thus aimed to see how sensitization through studying scholarly publications about STU variation and problems affects graduate L2 students' citation practices. The following research questions guide this qualitative, intervention-based study.

RQ1: Which citing strategies did graduate students of TEFL use in academic summary writing? Why did they use a specific citing strategy?

RQ2: How did sensitization, if any, affect the students' citing practices in academic summary writing?

Method

Research Context and Participants

This study examined the MA graduate students' summaries before and after sensitization to different methods of citation and STU problems. The participants were 16 second-semester TEFL students from a university in Iran. All the students had already passed a required two-credit writing course, which required the students to cite the relevant source texts when writing and seeking support from the literature. The participants' names used here are all fictitious.

Summary Tasks

The study involved two summary tasks, one ordinary and irrelevant to STU, and one sensitizing the participants' consciousness and perception of university students' citing behaviors and problems by asking them to study and summarize an article dealing with university students' citing practices and challenges. We first searched for a text for the second task. After searching through a series of academic resources and references, we chose the article entitled "Textual Appropriation and Citing Behaviors of University Undergraduates" by L. Shi (2008) because of its suitability to sensitize the participants to the significance and academic use of source texts. The article for the first task had to be different in content but comparable in structure and rhetorical features, most logically from the same journal. We chose "Interpreting Inexplicit Language During Courtroom Examination" by J. Lee (2009), with a length similar to that of Shi's and a negligible readability score difference. We made minor changes to the original papers by creating a rubric describing what the participants were supposed to do. We then removed all demographic and citational information from the papers and the abstracts because the participants were supposed to develop a summary comparable to the original abstracts. We also changed the titles of the two papers.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study came from two summary writing tasks assigned individually to each participant and collected over four weeks in June and July 2020. Just after each task, the students participated in an individual

45-minute retrospective interview about STU in their summaries (see Appendix). Both tasks and the interview questions were piloted with one participant. It resulted in some amendments to the interview questions and task requirements, such as setting no time limit for task completion. Due to COVID-19 preventive measures, the second researcher conducted the interviews in English over the telephone. Because of the sensitivity associated with source-based writing and the possibility of detecting textual appropriation and plagiarism, we assured the participants that their contributions were confidential, would be used anonymously, and that there would be no score for the summaries. Those who agreed to participate signed a consent form.

Before the interviews, we located where STU occurred in the students' written summaries and annotated them manually by line numbers and then compared the instances of STU case by case, which incrementally generated two citational categories of (a) direct STU and (b) indirect STU (see Table 1). Direct STU was further grouped into citations directly quoted from the sources and those copied verbatim without quotation marks. Indirect STU comprised citations completely reformulated and paraphrased with no trace of the source text and those partially reformulated and patchwritten with some lexical or syntactic traces. Both researchers conducted the STU analysis, with a few differences resolved by further analysis and discussion.

Table 1. Textual Comparison

	Borrowed sentences	Source sentences
Direct quotation	"Legal professionals as well as court interpreters need to appreciate that Clarification may be necessary for the sake of achieving interpreting accuracy." (p. 111)	Legal professionals as well as court interpreters need to appreciate that Clarification may be necessary for the sake of achieving interpreting accuracy.
Verbatim copy	This article infers from the study that court interpreters should not be held responsible for making sense of ambiguous utterances.	This article infers from the study that court interpreters should not be held responsible for making sense of ambiguous utterances.
Patchwriting	It is desirable to say that when interpreters feel free to disclose such problems, the court will hear the evidences accurately and this leads to correct decision making.	Only when interpreters feel free to disclose such issues related to the integrity of evidence, unafraid of losing face, will the court be able to hear the evidence accurately, as it wishes and as it is required.
Paraphrase	It was revealed that the interpreters' lack of contextual or elliptical knowledge made further clarification and interpretation problematic.	Whenever clarification was needed due to ellipted subjects creating a difficulty in interpreting, Interpreter 1 did not ask for the court's permission to seek clarification, and did not disclose to the court what the minor conversation was about or why such a clarification was needed.

The interview data analysis was conducted inductively and recursively using the thematic coding procedures suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The recorded interview data were initially played back, transcribed verbatim, and then studied in-depth for meaningful insights and "stretch[es] of discourse" (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 119). Insights of particular interest to the study were incrementally identified

and coded and further summarized and collated in categories based on similarity in content. Data collation then resulted in the development of overarching themes and subthemes, which were consistently reviewed and proofread to ensure that the themes and categories best represented the students' voices and views from the interviews. Then, the emerging themes, including discrepant findings, were refined by deletion, decomposition, or integration into one theme. Themes in the further analysis were interpreted by the researchers and supported by exemplary comments and quotes from the participants. For further clarification and confirmation of the emergent codes and categories, analytic memos aided the analysis (Saldaña, 2011), and the themes and findings were shared and cross-checked with a few participants for "member checking or validation" (see Bazeley, 2013; Creswell, 1998).

It should be noted that the second researcher coded the data and prepared an overview of themes. The first researcher reviewed the thematic categories and codes for inter-rater reliability on approximately 20% of the data. The agreement rate was 83%. The researchers resolved the differences in interpretation and analysis by further discussion and amendments, obtaining agreement on 95% of the coded data. Then, the data were reanalyzed by the second researcher.

Findings

The emergent themes are presented and discussed in response to the research questions from the participants' perspective.

Participants' Citation Practices in Academic Summary Writing and Reasons for Using a Specific Strategy

The first research question addressed the students' actual citing strategies in summarizing a source text before sensitization. Textual analysis indicated they generally used multiple strategies in the same summary. We collated the strategies used and the justifications and views expressed by all those students who used a particular strategy. The results revealed that about 71% of the students' summary citations were direct STU comprising direct quotations (11%) and verbatim copying (60%). Limited understanding and language proficiency, source text comprehensiveness, and publication improbability emerged as the most common reasons for reproducing the summary verbatim. One of the most common reasons for these students to rely on verbatim STU was their difficulty grasping and demonstrating general ideas and concepts. For example, Roya and Fatemeh summarized the source text content verbatim without acknowledgment, assuming that the technicality and sophistication of the source text were "going over their heads." It was the same for Raha: "I couldn't change the statements completely; it was a bit difficult for me to do that because I don't have that depth of knowledge and understanding of the language." As for limited understanding and linguistic proficiency in STU, Soraya and Sahar were concerned with the accurate interpretation of the source text and its message and feared that the linguistic changes made to the source text might "lower its tone" (Sahar). Verbatim STU was preferred, in addition, when some participants (e.g., Forugh, Marzieyh, and Leyla) found a source text part "concise enough" and closely fitting for what they intended to put in the summary. Two students (Arman and Noushin) did not accurately engage with or cite the source text. The summary, in their view, was not going to be marked by the instructor as a part of their coursework assignment or published.

A few participants directly cited the source text content and language, using quotation marks and page numbers as signs of acknowledgment and text legitimacy. Since they did not have experience in academic writing and publishing, as they acknowledged, they safely opted to cite the source text using quotation marks to show attribution and avoid plagiarism. According to Ali, "since these are someone else's ideas and not mine and not even a restatement, I decided to include

both the citation and quotation marks in my summary." Negar also thought direct quotations were academically more acceptable than verbatim STU, showing respect for all the "blood, sweat, and tears that went into the author's work." It also improves "the worth of the text and possible readers' trust," as commented by Raha.

Indirect STU emerged as a citing strategy in the summaries produced by the students, representing 29% of the students' text citations, of which 22% were patchwritten and 7% were paraphrased. They argued that indirectly citing the text is both linguistically and cognitively demanding, but they occasionally used this instead of direct STU to face the challenge of showing their voice and presence. However, what they did could sometimes be considered patchwriting. For instance, Azadeh, Soraya, and Sara replaced the source text content word for word in their summaries or narrowly changed the source text by rearranging the structure but keeping the words or the other way around. When asked why they did not reformulate the source text beyond this patchwriting, Sara, for example, argued that "this way the summary looked academic, reflecting the source text" and yet demanded not much effort. They generally seemed unaware of the illegitimacy of patchwriting in academic writing; they even looked at patchwriting as an essential transitional step in developing academic writing and literacy skills. Negar, for instance, stated that since she could not interpret and paraphrase some specialized phrases and terms like "culturally and linguistically diverse witnesses," she preferred to patchwrite, commenting that "half a loaf is better than none."

In a few cases, the participants preferred and managed to summarize the source text using paraphrasing because paraphrasing the sentences, in their views, made the summary more intelligible, simplified their texts, and demonstrated their mastery and control over the source text. As Ali argued, "I think it would be much more digestible to express this sentence in my own language than to just copy and paste it. Copying has little value, I think." A recurrent theme and reason for instances of paraphrasing was the participants' perception that a writer is supposed to integrate the critical parts and essence of source texts succinctly. If "I did not paraphrase those parts and put a lot in a nutshell . . . the summary would be lengthy comprising insignificant source text content," Noushin argued. For her, "the readers could have different interpretations of a sentence if they lack knowledge of the circumstances in which a sentence occurs." Another recurrent justification for paraphrasing instances was also the participants' inclination to show their mastery and control over the source texts integrated into their writing. They deemed that it helped them project their grasp and voice even if reproducing others' language and ideas in writing. Azadeh, one of the participants who chose paraphrasing to other citing strategies for most of the STU, thought that her renditions reflected her language level and analysis of the source text material. Negar, with a similar tendency, emphasized the need for "making one's own inferences in writing" and "making [herself] heard," mainly through paraphrasing. She added that "these instances [of paraphrasing] can best indicate how skillful I was in interpreting the paper and rewriting the gist of it."

Impact of Sensitization on Students' Citing Practices

We were also interested in probing how studying a scholarly publication about text citation and STU might influence the participants' citation practices. The results showed that having students summarize an exemplary citation paper implicitly raised their academic awareness of citing and paraphrasing. In the second summary writing, most students tended to use less direct STU, developing a preference for indirect strategies instead. They also seemed to grow in understanding that writing an academic and coherent summary incorporates their reflections and interpretations of the text. Although 81% of the students cited the summary indirectly, 36% of those

citing instances were still patchwritten. Preoccupation with the correctness of text interpretation and conveying also made three students (19%) go on consistently with direct STU.

Most students seemed to have found the STU problems of the study participants described in the second paper analogous to those of their own. Thus, they thought that the strategies used by those participants—or pointed to, discussed, or suggested by the author—could also be used in their summaries, as Arman commented. This was also indicated by Negar: "When reading the article, I felt I didn't have to merely copy or paraphrase the source text all the time. I learned some sentences were illustrative and meaningful enough to be used directly." In Forugh's words, they learned to "vary their thinking and writing skills;" they paraphrased to give an overview of the source text and quoted when they found the content delicate and specific. Hence, this strategy variation taught them the difference between citing the ideas and citing the language in that, according to Sahar, "I cited the ideas but left out its language when I was paraphrasing the source text." Azadeh also acknowledged that she used to copy the source text content verbatim whenever she could not manipulate and recount a part of it; but, after reading the second article, she learned that this was an instance of "academic dishonesty," as she frequently noticed this thought-provoking phrase in the text (see Shi, 2008).

It was also evident that studying the sensitizing paper developed the participants' critical thinking and introspection. The paper, in their views, encouraged them to expand their minds and give voice to their thoughts and text interpretation. Ali, for instance, found it immature to be entirely dependent on the source text. He decided to integrate the source text content into his summary with that gained from his prior knowledge and background readings. As a case in point, Marziyeh recalled a part from the paper that implicitly invited the readers "to infer from the text and [construct] new understandings and meanings . . . and not just [constructing] a citation that includes the name and year of publication." According to Shi (2008), "citing a source text is more than providing a name and a date; it is a subjective process of deciding how to make meaning out of the available resources" (p. 21). It motivated Marziyeh to legitimize her interpretation and add her voice while citing a part of the source text. Having studied the second paper, Zahra noted how writers' authority can be built by referring to, supporting, and challenging the prior propositions and knowledge claims, "not intending to be a mere citer or quoter of others' knowledge." Negar also acknowledged that she always used to copy the source texts word for word or to change the language of the source texts partially, but now she "understood what interpretive academic writing looks like."

Discussion

This study investigated TEFL second-semester MA students' STU in summary writing before and after a sensitizing task. Data analysis showed that, during the first summary task, the students were inclined towards direct STU, particularly verbatim quotes, without explicit acknowledgment, mainly because of limited understanding of and control over the source text or inadequacy of linguistic command. They feared that limited linguistic resources or poor comprehension of the source text might lead them to inaccurately present and communicate the source text content, which ultimately may subject them to the charge of plagiarism. This finding was consistent with L2 studies (e.g., Gebril & Plakans, 2009; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Luzón, 2015; Mori, 2018). Being afraid of copying the source text illegitimately, a few students, however, cited the copied content and language directly to acknowledge the source text authors and their original insights and to show compliance with academic norms. Summarizing the source text with direct quotations rather than verbatim was intended by these participants to demarcate between their ideas and the source-text

author's original contributions. This strategy, as the participants thought—and reported by Hirvela and Du (2013) and Mori (2018)—was intended to enhance their writing legitimacy and acceptability by the readership.

It is generally acknowledged that L2 students perceive paraphrasing in L2 as an intellectual and linguistic burden making them hesitate about their contributions and err on the side of caution by keeping the source text language unaltered to the most considerable extent (Hirvela & Du, 2013). According to Hirvela and Du (2013), this ill-informed, stereotyped view of indirect STU renders it less likely for L2 students to perceive what indirect uses, such as paraphrasing, genuinely have to offer in academic writing. Some participants found the language of the source text integrated into their summaries well-fitting and succinct enough, needing no linguistic manipulation. It is not surprising that L2 students prefer direct STU when they find the source text language and messages authoritative, sophisticated, and yet unambiguous, thus enhancing the scholarly quality of the students' work (Pennycook, 1996). Although the economical direct STU can help L2 writers develop their arguments and ideas more easily while evading potential misinterpretations of the text, it may also suggest their inability to strike out on their own and build their line of reasoning and communication (Wette, 2017). Studies reporting that direct quotations overrun L2 students' texts commonly suggest that they misapply the direct STU in a way that their arguments mostly lack rhetorical context and explicit communicative purposes. Consequently, these writers appear to speak for the privileged source-text authors rather than using source texts to formulate their positions and discourses (Abasi & Akbari, 2008). Some participants' reluctance to engage with the first source text linguistically or rhetorically might also be, as indicated in this study, due to the presumption that the summary was irrelevant to their course assessment or publication.

The students' summaries, however, occasionally displayed instances of indirect STU that were partially rewritten by plugging in different lexis and restructuring the textual pattern. This occasional patchwriting tendency lays the source text's far-reaching technical phrases and terms. Thinking that too much dependence on the source text might restrict their abilities to think and write initially, these participants with limited academic writing experience (see Abasi & Akbari, 2008; Leki & Carson, 1997; Wette, 2017) resorted to patchwriting as "an academic survival strategy" (Abasi & Akbari, 2008). L2 writing literature (e.g., Hirvela & Du, 2013; Howard, 1999; Pecorari, 2003; Pennycook, 1996) has frequently pointed to the emergence of patchwriting in L2 students' early academic writing and learning due to linguistic limitations.

Only a few indirect STU in the participants' summaries had no lexical or syntactic signs of the source text and could qualify as paraphrasing. Those who opted for paraphrasing thought that a summary had to reflect their grasp, critical reading, and writing skills and that paraphrasing was a means to achieve intelligibility, coherence, and reduction of the content, which is similar to the participants' perceptions about paraphrasing in Shi's (2012) and Mori's (2018) studies. Paraphrasing the source text could also strongly suggest their individuality and relative intellectual independence and voice in their writing. According to Mori, unlike direct quotations, paraphrasing, in the eyes of some students, was a valuable asset in that it ensured their voices were heard when presenting and articulating others' ideas.

The study mainly investigated the effect of sensitization on the students' citing practices by using a scholarly paper about STU variation and problems in the second summary task. The sensitizing paper by Shi (2008) seemed to have resulted in a noticeable decrease in the instances of direct STU, while the participants developed a tendency towards indirect uses such as paraphrasing and summing up. They argued that the second paper prompted their perception of the value of how to cite and use the source text academically

while giving their reflection and interpretation. When sensitized, they did not merely cite using the source text but learned to contextualize the arguments into their line of reasoning. Overall, there was a traceable shift in their STU from, in McCarthy-Young and Leinhardt's (1998) terms, "presenting ideas in sequence using empty list constructors to linking them conceptually using causal and qualifier connects" (p. 58). However, patchwriting and verbatim copying remained in their second summaries mainly because of their reluctance or inability to restate complex language and register.

An intriguing theme emerging from the discussion with the participants was how their awareness of the problems and strategies in citing a source text was raised by the second paper and implicitly led them to reflect on their problems and strategies. For instance, they noticed that the participants in the sensitizing paper sometimes oscillated between paraphrasing and directly quoting and realized that both strategies were essential but served different rhetorical purposes in their summary writing. In other words, they noted that they had to summarize and paraphrase the general content and the main idea of the source text "to emphasize and interpret what they are citing" (Hyland & Jiang, 2019, p. 72) while they needed to mine the text for exemplary ideas and cite them directly (Wette, 2017). In this regard, they seemed to have generally perceived the distinctions between citing the language using direct quotations and citing ideas while paraphrasing and summarizing.

They also seemed to have noticed how persistent copying or partial modification were frequently epitomized as dishonest and transgressive in the sensitizing paper compared with more professional STU by experienced writers involving critical responses and subjective analysis of the source text while generating coherent meanings and ideas. They were also sensitized to interpret the source text—rather than merely linguistically cite it—and enrich it with their intentions, voices, and prior experiences. Attempts to integrate their interpretation into the summaries also called for a more critical evaluation of the citations, whether explicitly or implicitly confirmatory or divergent. As also recognized in the literature (Harwood, 2010; McCarthy-Young & Leinhardt, 1998; Petrić & Harwood, 2013; Walker, 2008), drawing on a source text as a mine of linguistic and conceptual information has scaffolded the students to develop their repertoire of practice, and to improve their epistemological orientations to academic literacy practices. It is also argued that frequent reading, adapting, engaging with superior materials, and working within a growing corpus of scholarly research can promote a richer understanding of citation and academic language (Howard, 1999).

Studies tracking undergraduate students' progress using implicit or explicit pedagogical interventions (e.g., Klein & Samuels, 2010; McCarthy-Young & Leinhardt, 1998; McDonough et al., 2014; Wette, 2010, 2017) have generally pointed to a considerable reduction in the number of students copying from the source text and an improvement in accurate and academic STU that entails indirect STU with critical reflection, interpretation, and evaluation of source texts, generally supporting this study's findings. As the issue of writing from the source texts might be more significant for graduate L2 academic writers, this study exploited an implicit sensitizing approach to raise the L2 writers' consciousness of academic writing practices. There have also been numerous discussions on the significance and function of implicit learning in the instructional literature. Tacit engagement with learning materials has been shown to enhance the students' reflective and interpretive learning and the ability to extrapolate this learning to new academic contexts (Ellis et al., 2009; Jiménez, 2003; Logan & Etherton, 1994; Logan et al., 1996).

Conclusion and Implications

This study probed L2 graduate students' STU in two summary writing tasks: ordinary and sensitizing. The results showed that they summarized and cited the first source text content using more direct strategies,

particularly verbatim quotes, due to limited linguistic confidence or understanding of the text. A few students opted for direct quotations to credit the text's authorship and increase readability. The participants tended to restate the source text indirectly using patchwriting and paraphrasing to establish their writing voice and authority. When sensitized in the second summary writing, the students integrated more indirect and academic STU with their contribution and interpretation. They also opted for STU strategies more wisely and expressed themselves more authoritatively. The results indicate that limited awareness and skill in academically citing the source texts can induce L2 students to use rather excessive and voiceless direct STU and that writing practices with sensitizing tasks can enhance novice L2 writers' linguistic autonomy and agency.

The study suggests that using actual academic classics and exemplars can sensitize L2 students to various citing techniques. More specifically, providing students with some exemplars showcasing and discussing citing practices and problems of other L2 students (like the one used in this study) might prove beneficial by raising the L2 academic writers' awareness of challenges in academic literacies and understanding that some of such challenges are common and not exclusive to their writing endeavors. The implicit approach will, in turn, mainly through practice, develop their confidence in reflective STU and will likely generate a cognitive shift from more direct strategies to more interpretive STU. Professors of writing courses and research methodologies are also recommended to present, for example, published articles from journals following specific and clear citing procedures and styles similar to the practices the students should follow in their academic writing. They can demonstrate and discuss how professional writers tackled STU problems.

It is also worth noting that this study attempted to look into some L2 students' STU. Further sensitizing studies with larger samples of students and various L2 or L1 backgrounds, levels, and experiences can be undertaken to ensure the generalizability of the findings. Such research avenues might lend themselves to more quantitative methodologies. If appropriate, even mixed-methods studies can be exploited to look more comprehensively into STU, variables, and stakeholders.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Code:
Demographic info:
Gender:
BA major:
MA major:
Reading and writing proficiency:
Academic writing (published/unpublished):

How do you assess your English academic reading and writing?

Have you taken any academic exams (e.g., TOEFL) to test your writing and reading skills? If so, how was it?

The following questions are asked about the summary you have written.
1. Why did you change the source text's lexical or syntactic constituents in your summary?

2. Why did you use verbatim copying in your summary?

3. Why did you paraphrase this part of the source text?

4. Why did you decide to quote this part of the text?

https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101316

Needs Analysis to Design an English Blended Learning Program: Teachers' and Administrators' Voices

Análisis de necesidades para diseñar un programa de inglés en modalidad semipresencial: voces de profesores y administradores

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This needs analysis study sought to identify the contextual requirements to design and implement a blended learning program in English at a Colombian public university. Data on teachers' and administrators' perceptions were gathered through a questionnaire, interviews, and focus groups and analyzed using grounded theory. Findings revealed the need to invest considerably in new personnel and e-infrastructure. Likewise, students' context should be considered to design EFL blended programs. Teachers and students should be offered ICT and methodological professional development. Finally, the program should carefully balance the integration of face-to-face and online modalities. This investigation can help the academic community of language educators and curriculum designers carry out needs analysis studies for creating contextualized blended learning programs.

Keywords: blended learning, English as a foreign language, needs analysis, program design, university curriculum

Este análisis de necesidades buscó identificar los requisitos para diseñar e implementar un programa de inglés en modalidad semipresencial en una universidad pública colombiana. Los datos sobre las percepciones de profesores y administradores —obtenidos mediante un cuestionario, entrevistas y grupos focales— se analizaron siguiendo la teoría fundamentada. Los hallazgos mostraron que es necesario invertir en nuevo personal e infraestructura tecnológica, considerar el contexto de los estudiantes para el diseño de programas de inglés en modalidad semipresencial y ofrecer oportunidades de desarrollo profesional en metodología y tecnología a profesores y estudiantes. Finalmente, el programa debe equilibrar la integración de las modalidades presencial y en línea. Esta investigación puede ayudar a los profesores de lenguas y diseñadores curriculares a crear programas semipresenciales contextualizados.

Palabras clave: análisis de necesidades, aprendizaje semipresencial, currículo universitario, diseño de programas, inglés como lengua extranjera

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Tamayo Cano, L. H., Riascos Gómez, A. F., & Pineda Hoyos, J. E. (2023). Needs analysis to design an English blended learning program: Teachers' and administrators' voices. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 193–210. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101316

This article was received on February 25, 2022 and accepted on September 22, 2022.

Introduction

This study was conducted at a Colombian public university's main campus and eight regional campuses in 2019 and 2020. This institution has designed and implemented language policies for its undergraduate and graduate students in the context of globalization and linguistic and educational reforms in Colombia (Usma-Wilches, 2009). The university's latest foreign language policy for undergraduate students was renewed in 2014 and materialized in the Institutional English Program (IEP). This program seeks to promote the development of communicative competence and linguistic and study skills in English. This policy resulted from a context and needs analysis assessment research project based on the model *context*, *input*, *process*, and *product* (Stufflebeam, 2003).

The project above sought to evaluate an English reading comprehension program that existed before the IEP through questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews with teachers, students, and administrators. Findings revealed both strengths and weaknesses in the program; more importantly, the research identified the need to renew it with a new methodology, focusing on developing the learners' communicative skills needed for their personal and academic life (Quinchía-Ortiz et al., 2015). The findings of this project led to the creation of the IEP, which included, for the first time, new modalities of instruction for language learning, namely, online and blended learning, in the context of undergraduate studies.

Materials and resources for the face-to-face (f2f) and online learning modalities for the IEP have already been developed and deployed at the university's main and regional campuses. However, designing and implementing a blended learning modality for this program is still a pending task. Consequently, a needs analysis was done as a preparatory stage for designing and implementing a blended learning modality for the IEP, especially for the university's regional campuses, where it needs to be better implemented as contextual conditions require special consideration.

Therefore, this needs analysis study sought to assess technological and methodological aspects; teachers', administrators', and students' needs and infrastructure and connectivity requirements to design and implement the blended version of the IEP. This research provides the institution with updated data to make informed instructional, administrative, and financial decisions. Furthermore, as stated by Johnson and Marsh (2014), "investigation into the delivery and assessment of course content through blended formats has become an important and emergent field of study" (p. 23). Thus, this research enriches language learning methodologies and broadens the scope of information and communication technologies (ICT) integration into language learning and teaching for local and international contexts. Even though data were gathered from all stakeholders, this article focuses on partial findings from surveys of teachers and program and campus administrators, addressing the following research questions:

- What is the status of the e-infrastructure available in the university's regional campuses for teaching activities in a blended learning English program?
- What are the teachers' and program or campus administrators' views regarding academic, methodological, and contextual needs to implement a blended learning English program at the university's regional campuses?

Literature Review

Blended Learning: Towards a Conceptualization

Blended learning refers to integrating f2f teaching or a classic form of contact teaching with any online teaching experience that can be used online or offline (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Hubackova & Semradova, 2016; Whittaker, 2013). Ginns and Ellis (2007) and Picciano (2009) agree with this definition and point out that the online component does not necessarily have to be based on written communication. Hence,

different activities and means can set a *blend* to promote meaningful learning, student motivation, cooperative learning, and increase language performance (Shih, 2010; Singh, 2003), for example, video-conferencing sessions, podcasting, wikis, blogs, and vlogs (Ginns & Ellis, 2007; Picciano, 2009). In this sense, blended learning can also be considered "learning that happens in an instructional context which is characterized by a deliberate combination of online and classroom-based interventions to instigate and support learning" (Boelens et al., 2015, p. 2).

Blended learning has been considered a complete modality of instruction (Driscoll, 2002, as cited in Bernard et al., 2014). The key in this modality is finding the right combination by differentiating between resources and activities that should take place in a traditional instructional context and those that should be delivered through a technological device or e-learning platform.

Among the reasons to integrate and use blended learning in higher education, the literature points out that "learners nowadays expect technology to be integrated into their language classes" (Whittaker, 2013, p. 15). Likewise, they expect flexibility to study and work or do other activities, primarily when students work or study part-time. Blended learning provides these students with such opportunities, granting them an active role in their learning processes, which is the desired outcome. It is expected in institutions where language learning implies a constructivist or social-constructivist perspective. Caulfield (2011) states that "hybrid courses place the primary responsibility of learning on the learner, thus making it the teachers' primary responsibility to create opportunities and foster environments that encourage student learning" (p. 4).

Notwithstanding, blended learning does not only use digital resources; some of its implementations use analogical resources as they were used, for example, in the correspondence model of distance education (e.g., printed textbooks). Combining digital and analogical resources allows for different blends and resource integration for a particular context. Therefore, with blended learning, higher education institutions might offer the best of f2f and online education.

Lastly, it should be noted that learning in a blended learning program happens in three scenarios (Christensen Institute, 2015, as cited in Tucker et al., 2016). The first one, where students learn partially through online learning with a control element such as place or pace; the second scenario, where they learn under supervision in a traditional classroom setting or institution; and the third one, where interconnected modalities enhance their learning experience.

In line with these scenarios, Tucker et al. (2016) claim that a successful implementation of blended learning may yield some benefits for teaching and learning practices, such as personalization, agency, authentic audience, connectivity, and creativity.

Tucker et al. (2016) define each one of these benefits as follows:

- Personalization: providing unique learning pathways for individual students
- Agency: giving learners opportunities to participate in key decisions in their learning experience
- Authentic audience: giving learners the opportunity to create for a real audience both locally and globally
- Connectivity: giving learners opportunities to experience learning in collaboration with peers and experts locally and globally
- Creativity: providing learners individual and collaborative opportunities to make things that matter while building skills for their future. (p. 6)

In teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), scholarship has devoted efforts to studying what makes blended learning successful. For example, Neumeier (2005) and Motteram (2006) argue that blended learning courses can only be successful if they are designed considering the voices and nature of all communities involved. Comas-Quinn (2011) states that teacher professional

development in online technologies is paramount for blended learning success. For this author, a professional development strategy designed for teachers' needs should allow them to concentrate on improving their digital skills and understanding how online teaching and learning work.

Finally, in agreement with Grgurović (2017), blended learning could be the favored language teaching and learning approach in the future, as newer technologies will keep molding newer learning contexts for students. As stated by Quitián-Bernal and González-Martínez (2021), research in blended learning concurs that combining f2f and online settings stimulates the development of better pedagogies to improve classroom work.

Needs Analysis Studies in Language Learning

The origin of the term "analysis of needs" appeared first in India in the 1920s to differentiate two things: "(i) what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation, and (ii) how learners might best master the target language during the period of training" (West, 1994, p. 1). Later, in the late sixties, the term reappeared, linked to the new development and interest in English for specific purposes, for which needs analysis became a key instrument. Then, in the early seventies, these types of studies began to take place, and ever since, they have evolved to answer questions related to adapting the teaching to the kind of learning audience, on the one hand, and training the learner on how to learn, on the other (West, 1994). Needs analysis studies (NASs) also attempt to shed light on proper learning needs and goals, wants, and limitations in each context, as well as on appropriate learning strategies and materials.

External researchers initially carried out NASs without considering the opinion and knowledge of those directly involved in educational programs. It started to be problematized by perspectives such as Jasso-Aguilar's (1999), which points out the "'value of insiders' perspectives in needs analysis (NA) research for language teaching" (p. 27). This author adds that those directly involved, that is, teachers, learners, and program administrators—the insiders—, provide valuable information for improving a given program far beyond what external auditors do.

However, it is necessary to use multiple sources and methods to identify learners' needs and triangulate the information obtained to validate its reliability regardless of its provenience, either from insiders or outsiders (Jasso-Aguilar, 1999). In this sense, Long (2005) points to the need to include more primary respondents in NASs beyond learners. For example, domain experts, language teachers, and materials writers. The reason for this is the existence of an "urgent need for courses of all kinds to be relevant . . . to the needs of specific groups of learners and of society at large" (Long, 2005, p. 19). Long describes learners as sources of information regarding their learning styles, preferences, and skills. Still, other insiders, such as administrators and teachers, are needed to obtain information about what language learners need to function successfully in their target discourse domains (Long, 2005). All in all, there should be multiple sources to extend and deepen the analysis and allow for the triangulation of sources to properly validate findings (González-Lloret, 2016; Jasso-Aguilar, 1999; Long, 2005).

More recently, NASs have included another element to adequately answer questions about the students' needs for a given learning program: technology (González-Lloret, 2016). Such inclusion of technology in the education realm originated from the design of technology-mediated or technology-supported learning programs. Yet, drawing from technology, an NAS requires an analysis of not only learner's needs, wants, goals, and possible learning tasks but also technology needs, possibilities, and limitations. For instance, in the task-based language teaching curriculum and program design frame, González-Lloret (2016) suggests that analysis should find the technological tools needed to develop a task, participants' digital

literacies, technological accessibility, resources, and technical support available.

NASs should "acknowledge the role that technology plays in achieving the task, just as much as the language" (González-Lloret, 2016, p. 20). For technology to work correctly in NASs, two aspects exist to consider. First, the resulting needs out of the intersection between technology and tasks; second, the technology-mediated environment needed to perform, support, and help execute the tasks and the general moderation of the course. In this vein, González-Lloret (2016) selects four aspects that should be analyzed in a NAS for a technology-supported program: (a) *tasks*, (b) *tools*, (c) *digital literacies*, and (d) *access to technology*, which are addressed as follows.

In terms of *tools*, González-Lloret (2016) suggests that an NAS should discover the most effective technologies for completing a task since selecting a particular technological tool defines the language skills required. In turn, using these tools requires specific *digital literacies* that should be recognized and defined for learners to develop. These literacies imply employing a variety of hardware and software to perform different communicative tasks, accessing information, and, overall, using technology for general-life tasks and academic or professional tasks. Hand in hand with this, *access to technology* and e-infrastructure are crucial to developing digital literacies and participating in a technology-supported program. The educational institution might provide this access to technology, or, possibly, learners can access different kinds of technologies at home. Both cases need to be identified and clarified as this is relevant for developing this program. To sum up, tools, digital literacies, technological accessibility, technical support, access to technology, and the identification of the type of task that learners prefer, as well as the understanding of what they need to do with the language, are fundamental to the design of a language learning program mediated by technology (González-Lloret, 2016).

Method

This investigation is an NAS (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Jasso-Aguilar, 1999) framed in a descriptive and interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2007) that resorts to data triangulation to ensure the validity and reliability of the study's findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Participants

The participants of this study were 27 English language teachers, five program coordinators, and seven regional campus coordinators. Most English teachers have a bachelor's degree in language education (77.8%). There are also a few professionals with bachelor's degrees in translation (7.4%), philosophy (3.7%), natural sciences (3.7%), cultural studies (3.7%), and computer education (3.7%). Most of the teachers hold a graduate degree (81.5%). Table 1 summarizes this information.

Table 1. English Language Teachers' Professional Background

		Frequency	%
Undergraduate degree	Bachelor's degree in language education	21	77.8
	Bachelor's degree in translation (English, French)	2	7.4
	Bachelor's degree in philosophy	1	3.7
	Bachelor's degree in cultural studies	1	3.7
	Bachelor's degree in natural sciences	1	3.7
	Bachelor's degree in computer education	1	3.7
Last degree obtained	Graduate degree	22	81.5
	Undergraduate degree	5	18.5

These participants have an average teaching experience of 18.7 years in f2f learning contexts; their experience with blended learning environments is 3.5 years and with online learning environments is 1.9 years, as Table 2 shows. Finally, these participants' average age is 46.6 years, the minimum being 33 and the maximum 64.

Table 2. English Language Teachers' Experience

	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Experience with f2f learning contexts	18.7	6.4	9	35
Experience with blended learning environments	3.4	3.9	0	16
Experience with online learning environments	1.9	2.2	0	8

The second group of participants consists of five program coordinators and seven regional campus coordinators with varied professional backgrounds and experience and an average of 14 years of experience in education. Three program coordinators are engineers at the university's Faculty of Engineering and coordinate how the main courses are offered and implemented at the regional campuses. The other two coordinators carry out the same task, one with a master's degree in education and the other in a technical program in agriculture. The former holds a bachelor's degree in education and the latter in animal husbandry engineering. Lastly, regarding the seven regional campus coordinators, three of them have graduate degrees in education, one holds an MBA, and the rest hold bachelor's degrees in psychology (1), engineering (1), and plastic arts (1). Table 3 synthesizes this information.

Table 3. Regional Campus Coordinators' and Program Coordinators' Profiles

Aspect	Characteristic(s)
Experience	An average of 14 years
Professional backgrounds	• 4 hold a bachelor's degree • 5 hold a master's degree • 2 hold a graduate certificate
Academic areas	• Organizational psychology • Agriculture and animal husbandry • Economy • Linguistics • Administration • Plastic arts • Education • Telecommunications • Informatics

Data Collection Instruments

This section describes the three data collection instruments employed in this study: an electronic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews.

Electronic Questionnaire

Teachers who had worked as English teachers at any undergraduate program were invited to participate in the study. The first step was taking an anonymous electronic questionnaire. Sixty English language teachers were invited to take it, and 27 answered. This instrument gathered demographic data; information about the types of internet and devices teachers use; internet connection speed and stability; and the teachers' expertise in employing Microsoft Office, picture, audio, and video editing software, and some e-learning platforms. Finally, it collected information about teachers' use of technology in their practices and preferred language teaching methodologies. At the end of the electronic questionnaire, participants were asked if they wanted to participate in more data collection activities for the project. Those who manifested interest in participating in semi-structured interviews or focus groups were called to do so.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted through Zoom video calls lasting from 20 to 45 minutes. The interviewees were 11 teachers who manifested interest in participating after answering the electronic questionnaire, two program coordinators, and seven regional campus coordinators. The program coordinators were sent a direct invitation via email to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The interviews used a protocol divided into three sections to guide the conversation. The first section aimed to present information about the project. The second section explained the purpose of the interview, its implications, how data would be recorded and reported, and how long the interview could last. Finally, the third section contained closed and open-ended questions framed in the same categories underpinning the electronic questionnaire. These interviews resulted in 638 minutes of recordings transcribed verbatim and analyzed with the computer software Nvivo 12 (Windows version).

Focus Group Interviews

Two focus group interviews were conducted with two English teachers interested in participating after answering the electronic questionnaire and three program coordinators. The program coordinators were sent a direct invitation via email to participate in the focus group interviews. These interviews followed the same protocol as the semi-structured interviews and resulted in 158 minutes of recordings that were also transcribed to facilitate analysis. Transcripts from semi-structured and focus group interviews were originally in Spanish, with only selected excerpts translated into English.

The semi-structured and focus group interviews asked differentiated questions for teachers and program and regional campus coordinators. On the one hand, teachers were asked about their technological resources to teach, their opinions about technology affordances, their pedagogical use of technology, their professional development needs regarding the use of technology, their skills to teach in online environments, and the institutional support they obtain to integrate technology into their pedagogical practices. On the other hand, program and regional campus coordinators were asked about how they administer their programs, the technological and human resources they have to coordinate their programs, how they perceive students' quality of internet access and technological competencies, their most common academic and administrative problems and how they solve them, and the institutional support they have for program management. Finally, teachers and program and regional campus coordinators were asked how a blended learning English program should be designed and offered considering their experience and expertise.

Ethical Considerations

All participants signed a consent form detailing the study's characteristics; how data would be treated, reported, and analyzed; the strategies to guarantee their anonymity; the potential risks; and their right not to participate in the study if they chose so. This study obtained approval from a research committee, an advisory board, and ethics committee for social sciences.

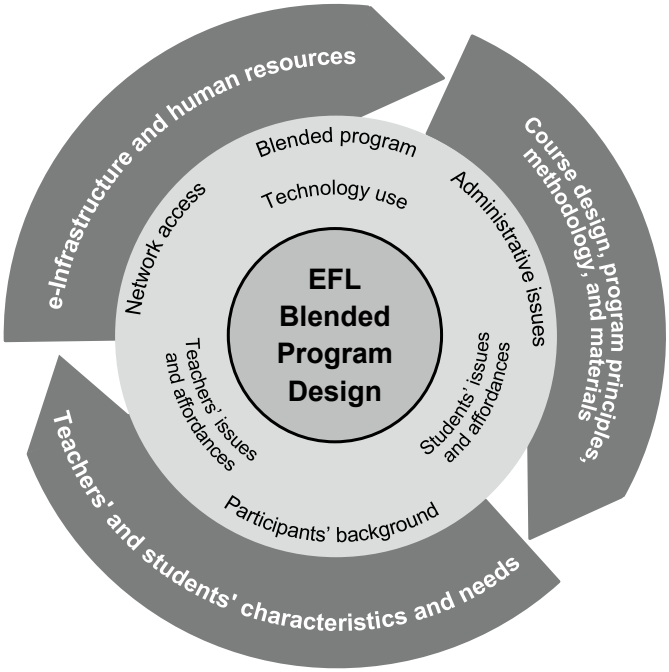
Data Analysis

Data analysis drew on grounded theory and was refined as the analysis advanced following the open, axial, and selective coding processes, which allowed us to code with a code system based on the literature review conducted for the project; the code system was reviewed and adjusted as the analysis advanced (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We relied on the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12 for this analytical process.

Grounded theory allows for the development of substantive and formal theories (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). In our case, this study is limited to a substantive theory and does not connote formal theory. In this vein, findings corresponding to the first level of analysis permitted a description and understanding of the situations under examination by presenting a coherent set of conceptual categories and their corresponding analysis.

Aligned with the preceding considerations, the code system was initially fed with *in vivo* codes that we discussed and adjusted as the analysis advanced; once a preliminary analysis was conducted, we agreed upon a fixed system of codes to analyze and make sense of the data (Miles et al., 2014). In this sense, 58 codes were used in the initial coding in NVivo 12, which were later grouped into seven dimensions: participants' background, network access, blended program characteristics, students' issues and affordances, teachers' issues and affordances, use of technology, and administrative issues. Finally, these were organized into three categories: (a) e-infrastructure and human resources; (b) course design, program principles, methodology, and materials; and (c) teachers' and students' characteristics and needs. Figure 1 presents the study's categories and dimensions, described in the next section.

Figure 1. Categories and Dimensions of the Analysis



Findings

As mentioned before, three main categories and seven dimensions emerged from the findings. An analytical matrix (Miles et al., 2014) was used to validate, verify, and summarize the findings and their relationships. Hereunder, these relationships are explained.

e-Infrastructure and Human Resources

Electronic infrastructure (also known as e-infrastructure) refers to "all ICT-based resources (i.e., distributed networks, computers, storage devices, software, data, etc.) and support operations which facilitate the collaboration among research communities by sharing resources, analysis tools and data" (Barbera et al., 2009, p. 248). These ICT-based resources are crucial for all activities at the university and, particularly, for teaching. Regarding computers and software, teachers reported that these tools are available to students for most regional campuses. However, computer and software quality are not as good as expected to support teaching and other activities. For example, at Regional Campus 1, one of the teachers said the following about the computers' quality:

> I would say it is not great as computers are rather old. We have been working with them for about three or four years, maybe more. [Teachers and students] sometimes complain about the quality of computers and wireless internet connection. (Teacher 1, interview)[1]

It means that technological resources in computer rooms are outdated and probably do not work best for online or blended courses if students use university campus resources. Furthermore, some teachers manifested that, on some occasions, they must bring their technological equipment to teach:

> Teachers have opted for bringing their computers to class . . . in my case, once, I had to change computers because the numeric [keypad] was not working, which made things difficult, so I decided to bring my own. (Teacher 2, interview)

However, even if most regional university campuses do not have updated computers and software, all teachers agreed that there is some e-infrastructure to support teaching, research, and extension activities and that computers have a wired and sometimes wireless connection to the internet.

Regarding internet access at the university's regional campuses, there are still connectivity and speed issues, which should be considered a limitation for the design of the blended program. Most opinions from teachers and administrators evidence this. For instance, one of the coordinators at Regional Campus 1 asserted: "It may work during the day but intermittently. . . . There are moments when it won't work, but half an hour later it is back to normal . . . it is very [unstable]" (Coordinator 1, interview).

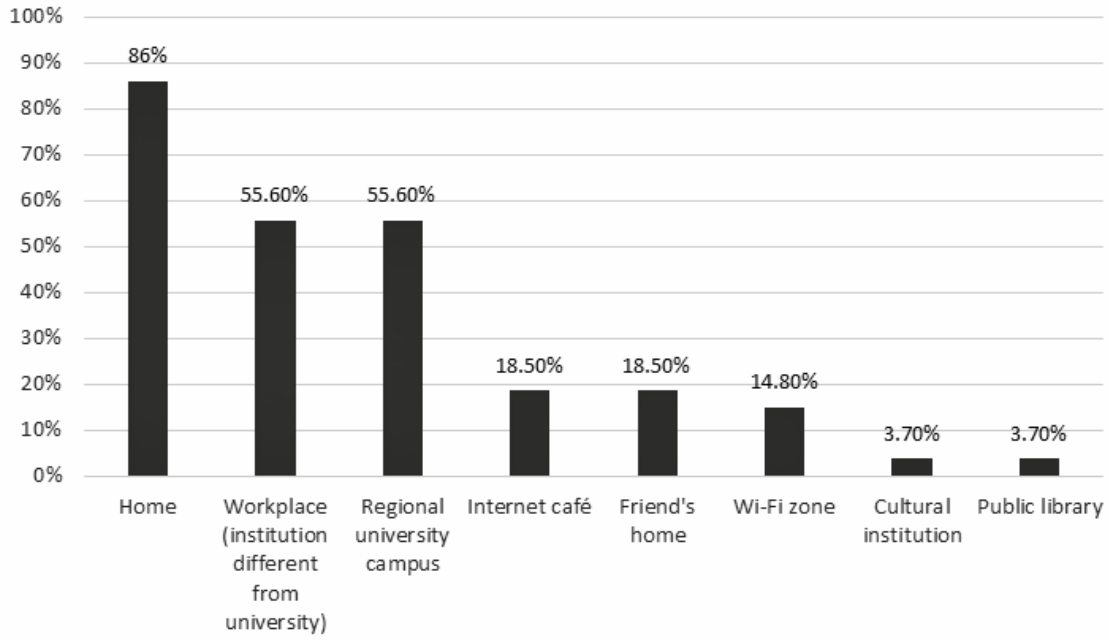
These connection problems also affect telephone communications since they work with the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which is vital for several administrative activities that support the university's mission: "Sometimes, when the network is down, it is frustrating because phones do not work; and, if phones do not work, we do not have contact with the main campus" (Coordinator 1, interview).

Even if internet connectivity is still an issue for most regional campuses, the situation with Regional Campus 2 is different. Conditions there allow for better internet connectivity, which is, according to teachers and administrators, more sophisticated and comparable in quality to the main campus. In this line, the campus coordinator claimed: "I think [internet speed and connectivity] are generally good. Here, we have a good connection" (Coordinator 2, interview).

1 The excerpts have been translated from Spanish.

However, according to the information obtained through the electronic questionnaire (see Figure 2), teachers access the internet mainly from home, where they have a better internet connection, so internet access from regional campuses is a secondary option. They reported their workplace and regional university campus as their second and third places to access the internet since they have a better internet connection at home.

Figure 2. Teachers' Internet Access Locations



Finally, in terms of human resources, administrative staff hired by the university to support teaching, research, and extension activities seem insufficient in most regional campuses. In this regard, most program and campus coordinators agreed on the need for more support personnel at the university's regional campuses, especially for new programs. One campus coordinator affirmed:

> It gets complicated at times when [working] conditions are not clear because in the . . . regional campus, I work at an office; but in two other regional campuses where I also have to work, I have to borrow a computer and do things here and there [since I do not have an office]. I cannot do much about it or find a solution. (Coordinator 3, interview)

Table 4 synthesizes this section's findings through an analytical matrix (Miles et al., 2014).

Course Design, Program Principles, Methodology, and Materials

Regarding the second category, the teachers interviewed agreed on the importance of students' contextual conditions when designing an EFL blended program. Such conditions include internet access, technological tools availability, and online learning training. One of the teachers asserted:

> In regional campuses, especially, the most complicated issue is related to students who live in remote rural areas with no internet access. If a blended program were to be created, students should be able to use computers lent by the university or work in a university's computer room. (Teacher 3, interview)

Table 4. Summary of the Findings for e-Infrastructure and Human Resources

Participants' background	Computer and software quality at the university's regional campuses might not be as needed to support online and blended teaching and other activities.
Network access	There are connectivity and speed issues at the university's regional campuses.
Blended program characteristics	Designing and implementing a blended learning program requires proper hardware and software.
Students' issues and affordances	Students' technological resources can be a starting point for accessing content and materials in a blended learning program.
Teachers' issues and affordances	Teachers' technological devices can help them moderate their blended learning courses from home.
Technology use	Technology is already used for teaching purposes at the university.
Administrative issues	Implementing an EFL program in blended learning modality would require a solid investment in e-infrastructure and hiring new personnel.

The teachers also pointed out that students, not the teacher, should be the central figures in the classroom and the virtual learning environment (VLE). They stated that they ought to be knowledgeable of technological tools and educational platforms and flexible to new methodologies and working materials. Likewise, they should participate in the design of the program content, foster students' autonomy, and be able to work in groups or teams. In this train of thought, one teacher manifested: "I think tutors should have excellent skills to use programs, platforms, and technology. They should know those tools very well; otherwise, they would be in serious trouble" (Teacher 4, interview).

On the other hand, when talking about methodological suggestions, some teachers believed that the new program should allow students to experience an interdisciplinary academic education, which, in turn, may benefit interaction in the classroom. One teacher affirmed: "When an academic program can interact with different areas of knowledge, [students'] interaction, classroom management, and [language] production are greatly enhanced" (Teacher 5, focus group interview).

Regarding materials and content, teachers reported that these should be graphically attractive, motivating, with clear instructions, and should discuss topics related to students' personal and professional contexts. Furthermore, teachers suggested that traditional materials be considered alongside digital media to present content. Teachers claimed that materials and content for the program, which are available through a website or an e-learning platform, should also be offline or printed (e.g., a printed textbook). Also, online materials could be made offline through USB drives or SD cards. One teacher commented:

> We often believe a blended learning program requires internet access, but that is not the case. We have other resources that can make blended learning feasible for regional campuses with difficult or no internet access since we have other materials (traditional or analog) that can provide ways for content acquisition without needing a computer or Wi-Fi network. (Teacher 11, interview)

Finally, some coordinators agreed that institutional commitment is essential for implementing a blended learning program. Central administrations should be concerned about supporting methodologies adapted to general and particular contexts for the current, fast-changing language teaching and learning realities. Table 5 synthesizes this section's findings through an analytical matrix (Miles et al., 2014).

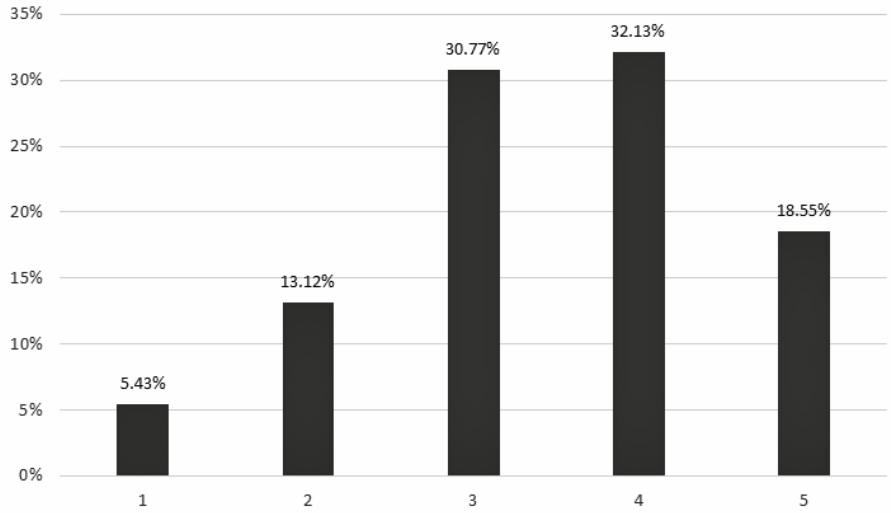
Table 5. Summary of the Findings for Course Design, Program Principles, Methodology, and Materials

Participants' background	Program contents should discuss topics close to students' personal and professional contexts.
Network access	Materials and content should be accessible both online and offline.
Blended program characteristics	• The program should allow students to experience an interdisciplinary academic education. • Program materials should be motivating, graphically attractive, and have clear instructions. • The program should be scaffolded and foster students' autonomy.
Students' issues and affordances	Several students have a good disposition toward online and technological learning.
Teachers' issues and affordances	• Teachers should participate in the design of the program content. • Teachers require training and professional development on methodological issues to properly work on an EFL blended program.
Technology use	• The program must carefully balance the integration of face-to-face and online components. • Tutors require training and professional development in technical and pedagogical ICT skills.
Administrative issues	Implementing an EFL program in a blended learning modality requires institutional commitment.

Teachers' and Students' Characteristics and Needs

As for teachers' and students' characteristics and needs, teachers and administrators agreed that many students show a good disposition towards online learning and learning in general through technological means. They asserted that some learners exhibit good technical skills in their classes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Students' Virtual Learning Environment Usage Skill Level From 1 (Lowest) to 5 (Highest)



According to teachers and administrators, students' competencies in technology depart from the fact that the latter is already used to support f2f teaching and learning practices. In this line, one teacher posited: "There are outstanding students for online learning because they are passionate about technology, they feel motivated by it, and that is why they like it so much" (Teacher 7, interview).

The preceding is important because it allows content designers to use different technological tools to operationalize a teaching methodology in a VLE. Nonetheless, according to one of the teachers interviewed, some students are experts when using social media, but not much for VLEs, although using them can be learned quickly: "Even if we think today's students are technology experts, they seem to be experts when it comes to social media, but not so much when it comes to using VLEs" (Teacher 8, interview).

Another teacher added that older students need more assistance when doing online activities: "There are also non-digital native students. They are the older students in their classrooms, 30-year-olds or older who have difficulties [learning online] and need a lot more assistance [from the teacher] than others" (Teacher 9, interview).

Concerning teachers, even though they indicated that their VLE usage skills are good (40.74%) or outstanding (37.04%; see Figure 4), most of them agreed that they need training on the use of these kinds of environments before, during, and after their courses; the latter as a follow-up strategy to check on their technological skills learning. This is a recurrent theme for teachers and administrators as they also pinpointed that training should be included in their working hours and offered not only at the main campus but also at regional campuses. One teacher affirmed: "At the regional campuses, we are surprised to see the considerable professional development programming the School of Languages offers, but only for the main campus teachers" (Teacher 10, interview). Table 6 synthesizes this section's findings through an analytical matrix (Miles et al., 2014).

Figure 4. Teachers' Virtual Learning Environment Usage Skill From Level 1 (Lowest) to 5 (Highest)

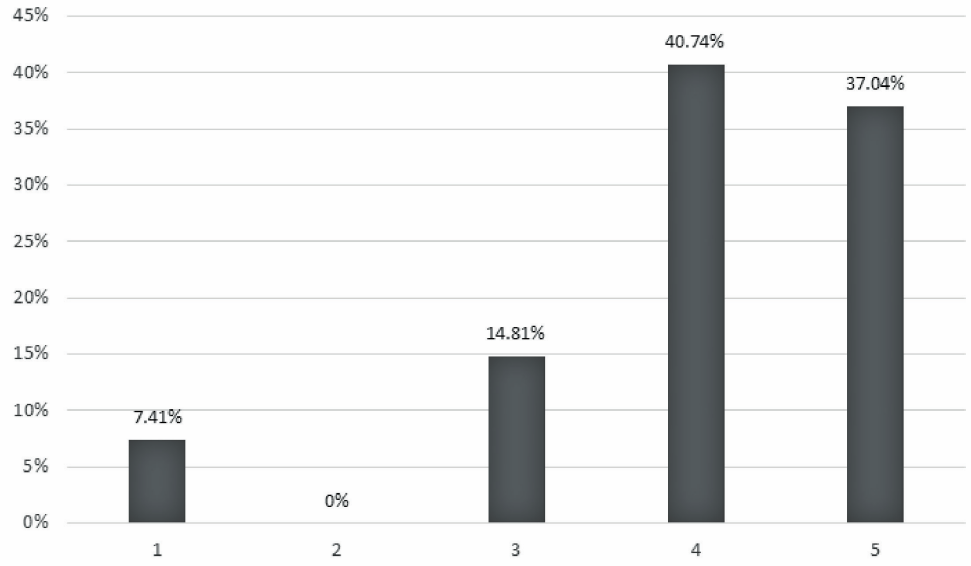


Table 6. Summary of the Findings for Teachers' and Students' Characteristics and Needs

Participants' background	Teachers and students already use technology to support their f2f educational practices.
Network access	Teachers access the internet mainly from home, so it could be considered the primary option for teachers to work in a blended learning program initially.
Blended program characteristics	• Students should be the central figures in the classroom and the virtual learning environment. • Considering students' context to design an EFL blended program is fundamental.
Students' issues and affordances	Students need training on ICT academic use and online learning.
Teachers' issues and affordances	Teachers need to further their professional competencies in ICT use for teaching purposes.
Technology use	• Some students exhibit good technical skills. • Students are skilled in social media use.
Administrative issues	Logistics are needed to integrate blended learning preparation into the existing teachers' professional development program.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that students should be the leading roles in the classroom and VLEs when designing a new EFL blended program. Similarly, materials and content should be motivating. These results align with other studies that have shown that this aspect is critical for designing a blended learning program since "motivation is key to successful learning in blended learning environments" (Bernard et al., 2014, p. 117).

These results further highlight the importance of students' contextual conditions when devising an EFL blended program. Such conditions include recognizing their contextual possibilities and needs and designing a program that carefully integrates f2f and online components. For this new program, an online component should focus not only on an e-learning platform but also on analog or traditional means, as supported by other studies that claim that an analysis of context is critical for the success of online and blended language learning environments (González-Lloret, 2014; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020).

Findings also suggest a careful design for the program's online component that should be accessible when there are connectivity issues. In addition, the program design should consider the need for students and teachers to gain digital literacy, as it is of paramount importance. Results suggest that students are experts when using social media but not necessarily when using VLEs. Research has shown that a blended learning program design requires students to learn skills to work in the e-learning platform and with the technological tools chosen by the instructional designers for the program (Bernard et al., 2014). This instructional design must be complemented by proper training on ICT use, which does not entail preparing teachers for teaching online but training them to become online teachers (Comas-Quinn, 2011).

Besides, findings suggest that implementing an EFL program in a blended learning modality requires a solid investment in e-infrastructure and hiring new personnel. While e-infrastructure would require proper hardware, software, and connectivity improvements, hiring new personnel should accompany this investment to support teachers, administrators, and students. This investment in e-infrastructure could be carried out gradually, in any case, because teachers have devices and

access to the internet at home, which might help pilot the program, whereas the institution further develops its e-infrastructure.

Furthermore, results also reveal that a blended learning program should be scaffolded and foster students' autonomy. These results align with Bernard et al.'s (2014) idea that "assignments that help students find value in goal setting, strategic planning, self-observation (i.e., self-reflection), etc., among the primary pillars of educating students in self-regulation, need to be promoted in the blended learning environment" (p. 117).

Findings suggest that the scaffolded learning experience should contain graphically attractive materials with clear instructions, discussing topics related to the students' personal and professional contexts, which should be appropriately integrated into the program's online component. According to Bernard et al. (2014), successful integration of the online component of a blended program "seems to add a dimension of independence from time and place that may turn out to be both more motivating and more facilitative of the goals of instruction than either CI [computer instruction] or DE/OL [distance education/online learning]" (p. 116), which is essential for the context where the new program could be implemented.

Following findings, a new higher education EFL blended learning program implies a paradigm shift in which teachers are tutors, facilitators, and guides—instead of knowledge holders and spreaders—that require both training and professional development on methodological issues and technical skills. In this sense, even though there is already a multimodal professional development strategy to cope with teachers' needs at the institution (Gómez-Palacio et al., 2018), this strategy would have to be updated and specifically tailored to the new blended learning program. This training should engage teachers and students to explore topics related to ICT use and methodological issues to implement them, evidencing that participants can understand and apply blended learning principles as intended by the institution and specific context (Hockly, 2018). All in all, teachers and students need to learn how to be successful in blended learning environments, which "requires development of learning skills and strategies by careful guidance . . . and e-tutoring, training and opportunity for practice" (Neumeier, 2005, p. 168).

In conclusion, this NAS substantiates academic, professional development, and contextual conditions needed to design and implement an EFL program in a blended learning modality. These conditions have been established thanks to the existing English program teachers' and coordinators' voices. They play a crucial role in blended learning course design as long as instructional designers consider them. The teachers' and administrators' perspectives on needs and limitations for implementing an EFL blended learning program presented here could help the community of language educators and curriculum designers conduct NASs for creating blended learning programs in their contexts.

As per the study's limitations, students' perceptions were not included in the analysis of this paper since we plan on discussing them in an upcoming publication. Also, the number of teachers who participated could have been more significant; even though we invited all teachers working for the IEP at the regional campuses, only a little less than half participated in the study. All the teachers' opinions could have given us a deeper understanding of their needs and perspectives. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, visits to the regional campuses were impossible. Had we visited the regional campuses, we would have broadened our perspective first-hand on the e-infrastructure of these campuses.

Further research is needed to better understand contextual conditions in different educational settings to implement blended learning English programs and better integrate technology into f2f environments. Also, there is a need to explore teachers' professional

development on ICT and methodological issues concerning implementing blended learning language programs, as this instruction modality keeps developing in our educational institutions. Finally, more research is needed to further our understanding of balancing the integration of f2f and online modalities of instruction for English blended learning programs.

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PROFILE

Issues from Novice Teacher Researchers

https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.99248

Imagined Identities and Imagined Communities: Colombian English Teachers' Investment in Their Professional Development

Las identidades y comunidades imaginadas: la inversión de los docentes de inglés colombianos en su desarrollo profesional

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English teachers' professional development responds to individual needs and societal discourses about teaching, learning, and language use. This paper reports the findings of a case study that explored the factors that increased or limited the active and committed participation of nine Colombian teachers of English in professional development programs. Findings suggest that English teachers are invested in their professional development if they may develop three imagined identities—as proficient English speakers, ELT experts, and ICT competent users—and their affiliation to an imagined community of "bilinguals." The teachers' journey to the imagined identities and the imagined community is full of conflicting emotions amidst the socio-political context of their work and the country's language education policies.

Keywords: English teaching, imagined community, imagined identity, investment, teacher professional development

El desarrollo profesional de los docentes de inglés responde a necesidades individuales y a discursos sociales sobre la enseñanza, el aprendizaje y el uso de la lengua. Este estudio de caso exploró los factores que incrementaron o disminuyeron la participación activa y continua de nueve profesores de inglés colombianos en programas de desarrollo profesional. Se encontró que los docentes de inglés invierten en su desarrollo profesional si pueden desarrollar tres identidades imaginadas —hablantes competentes de inglés, expertos en la enseñanza del inglés y usuarios competentes de las TIC— y afiliarse a la comunidad imaginada de "los bilingües". El trayecto hacia las identidades imaginadas y la comunidad imaginada está lleno de ambivalencias generadas por el contexto sociopolítico de su trabajo y las políticas lingüísticas educativas del país.

Palabras clave: comunidad imaginada, desarrollo profesional docente, enseñanza del inglés, identidad imaginada, inversión

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This article is based on the thesis completed by Ovalle Quiroz (2018). Professor González was the thesis supervisor.

How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Ovalle Quiroz, M., & González, A. (2023). Imagined identities and imagined communities: Colombian English teachers' investment in their professional development. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 213–228. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.99248

This article was received on October 28, 2021 and accepted on September 12, 2022.

Introduction

Seeking to make the country a competitive nation in the global market, English language education and massive use of information and communication technologies (ICT) have become significant axes in the education agendas in Colombia for almost two decades. The two areas claimed particular importance when the country was admitted to the Organization for Economic Co-operation Development (2015). Since the beginning of the definition of the plans around the axes above, the National Program of Bilingualism (NPB) set goals in English proficiency for students in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, connecting competent use of the language to a prosperous future for all (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

Primary responsibility for the attainment of the language targets has been assigned to local English teachers (González, 2020), and, as a consequence, their English language proficiency and the English language teaching (ELT) methodologies they use have been a priority for the government (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2005). Since the early stages of the NPB design, policymakers assumed that most in-service Colombian teachers did not have the linguistic and methodological knowledge to face the challenges that the NPB posed (Cely, 2007). To address the English teachers' supposed deficiencies in their professional performance, the Ministry of Education proposed a professional development agenda for English teachers that included nation-wide initiatives. Primary actors in the professional development programs (PDPs) were the British Council and international publishing companies (González, 2007; Le Gal, 2018). As the demand for language proficiency and ELT certifications grew exponentially, local governments proposed numerous initiatives in association with universities (Álvarez et al., 2011).

The proliferation of PDPs for English teachers after launching the NPB conveyed growing interest in the study of professional development in Colombia (Buendía & Macías, 2019). Various local scholars have reflected on the design and implementation of professional development initiatives highlighting important issues as the language education policies have historically shaped PDPs (González, 2021). Recent critical and locally-constructed knowledge about English teachers' professional growth includes the emphasis on coverage over sustainability and quality of PDPs (Álvarez et al., 2011), the limited access to professional development for English teachers in rural areas (Bonilla-Medina & Cruz-Arcila, 2013), and the predominance of colonial epistemologies in ELT, teacher education, and professional development (Fandiño-Parra, 2021; Granados-Beltrán, 2018, Guerrero, 2008; Usma-Wilches, 2015).

Traditionally, professional development has served to update teachers' knowledge and improved their teaching and assessment practices (Day & Sachs, 2004; Díaz-Maggioli, 2004). Other views of professional development see teachers as agents of change who act and resist the ideological structures of language learning and teaching (Musanti & Pence, 2010). This individual and collective agency supports the development of imagined identities and the affiliation to imagined communities (Barkhuizen, 2016; De Costa & Norton, 2017; Xu, 2012), and the development of these ideal ways of being is the result of teachers' investment.

Norton's (2000, 2013) work on investment in second language learning has illuminated different studies that explore teachers' investment (Karam et al., 2017; Sanches-Silva, 2013; Stranger-Johannessen & Norton, 2017; Waller et al., 2017; Xu, 2012). However, despite its importance, no studies address why or how English teachers become invested in their professional development. The lack of research in Colombia, and globally, on the reasons for such commitment motivated us to pose this research question: "What factors drive the investment of nine Colombian teachers of English in their professional development?"

In our analysis, we assume that different relations and structures of power in society frame language teaching and learning and, therefore, teachers' profes-

sional development. In this interrelation, identities are constructed and reconstructed at the individual and social levels (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016). Ideologies and discourses about English, ELT, and professional development shape the teachers' identities and, therefore, their investment in their professional growth.

Literature Review

Investment

Norton (1995, 2000) proposed the construct of "investment," in contrast to "motivation," to explain the relationship between the identity of language learners and their commitment to learning a language. Investment is the concurrency of human capacity, power, and identity to pursue tasks with perseverance to increase symbolic and economic capital. People invest in something that boosts "the value of their cultural capital and social power" (Norton, 2013, p. 6). Darvin and Norton (2015, 2016) recreated Norton's initial investment model. They show how investment is a unity where the concepts of identity, capital, and ideology converge. Their model shows how ideologies define, shape, and reshape learners' identities and allow them to be positioned and position others in dynamic ways across time and space (De Costa & Norton, 2016).

Further analyses have derived from the investment reconceptualization of Darvin and Norton (2015) exploring English teachers' investment in their identity transformation. Karam et al. (2017) found that English teachers in refugee camps in Syria developed agentive roles and advocacy identities when they became invested in ELT. In Uganda, Stranger-Johannessen and Norton (2017) concluded that English teachers invested in a multilingual literacy digital initiative developed new identities as writers, readers, digital experts, and global citizens. Finally, Sanches-Silva (2013) showed how future teachers in Brazil struggled to define their identities as English learners, English users, and English teachers as they were invested in learning the language in their teacher preparation program. In Colombia, Ubaque and Castañeda-Peña (2017) explored how some English teachers struggled in their school contexts to be invested in pedagogical practices that allowed them to develop their identity as teacher-researchers.

Imagined Identity and Imagined Communities

Norton's works characterize identity as "fluid, context-dependent, and context-producing, in particular historical and cultural circumstances" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 419). Due to its complex nature, someone's identity may respond to societal demands or represent a conflict between what the person desires and what the social ideologies impose.

Teachers' identity is gaining importance in teacher education and ELT. Studies on teachers' identity show how personal histories, professional development, and job contexts shape teachers' professional identity through their affiliation to imagined worlds (Martel & Wang, 2015). A particular aspect of English teachers' identities is that they are framed by their status as native of non-native speakers of English (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Pavlenko, 2003; Song, 2016; Wu, 2017; Xu, 2012; Yuan, 2019). For language teachers, Ruohotie-Lyhty et al. (2021) demonstrated how identity development involves an emotional basis because the socio-political contexts press their teaching to respond to societal discourses and realities. Teaching shapes their identity, and the new identities shape their teaching practice (Kharchenko, 2014; Xu, 2012).

Constructing an imagined identity is a way to enter an imagined community (Barkhuizen, 2016; Darvin & Norton, 2015). Xu (2013) shows that school contexts and societal dynamics mediate imagined identities and imagined communities. Even if the imagined identity and the imagined community represent the teachers' desires and aspirations, they may not be exempt from obstacles as they depend on educational decision-makers (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016).

Professional Development

Professional development is a continual process, "a range of activities—formal (accredited) and informal (nonaccredited)—which meet the thinking, feeling, acting, life, context and change purposes of teachers along their teaching careers" (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 12). Díaz-Maggioli (2004) adds that professional development is "a career-long process in which educators fine-tune their teaching to meet student needs" (p. 5). Despite the importance of professional development in the professional life of teachers, programs may not support changes in teaching that may be conducive to students' learning. For most teachers globally, PDPs usually do not fulfill their expectations, and offers depend on societal representations of the kinds of professionals they should become (Groundwater-Smith & Dadds, 2004).

Method

Context and Participants

Deriving from a more extensive mixed-methods study,[1] we conducted a smaller qualitative study to explore the particularities of the investment of nine English teachers in their professional development. We chose qualitative research because it would allow us to know their direct voices and obtain more detailed descriptions of their experiences in the initiatives they have participated in (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The nine participants' investments became the case of investigation (Stake, 2005). We selected the case after administering a survey in the larger study. Through data analysis, one of the five municipalities emerged as the context where teachers reported the highest participation in professional development initiatives. In that municipality, 17 English teachers gave us their contact information and expressed interest in participating in another research phase. We selected the nine participants using a convenience sampling criterion (Patton, 2001). These teachers replied to our emails promptly and were available to meet with us after school for the interviews and the writing task.

The group of participants is diverse in terms of age, teaching experience, educational background, and participation in PDPs. Six of the teachers have two teaching jobs. The participants work in four public schools that may represent some of the country's general conditions of urban public education. We assigned the schools the following fictitious names: Hill School, Round School, Station School, and Green School. A language center where the teachers took some English courses is presented with a made-up name. Although these schools face various challenges, teachers get access to different teaching resources, receive open support from administrators in curricular innovations, and participate actively in national and local professional development initiatives. These teachers possess higher levels of English language proficiency, as measured in a national testing initiative. The four schools have academic recognition in the municipality due to their students' high scores on national standardized tests.

All participants signed a consent form. The document described the purpose of the study, explained the conditions of their participation, and informed them about the confidentiality of the data they shared. Table 1 includes academic and professional information about the participants (pseudonyms are used).

1 The larger study aimed at exploring how English teachers appropriated and interpreted the targets of the NPB in five municipalities of the Metropolitan Area of Medellín, Colombia.

Table 1. Participants' Information

Teacher	Gender	Age	Years of teaching experience	Academic training	School	Second job
Octavio	Male	58	22	BEd in Foreign Language Teaching, BS in Natural Sciences, specialization in pedagogical innovations and project management	Hill School	English instructor in a prison education program
Yuri	Female	27	3	BEd in English and French Teaching	Hill School	English teacher at a private language center
Gabriela	Female	46	20	BEd in English and French, specialization in Telematics	Hill School	English teacher at a private school
Camilo	Male	46	20	BEd in Foreign Language Teaching	Hill School	No
Nora	Female	42	11	BEd in Foreign Language Teaching, a specialization in Education and Technology, and an MA in Education	Round School	No
Esmeralda	Female	52	31	BEd in Foreign Language Teaching, specialization in English Teaching and learning	Round School	English adjunct instructor in a private community college
Mónica	Female	49	26	BEd in History and Philosophy, specialization in Democracy and Literary Studies	Station School	No
Mario	Male	43	15	BEd in English and French	Station School	English teacher in a private school
Mar	Female	35	11	BEd in English	Green School	English adjunct instructor in a community college

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection included the nine teachers' responses to the surveys used for the more extensive study. We collected demographic, academic, and job information and their participation in PDPs through the surveys. We also used semi-structured in-depth interviews, and later, we invited them to write a narrative of a meaningful experience in professional development. As requested, the participants used Spanish for the interviews and the narrative.

We used a narrative activity to externalize, verbalize, and systematically examine the teachers' voices (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). We focused on the possibility of externalization because narratives represent a possibility for teachers "to express their understandings and feelings by giving voice to their past, present, and even imagined future experiences" (Golombek & Johnson, 2017, p. 18). For the narrative activity, we invited the participants to write a retrospective account of a powerful professional experience in professional development. It could be a positive or negative experience because different views of the same event may coexist within an individual, or the same event may be perceived differently by different people (Day, 2005; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995). We included negative experiences because they are "part of what constitutes and reifies a teacher's identity in (and out of) institutional settings" (Kitching, 2009, p. 142). Angelides (2001) highlights that a critical incident or problematic situation stimulates reflection and searching for a solution.

We conducted two semi-structured in-depth interviews with each teacher over a year. In-depth interviews allow a deep exploration of topics, as there is room for comments that reveal values, beliefs, and experiences (Kvale, 1996). The first interview explored if teachers were invested in their professional development across their teaching careers, and it was motivated by their responses to the survey. The second interview aimed to understand what led to the teachers' investment, as they reported it in the professional development experience in their narratives. We transcribed interviews using regular orthography and later translated them and the stories into English for verbatim quotations.

We performed content analysis to make valid inferences from data and provide new insights. We used NVIVOTM 11 to analyze the teachers' stories and interviews. The coding process followed an inductive approach with open coding, creating categories and abstracting meanings (Saldaña, 2016). To assure trustworthiness, we conducted methodological and investigator triangulation (Guion et al., 2011) and used member checking in the interviews (Kvale, 1996).

Findings

Findings suggest that for the participating English teachers two main factors drove their investment in their professional development: the support in constructing their imagined professional identities and the possibility of joining an imagined professional community. Teachers are invested in showing interest in the PDPs, committing to learning, and implementing new knowledge in their classrooms. They also express an avid desire to share what they have learned with their colleagues. On the contrary, if English teachers are not invested in their professional development, they ignore or decline calls for participation, do not show long-term academic commitment to the PDPs, or withdraw promptly.

English Teachers' Imagined Identities

Three primary imagined teacher identities emerged in our analysis: proficient speakers of English, ELT experts, and competent ICT users. Under the demands of the NPB, the participants saw the three identities as a priority for improving their professional future. However, social and academic discourses around the quality of English in Colombia have produced some rankings in which language proficiency development is the primary drive for being invested in professional development initiatives. ELT methodologies appear in second place, and, finally, the use of ICT. Following the importance ranking, we describe the identities below.

Proficient Speakers of English

Although the participants are fluent English speakers, and all had a B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)—stated in the NPB as the minimum proficiency level for English teachers—all reported feeling some degree of insecurity about their linguistic competence. The negative appraisal was more evident for Nora, Octavio, Yuri, Mónica, and Mario, as they said in the interviews. Esmeralda and Camilo seemed more confident about their English proficiency. Still, their feeling of linguistic incompleteness was a primary drive to attend PDPs, as it was for the rest of the group. In the survey, Esmeralda reported having participated in numerous English courses the municipality financed or paid for to support her English language development.

All the participants want to see themselves as proficient English speakers in the future. In the first interview, they mentioned that PDPs that used English as the means of instruction and interaction among participants drove their investment as it led to improving or maintaining their language proficiency. When the PDPs did not allow the use of English, they were not invested and usually cancelled their participation.

A primary reason for the power they grant to PDPs in English is the teachers' limited opportunities to use the language in their schools. The participants stated that their regular classes allow for the use of English for classroom management, instructions for students' individual or group work, or drilling exercises. Additionally, they feel that their peer teachers are highly insecure about their language proficiency and avoid speaking English with them. In the first interview, Camilo said,

> We talk all the time in Spanish about superfluous topics. Instead, it would be great if we discussed a reading on a specific methodology or issue that we need for our teaching practices. Besides, we should generate the habit of speaking English among ourselves.

Even when teachers started using English with some colleagues, the practice lasted only a short time. Nora reported in the first interview the need to create some spaces for language practice and improvement. However, she acknowledged the fear of being exposed, mainly when the interlocutor is a peer teacher: "We usually think that we do not pronounce properly and the other [teacher] will not understand us." The individual insecurities and the feeling of not having peers who could provide corrective feedback hindered the language practice initiatives.

Esmeralda, Mónica, and Nora took English language courses in private language centers. Their registration fees were a scholarship from the municipality because it was a form of professional development. This opportunity boosted their linguistic investment. Teachers highlighted the quality of interactions with the English instructors and the classmates they had. This benefit was not permanent because it depended on the municipal authorities in power. The end of the English courses provoked frustration because teachers lost space for meaningful language learning and use.

Consequently, the lack of continuity in this PDP challenged the teachers' drive to achieve and maintain their imagined identity as proficient speakers of English. Nora described her experience as an English student as highly rewarding, but when the courses were interrupted, she felt frustrated. She externalized her frustration by saying, "we feel confused on how to continue" (2nd interview).

ELT Experts

The participants insisted that the NPB has made their need to use communicative methodologies more explicit to meet the English national standards. When professional development allows teachers to feel acquainted with different ELT methodologies, they feel empowered. In the first interview, Mar said that her participation in "different online English teaching networks to be updated on the latest methodologies in

foreign languages" has substantially increased. Thanks to that experience, she reports knowing about "CLIL and task-based language learning." In the second interview, Gabriela explained that the professional development she received in her second job in a private school has made her feel more confident and qualified as a professional with ELT expertise. There, she learned different teaching techniques that she also applies in her classes at Hill School.

Despite the positive feelings teachers gained through developing their imagined identity as ELT experts, some participants commented in the interviews that their investment was also a source of negative emotions. To all, this imagined identity is seldom constructed through the professional development offers of the local and national governments. These programs require specialized facilitators, a longer time, a classroom application phase, and more funding. Besides, the programs should ideally use English as a means of instruction and interaction to support their first imagined identity, but the teachers have received offers in Spanish. Some participants externalized this frustration in the narrative activity when the new ELT knowledge could not have a real application in their English classes. The main reasons causing their despair were the lack of support from the school administrators, the limited time for English instruction in the school curriculum, and the lack of teaching resources.

ICT Users

In this third imagined identity, the participants report having experienced the rapid development of ICT in their personal and professional lives. Although we found various skills in using computers and software in the interviews, the nine participants expressed their need to be updated in ICT for two main reasons. One, they know the importance of ICTs in improving students' learning and motivation. Two, the national government's discourse on teachers' use of ICT is compelling. This emphasis is reflected on the many offers for professional development and the subsidies and grants for graduate studies in that field. In the surveys, these nine teachers reported numerous references to PDPs that encourage the use of ICT and support the acquisition of technical skills.

In both interviews, Camilo said he decided to invest in his professional development to pursue a graduate degree in ICT. He aimed to cope with his students' technology knowledge and perceived his lack of training as a primary professional need. He wanted to belong to the imagined community of technologically competent ELT teachers, distancing himself from the generalized idea of public school teachers as professionals who do not innovate in their teaching practices. He said,

> We have been underestimated, maybe because, in the past, some of our colleagues did not need to innovate. They stuck to a book and continued teaching with it for the rest of their careers, but now things are different because we have innovative teaching practices, in my case, using ICT. (1st interview)

Regarding this imagined identity, Esmeralda, the teacher with the most extensive teaching experience and close to retirement, has been openly invested in becoming a proficient technology user through her participation in professional development initiatives. In the second interview, she reported: "Actually, my students tell me, 'Teacher, my mom is your age, but she does not know how to use a computer, and you are a genius.'"

Being recognized as English teachers with high technological skills has brought about high professional self-esteem and job satisfaction for all. At the time of the interviews, Esmeralda and Camilo had become leaders in using ICT in their institutions and municipality. Esmeralda enthusiastically described her experience using the municipality's platform for ELT. She said, "I taught the teachers of my municipality the way they can make their classes more appealing, meaningful, and fun through the use of these technological tools" (1st interview). Yuri, Mario, and Nora expressed in the

interviews that their school contexts and students' needs have influenced their interest in ICT.

Despite the importance of developing this imagined identity as competent ICT users, the participants reported that their investment is often affected by their schools' lack of technological resources. Mario, Esmeralda, and Nora declared that this issue becomes a discouraging factor for them to be invested in new PDPs. Recalling her experience in a professional development initiative that focused on the use of ICT, Nora verbalized and externalized her frustration about limited ICT resources:

> I want my students to have access to laptops, games, varied materials, etc. It is really tough to put into practice what I have learned in training programs offered by local and national governments when you arrive in this setting and need more resources. (Narrative activity)

Esmeralda and Nora expressed in the interviews their mixed feelings about their investment to develop their identity as ICT experts. To solve the scarcity of resources, at one time, they paid from their own money for loudspeakers and broadband internet plans to teach better classes. Although that aspect made them highly dissatisfied with their job, they did not regret buying the equipment. They said their commitment to their students' learning and self-esteem as competent technology users compensated for their temporary frustration.

The three imagined identities are equally important to the teachers, but most programs need to support their professional development in an integrated way. Most of the courses focus on language, methodologies, or ICT. In very few cases, PDPs address the teachers' language proficiency and ELT methodologies. Four participants mentioned in their narratives that their best experience in professional development combined these two aspects. Nora described her experience as a student in an English language center as a powerful boost in her professional development investment. Not only did she improve her English but also, she learned about innovative practices in ELT. She verbalized her satisfaction in the following excerpt,

> The most positive professional development experience I have had was in the Mountain Language Center because I was a student there. I had the possibility of learning English from basic to advanced levels. Besides, they implemented interesting methodologies. I learned [English] through communicative activities and language games. We, as teachers, need to know these different methodologies to have alternatives for teaching. This experience allowed me to grow as a language learner, and from there, as a language teacher. Also, when I plan my lessons, I integrate all the methodologies I learned there.

At the time of data collection, none of the participants had been in a PDP that supported their three imagined identities.

English Teachers' Imagined Community: "Bilingual English Teachers"

In our analysis, a second factor played an essential role in the teachers' investment in their professional development: The teachers' individual imagined identity as proficient speakers of English became a collective imagined identity where they could become members of the community of "bilingual teachers." Most participants believe their linguistic competence is not good enough and do not see themselves as "bilinguals" or "bilingual teachers." Nora, for example, explained her language needs in the following excerpt from her narrative: "I need a training program in which I can really improve my English proficiency, like advanced conversation clubs and advanced grammar and writing workshops." She extended that need to all Colombian English teachers, defining the challenge as follows,

> What teachers do the least in their daily practice is improve their English proficiency. If the Ministry of Education asks for a B1 level [of the CEFR], [teachers] comply with that, or they may achieve a B2 level. However,

everybody should constantly aim to move forward to a higher level.

For the participants, some degree of validation of their language proficiency, and specific self-recognition of their linguistic skills, came from having contact with communities of English speakers in language immersion programs, traveling abroad, or interacting with the English Fellows.[2] Gabriela, Esmeralda, and Nora participated in an English immersion program in the Colombian Caribbean islands of San Andrés and Providencia.[3] For them, using English daily meant a close encounter with "bilingualism." Gabriela defined the experience as "mind opening to continue enhancing my L2 proficiency." For Octavio, the feeling of being bilingual resulted from traveling abroad, as he reported in the second interview. Using English with native and non-native speakers in his everyday activities on a trip to Switzerland showed him that he was part of that imagined bilingual community, something he did not feel in Colombia. He said: "This experience was very enriching because I could communicate with people there, and I understood everything, and I said to myself, "This is amazing! I can communicate with these people!" (2nd interview). In the first interview, Gabriela also defined travelling internationally as a key factor in practicing her English because she encountered native speakers. She extended the benefit to interactions in her family circle, saying, "some of my brothers live in the US, so they talk like native speakers."

The English Fellows program got a solid national and local promotion as a primary resource to make the country bilingual. Conceived as a PDP, the presence of English Fellows was supposed to contribute to improving the communication skills of teachers and students, mainly in their pronunciation. Only schools with outstanding academic scores and highly committed teachers received English Fellows. Nora, Esmeralda, Mónica, and Mario shared their teaching duties with one of these ELT assistants for almost a year. Esmeralda defined the strategy as highly enriching: "Having a native speaker who speaks with perfect pronunciation is wonderful because this motivates both teachers and students." Nora insisted in the first interview that interacting with the English Fellows was highly beneficial to achieve the bilingualism targets. She said: "We should take advantage of every opportunity to practice, but it is also because we want to do it perfectly."

Despite the apparent benefits, the presence of English Fellows in schools was only a satisfactory experience for some. For some of the teachers, speaking in English with them was intimidating. Without an open reference to a personal experience, some participants verbalized fear of being judged or mocked, which provoked insecurity. Nora acknowledged some anxiety when interacting with their Fellow in her school but concluded, "we should not be worried about that."

The road to joining this imagined community of "bilinguals" has been rough. The participants believed that their investment was not valued. They regret missing opportunities for this affiliation due to a lack of professional development continuity and support. The immersion experiences in San Andrés were limited in coverage and no longer offered. The English Fellows program lasted only a few years. If they do not receive financial aid from the local or national governments, teachers cannot afford to travel abroad or participate in English immersion experiences. They insisted that language immersion in English-speaking countries was the golden ticket to accessing the imagined community.

Discussion and Implications

The findings showed that the participants' investment in their professional development was boosted or

2 The English Fellows program was a national strategy of the NPB that hired foreign native and nonnative speakers of English as teaching assistants for public schools. This was advertised as a professional development initiative to support the teachers' language proficiency.

3 The English language immersion program took place in the only territory in Colombia where English is used as a means of communication. It interacts with Creole and Spanish in a triglossic situation.

limited by two main factors: the development of their imagined identities and their affiliation to an imagined community. The teachers displayed high interest in joining, completing, and applying the knowledge acquired through their participation in certain PDPs to be recognized as proficient speakers of English, ELT experts, and competent ICT users. The participants also devoted their time, energy, and commitment to professional development initiatives that allowed them to feel they belonged to the imagined community of "bilingual English teachers." If the PDP offers did not address these expectations, they would not be invested, and the lack of investment would mean not registering, dropping out promptly, or not applying new knowledge at schools.

The English teachers' three imagined identities and the affiliation to an imagined community of "bilinguals" respond to transnational discourses of globalization and the obligation assigned to educators to prepare citizens for the labor market (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, 2016; Usma-Wilches, 2009, 2015). In Colombia, the NPB has perpetuated those ideas shaping teachers' imagined individual and collective identities. Therefore, they become invested in PDPs that support their compliance with the language education policy standards and ideals about the ELT profession.

Under the premise of the benefits of teaching English using international standards, professional development has been shaped towards discrete aspects such as teachers' language proficiency, use of ELT methodologies, and ICT competence (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2012). The three imagined identities reflect beliefs and values operating simultaneously at three levels (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016). At a macro level, they exist through ideological policy design and implementation structures. At a meso level, they find a place at schools and decision-making instances that define the funding of professional development initiatives. Finally, they operate at a micro level where teachers create individual and collegial conceptions of professionalism and pertinent professional development. The complexity of the teachers' professional needs is still disregarded, and available PDPs barely address it.

After our data analysis, it was clear that English teachers' voices are still unheard in most professional development agendas (Buendía & Macías, 2019; Cárdenas & Chaves, 2013; Fandiño-Parra, 2021). Most of the national government actions have placed the success of the NPB almost exclusively in the teachers' hands (Cárdenas & Chaves, 2013). Unfurnished schools, little social appreciation, low salaries, and lack of administrative support not only hinder English teachers' investment in PDPs. They are a constant in public education in Colombia and Latin America, making English teachers' work a rampant challenge (Álvarez-Espinal, 2018; Arias-Soto et al., 2011; Bonilla-Medina & Cruz-Arcila, 2013; Correa & González, 2016; Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017; Sánchez-Jabba, 2013).

Although the professional needs that underlie teachers' imagined identities and their affiliation to an imagined community are essential, they should not be the only priority in ELT. There is an urgent need to challenge the tenets of the national English language education policy as they reproduce discourses of colonialism and undermine teachers' professionalism (Álvarez et al., 2011; González, 2007; Guerrero, 2008). Teacher educators and teachers are to work collaboratively, insisting on setting up new agendas that inform policymakers about the necessity of a paradigm shift in ELT and professional development (Fandiño-Parra, 2021; González, 2021; Granados-Beltrán, 2018; Le Gal, 2018; Usma-Wilches, 2015). Only through democratic, situated, and decolonial views of English, ELT, English teachers, and professional development can the country achieve its educational targets.

Our findings are aligned with other studies about teachers' imagined identity and investment. The teachers' imagined identity as proficient English speakers coincides with the educational community's interest in the teachers' linguistic level in Colombia (Cárdenas

& Chaves, 2013; Kostina, 2012) and internationally (Copland et al., 2014; Lantolf, 2009; Richards et al., 2013). The teachers' imagined identity as ELT experts coincides with knowledge of updated teaching methodologies for English teachers in China and Taiwan (Xu, 2012, 2013; Wu, 2017) and Brazil (Sanches-Silva, 2013). The clever use of ICT as an imagined identity that drives investment coincides with findings reported by Stranger-Johannessen and Norton (2017) and Méndez-Rivera and Guerrero (2018). Finally, the participants' struggle to be "bilinguals" agrees with findings reported by Pavlenko (2003) and Viáfara (2016).

We hope to have shed some light on Colombian English teachers' investment in their professional development despite the study limitations. We focused on a small number of teachers that work in public schools in an urban context. As English teachers' investment and identity transformation are becoming subjects of interest to the ELT community, we encourage new studies that consider teachers from private schools and rural areas in different regions of the country. Another critical aspect to consider is that we have discussed the professional needs of teachers who hold ELT degrees. Still, there is another significant number of teachers that do not speak English, nor are they acquainted with adequate language teaching methodologies. Their specific conditions challenge most current PDPs' foundations and require detailed exploration to understand their professional challenges. Our study may inspire other projects where teachers' imagined professional futures and imagined identities are explored in more detail to contribute to the quality of ELT.

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https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101251

Strengthening Reading Competence in English Using a Reading Comprehension Module

Fortalecimiento de la competencia lectora en inglés mediante la aplicación de un módulo de comprensión de lectura

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This article reports the results of a study carried out at a public high school in Colombia whose objective was to design and determine how a reading comprehension module contributed to strengthening English literacy competence in sixth graders. The methodological framework entailed a basic outline of the action-research cycle. The qualitative data analysis was designed descriptively, focusing on three research moments corresponding to each cycle's stages. The results show that the implementation of the material had a significant impact on the development of literacy competence, which suggests the material could be a tool for supporting English language learning.

Keywords: English language learning, materials design, instructional modules, reading competence

Este artículo de investigación reporta los resultados de un estudio realizado en un colegio público en Colombia cuyo objetivo fue diseñar y determinar el grado de contribución de un módulo de comprensión de lectura en inglés para el fortalecimiento de la competencia lecto-escritora en grado sexto. Desde el diseño metodológico se implementó un esquema básico del ciclo de investigación-acción. El análisis de datos cualitativos se realizó de manera descriptiva, centrándose en tres momentos diferentes de la investigación que corresponden a las fases de cada ciclo. Los resultados muestran que la implementación del material tuvo un impacto significativo en el desarrollo de la competencia lecto-escritora, lo que sugiere que puede ser utilizado como herramienta de apoyo en el aprendizaje del inglés.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje del inglés, competencia lectora, diseño de materiales, módulos

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This article is based on the thesis completed by Gálvez (2021). Professor Del Campo was the thesis supervisor.

How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Gálvez, J. D., & Del Campo, M. (2023). Strengthening reading competence in English using a reading comprehension module. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 229–243. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.101251

This article was received on February 23, 2022 and accepted on September 23, 2022.

Introduction

Reading comprehension constitutes a fundamental pillar of any educational endeavor. It establishes an interaction between the reader's prior knowledge and the information they find in a new text (Fontes-Guerrero et al., 2020). In order to determine the quality of education and define strategies for improving literacy in foreign language acquisition, citizenship skills, and numerical reasoning, the Colombian State established a series of policies based on two types of diagnoses: unified criteria and standardized tests. The first corresponds to an internal evaluation system proposed in Decree 1290 by the Ministry of National Education (2009), which establishes that the evaluation of students within schools is particular and autonomous since it responds to each institution's educational model. On the other hand, standardized tests are implemented within the compulsory education system to evidence the students' level of achievement regarding scientific, mathematical, and communicative skills (Sanabria-James et al., 2020).

Colombian laws guarantee universal access to education,[1] including learning a foreign language, and thus, reading comprehension in a foreign language has become a relevant issue. According to Grabe (1988), the reading process is not limited to extracting information from a text, for it constitutes a process in "which the reading activates a range of knowledge in the reader's mind that he or she uses, and that in turn, may be refined and extended by the new information supplied by the text" (p. 56). For Dechant (1991), efficient reading is the essential way to achieve effective learning because "reading is so interrelated with the total educational process that educational success requires successful reading" (p. 7). Consequently, good reading skills help students succeed in their learning process at school and in their lives.

Reading literacy is defined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as "understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society" (2010, p. 37). The OECD designs the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test to determine to what extent students completing compulsory schooling have acquired the essential knowledge and skills for adequate participation in modern societies (OECD, 2017).

This study took place in a Colombian public school located in a rural setting. Although regional educational authorities have shown great interest in strengthening the learning processes in English, as attested by recent policies,[2] tests reveal that secondary students have a low reading comprehension level in English. Specifically, the students in the school where the study was carried out have consistently shown poor performance in the critical reading and English components of the Saber 11 test. Table 1 shows the results of these two components for 2020.

As we can see, this particular school needs to improve students' academic performance if it wants to respond to the policies of the regional development plan. Therefore, reading comprehension in English must be fostered through a didactic strategy tailor-made for this purpose. Thereupon, taking into account the students' low academic results obtained on the Saber 11 state test, their poor command of the English language, and their limited literacy competence, we propose a study to determine the contribution of a reading comprehension module in English as a didactic strategy to strengthen the literacy and communicative competences in sixth-grade students in a Colombian public school.

1 The interested reader may consult Articles 27 and 67 of the Constitution of Colombia and the General Education Act (1994).

2 For instance, the regional development plan for 2020-2024 includes a chapter that contemplates fostering students' competence in the English language (Gobernación de Cundinamarca, 2020).

Table 1. Results of the Critical Reading and English Components on the Saber 11 Test, 2020

Component: Critical reading			
Level	**Rank**	**Number of students**	**%**
1	0–35	4 out of 101	3.9
2	36–50	39 out of 101	38.6
3	51–65	66 out of 101	55.6
4	66–100	2 out of 101	1.9
Institutional Average Rating: 51.6, which corresponds to Level 3			
Component: English			
Level	**Rank**	**Number of Students**	**%**
A-	0–47	61 out of 101	60.4
A1	48–57	34 out of 101	33.6
A2	58–67	5 out of 101	5.1
B1	68–78	1 out of 101	0.9
B2	79–100	0 out of 101	0
Institutional Average Rating: 45.11, which corresponds to A-			

Note. The reading component's levels are arranged in descending order (1 = highest, 4 = lowest). The levels in the English component correspond to those in the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001), and, in this case, the levels are in ascending order (A- = lowest, B2 = highest).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical bases that guided the research are found in two fundamental areas: the role of communicative competence in English learning and using a reading comprehension module as a didactic strategy.

Communicative Competence

The concept of communicative competence in language teaching and acquisition studies is directly related to the notion of linguistic competence, whose consolidation is based on the distinction made by Chomsky (1965) between competence and performance. For Chomsky, competence is the prior knowledge of the speaker-listener's language, while performance is the actual use of the language in specific situations (as cited in Sánchez-Lobato & Santos-Gargallo, 2004). On the other hand, from the study of language as a system, the interest does not lie in the use of language or the acquisition and teaching of languages but in the development of a linguistic theory focused mainly on grammatical rules (Sánchez-Lobato & Santos-Gargallo, 2004); that is, competence, rather than performance, is the primary subject matter.

For Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence comprises grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discursive competence, and strategic competence. This model has significantly influenced foreign language teaching, mainly in understanding those four competencies.

Reading Competence

For PISA, based on the DeSeCo project (Definition and Selection of Key Competencies), there is another competence framed within communicative competence: reading (Díez-Mediavilla & Egío, 2017). Reading competence moves toward the pragmatics field, meaning that reading has a purpose. As Solé argues (2012, as cited in Díez-Mediavilla & Egío, 2017), it is related to a

personal project that implies development, growth, and social insertion. It gives an efficient sense to reading; reading competence means reading certain information within a specific context. Because of this, the PISA model for evaluating reading competence focuses on three dimensions: aspects discussed, texts read, and situations in which the reading act is established (Díez-Mediavilla & Egío, 2017).

The first dimension—*aspects*—refers to mental strategies, approaches, or purposes that readers use to approach the texts (Ministerio de Educación, 2010). PISA synthesizes those strategies into three categories: obtaining information, interpreting texts, and reflecting and assessing (Díez-Mediavilla & Egío, 2017). As for *texts*, the second dimension, the information here is classified according to four characteristics: media (print and digital); environment (author and message-based); format (continuous, discontinuous, mixed, and multiple); and type, which includes description, narration, exposition, argumentation, instruction, and transaction (Saulés, 2012, as cited in Díez-Mediavilla & Egío, 2017). Finally, *situations*, the third dimension, can be understood as a classification of reading tasks based on the use for which the texts are intended, on the relationships with other texts—which are implicit or explicit in the task—and on the textual content in general (OECD, 2000).

To close this section, we would like to highlight the notion of reading competence held by Jiménez-Pérez (2015) because it aligns with our study's objectives. For this author, reading competence comprises two elements: reading ability and comprehension. The former is defined as the individual's capability to apply the information obtained in a written text practically and in everyday contexts. The latter refers to the possibility of evoking the information of a text mentally without leading to a practical manifestation.

Reading Comprehension Module

Both PISA and Saber 11 tests use the same kind of exercise for reading comprehension, which is included in the English as a foreign language component of the latter, for they constitute the most frequent types of questions in standardized tests (Sanabria-James et al., 2020). These questions include textual questions, in which literal information about a given text is asked; single-answer multiple-choice questions, where several options are given, and only one of them is correct; true or false questions with justification, in which students must argue whether a statement is correct or not; and matching questions, which consist of matching statements in different columns according to the text. Due to its structure, implementing a reading comprehension module seems pertinent to respond to the need of students to become familiar with these types of questions.

A learning or instructional module is "a compilation or synthesis of different theories and pedagogical approaches which guide teachers in developing study programs and in systematizing the teaching and learning process" (Flores-Piñas, 2015, p. 22). According to Yukavetsky (2003), the instructional module constitutes a didactic material that contains all the elements necessary for learning concepts and skills at the student's own pace, without the instructor's continuous presence. For his part, Kaplún (1995) assures that the module is a didactically prepared text to facilitate the acquisition of certain knowledge or the satisfaction of a specific learning need autonomously, without requiring the permanent intervention of a teacher or a tutor.

A learning module for reading comprehension consists of an organized proposal of the instructional elements or components necessary for the student to develop specific learning around a theme. For this reason, every module must include learning objectives, contents, activities, and evaluation (Flores-Piñas, 2015). In addition, the module has to be developed through learning sessions with their respective evaluation instruments to measure the achievement of students' literal and inferential reading comprehension levels (Flores-Piñas, 2015).

Method

For this study, we developed a basic outline of the action-research cycle. According to Lewin (1946, 1948, as cited in Kemmis, 1980), this model involves a spiral of cycles. The basic cycle of activities consists of the following steps: (a) *planning*, which constitutes the creation of specific action steps to solve a given problem; (b) *acting*, which encompasses the development and implementation of the action steps; (c) *observing*, which involves amending the plan through a revision of each action step based on the monitoring of the implementation; and (d) *reflecting*, which embodies the explanation of any possible failure and its effects, as well as the recognition of new problems. From this primary cycle, we then developed a second action step, which included implementation and evaluation, leading to a new revision of the general plan and, if necessary, to the development of a third action step, with its respective implementation and evaluation, and so on (Elliott, 1991).

Population and Sample

In 2021, the school where the study took place had a population of 92 sixth graders from low-income families and ages between 10 and 14 years old. After a process of intentional or convenience sampling, we took a representative sample of 25 students (21.17 % of the whole sixth-grade population) divided into four groups: 601, 602, 603, and 604 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of the Participating Students (*N* = 25)

Group	*n*	%
601	6	24
602	5	20
603	6	24
604	8	32

We used intentional or convenience sampling to ensure a homogeneous population throughout the research. Purposeful sampling is how the researcher non-randomly selects individuals with a value of information about the social phenomenon intended to be studied (Izcara-Palacios, 2007). The selection of the interviewees is based on their knowledge and ability to report on a specific topic (Anduiza-Perea et al., 1999). It should be noted that these types of samples are considerably small compared to the standards used in quantitative research (Castro-Nogueira, 2002). This sampling also allowed us to have a similar number of participants from each group (see Table 2).

Instruments for Data Collection

We resorted to two qualitative tests (pre-test and post-test) and objective tests (reading comprehension modules). In the following sections, we will describe how these instruments were applied.

Data Analysis

Due to the nature of qualitative research, we decided to analyze the information descriptively since it is through description that this type of research intends to account for the results obtained (Mejía-Gamboa, 2014). Consequently, we followed the contrast analysis method to respond to the research objectives, which consisted of contrasting the information collected to specify the effectiveness of the implemented didactic strategy (Martínez, 2000). In the case of the current research, the results obtained from the pre-test and post-test instruments were juxtaposed to determine the impact of the implementation of the reading comprehension module in strengthening the participants' reading competence in English.

The analysis develops around four moments of the study, which correspond to the four stages of the action-research cycle. The results from each stage allowed us to move forward into the next stage. For *planning*, we focused on the results from the diagnostic pre-test, which, in turn, were the starting point for the *acting* stage, where we implemented three reading comprehension modules. Then, we

applied the post-test to *observe* any variations in the participants' reading comprehension, and by contrasting the results between the pre- and post-test, we finally were able to *reflect* on the impact of the modules and, thus, answer the research question and propose an action plan.

Results

First Stage (Planning): Results of the Pre-Test

The first part of the analysis evaluated the pre-test results used as a diagnosis to determine the degree of reading competence in English of the 25 participating students. The reading selected for said pre-test is titled *The Symbols of My School*, prepared exclusively for the participants based on historical information about their school. The exercise involved a reading comprehension module with the three main types of questions that make up the critical reading section in the PISA and ICFES Saber 11 tests: textual, inferential, and reflective.

The reading consisted of four short paragraphs in which the school's symbols are described with information related to their creators, composers, and year of incorporation into the school. Then, the reading comprehension exercise presented 16 questions referring to what is narrated in the text, distributed in three categories: five textual questions, six inferential questions, and five reflective questions. The results of the pre-test are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the Reading Competence Diagnostic Test (*N* = 25)

	Type of question		
	Textual	**Inferential**	**Reflective**
Students who responded correctly	9 (36%)	6 (24%)	2 (8%)
Students who responded incorrectly	16 (64%)	19 (76%)	23 (92%)
Students who passed: 8 (32%) Students who failed: 17 (68%)			

The results determined that 64% of the students needed reinforcement on the textual-type questions, 76% on the inferential-type questions, and 92% on the reflective-type questions. In addition, it was found that students were more comfortable with single-answer multiple-choice questions. On the other hand, they had great difficulties with open-ended questions and filling in the missing information.

Second Stage (Acting): Results of Implementing Reading Modules

For this stage, we proposed a series of activities interconnected through a thematic line that involved cultural and historical aspects of the local community, which included exercises commonly used in standardized tests. Each activity makes up for one of the three reading comprehension modules, which were designed by translating Spanish texts taken from the website of the local culture agency. The three reading comprehension modules were implemented in three weekly lessons of one hour each. At the end of each module, we gathered to assess its implementation.

We also designed each module following the stages of the action-research cycle at the micro-level. Taking into account the pre-test results, we *planned* the modules around the aspects that needed improvement, implemented them (*acting*), and *observed* how the participants responded. We finally *reflected* on the things that needed adjustments. From the beginning, we intended to make the material as appropriate as possible to meet the needs

of the participating population. As the materials were designed taking into account the cultural background of the municipality where the students resided and their familiarity with it, the modules constituted a series of activities that, in the end, provided constant support and assistance for the student's learning processes throughout the intervention (see Appendix).

Analysis of Results of the First Reading Module

During the first stage of the analysis, planning, and taking into account the pre-test results, we determined that the paramount need of the participants was to acquire the ability to answer textual questions based on literal information in the text. From this, the second stage of action or implementation took place. The most frequent types of questions from standardized tests were incorporated into the reading comprehension module to strengthen the students' recognition of the statements and the identification of the specific information requested. During the module implementation, in the observation stage, we identified the students' main difficulties when solving the exercises and their strengths and weaknesses in fulfilling the task. In general, the students could find the requested information and relate it to the questions; however, there was a noticeable problem with justifying their choices for true or false questions. Finally, in the reflection stage, we proposed possible solutions to counteract the material's shortcomings, especially in the justification section, and determined to what extent they could positively affect the participants' learning process.

The reading prepared for this module was *The Headquarters of My School*, which focused exclusively on textual questions. The text consists of seven short paragraphs that describe the creation, location, and characteristics of each regional branch of the school. The module has 15 textual questions: five single-answer multiple-choice, five true or false with justification, and five matching questions.

Of the 25 participants, 20 students gave correct answers to the multiple-choice questions, 14 to the true or false questions, and 17 to the matching questions, which resulted in 19 students scoring high enough to pass the activity, representing 76% of the population. Furthermore, justification exercises are more difficult for sixth-grade students than determining whether an idea is true or false.

Based on the above, we found that 24% of the students (n = 6) needed to improve their ability to answer questions based on literal information extracted from the text and that 40% of the students (n = 10) required some support to justify their answers, even though they were right at first. In addition, a considerable improvement was noted concerning the pre-test results, going from 36% approval of textual questions to 76%.

Analysis of Results of the Second Reading Module

Because of the results of the previous module and the pre-test, we decided that the second module would be focused on inferential questions and justified answers. The reading designed for this purpose, titled *Hills and Mountains of Tenjo*, is a short text comprised of four paragraphs of medium length and focused on the topography of Tenjo (the town where the school is located). The text includes historical data about the most representative mountains of the municipality, their height, location, and relevance to the traditions of Tenjo's population. Similar to the previous module, the material has 15 questions: five true or false with justification, five single-answer multiple-choice, and five chronological order questions.

Out of the 25 participants, 18 students (72%) answered the true or false questions correctly with justification, 17 students (68%) answered the single-answer multiple-choice questions without difficulty, and 13 students (52%) adequately resolved the chronological order questions. Sixteen students (64%) completed

the module successfully, while the remaining nine (36%) failed to do so. We observed that the difficulties concerning the justification questions were reduced, although the chronological order questions represented an obstacle for many students.

Based on the results of the second reading module and during the planning stage, we observed that the participants had reached a competent level in answering textual questions. Our next priority was for the participants to practice answering inferential questions based on the information presented in the text. Therefore, the action stage on this occasion focused on designing inferential-type questions whose answers could be gleaned from the ideas in the text. The students would then organize their answers chronologically. The objective of this stage was to develop exercises that allowed students to see the relationships between paragraphs and their general connection with the topic of the text. After implementing the material and during the observation stage, we noted that many participants did not order the propositions chronologically despite having enough source information. On the other hand, there was a noticeable improvement in justifying their choices in true or false questions, which can be attributed to the experience gained in the previous reading module. In the reflective stage, we recognized the effectiveness of the reinforcement implemented for answering questions that required justification and potential changes for solving questions of a logical order that could benefit the participants' reading process.

Considering the above, we found that 36% of the population ($n = 9$) required some support to improve their ability to answer inferential questions based on the implicit relationships of the propositions in the text. Furthermore, 48% of the population ($n = 12$) needed to reinforce their ability to solve logical questions. After implementing this second reading module, we also observed a considerable increase in the number of participants who correctly answered inferential questions, compared to the pre-test (see Table 3), from 24% to 64%.

Analysis of Results of the Third Reading Module

Based on the previous results (pre-test and first and second reading modules), we determined that the third module should be designed to resolve reflective and logical questions. For this purpose, we prepared the reading entitled *Tenjo's Principal Park*, composed of five paragraphs of medium length and focused on the history of the colonial park of Tenjo. The information in the text deals with historical data about the park's creation and renovation and its impact on the local market and the urban growth around it. Following the same format as the previous modules, the material includes 11 questions aimed at reflection and critical thinking, five single-answer multiple-choice questions, one open-ended question, and five true or false questions.

Of the 25 participants, 16 students (64%) correctly answered the multiple-choice questions, 14 students (56%) correctly answered the open-ended question based on the information in the text, and 15 (60%) students answered true or false questions without difficulty. Fourteen students (56%) completed the module; the remaining 11 (44%), on the other hand, failed to answer the module questions correctly. There was a slight improvement in the logical questions, although the students generally had difficulty with the open-ended question.

Bearing in mind the results of the second module, we considered it pertinent to direct the planning stage toward reflective questions, having found significant advances in the participants' resolution of textual and inferential questions. Because of the above, the design of questions in the action stage focused on raising concerns that would allow students to reflect on the information in the text. The participants' ability to reason at a literal and inferential level was essential for completing the third reading module because they needed a basic grasp of textual and inferential questions to tackle reflective questions. After implementing the material (observation stage), we found that the students had problems answering open-ended questions. Moreover,

the ability to answer questions of a logical order increased compared to the previous reading module. During the reflective stage, we modified the module's structure to improve the students' capacity to answer open-ended questions, allowing us to determine the module's impact on the participants' reading competence.

Based on the above, 11 students (44%) had difficulties answering critical-thinking questions. In addition, the same number of participants needed some support to answer open-ended questions. Even so, there was a noticeable increase in the percentage of students who correctly answered reflective questions: from 8% in the pre-test (see Table 3) to 56% in the third reading module. Furthermore, there was a slight improvement regarding the difficulties related to the logical questions, going from 52% approval in the second module to 60% in the third one.

Third Stage (Observation): Results of the Post-Test

The post-test was administered to the 25 sixth-grade students who participated in the research. The reading selected for that opportunity was *Chitasugá Artisan House*, based on the municipality's historical and cultural information and the results obtained from the pre-test and the three reading comprehension modules. The post-test included exercises based on the questions used in the pre-test and the three reading modules: textual, inferential, and reflective, allowing us to compare the results.

The reading is composed of five paragraphs of medium length. It describes the history of the Chitasugá Artisan House, information associated with its founder, representative cultural events, and its impact on the economy of artisans in the municipality. The reading comprehension exercise comprised 16 questions: five textual, five inferential, and six reflective. Additionally, the exercise included single-answer multiple-choice, true or false with justification, and open-ended questions.

Of the 25 participating students, 21 (84%) gave correct answers to the textual questions, 17 (68%) to the inferential questions, and 14 (56%) to the reflective questions. Unlike the pre-test, where only eight of the 25 students obtained a passing score, 20 passed the post-test, going from 32% to 80% of the total population (see Table 4).

Table 4. Reading Comprehension Final Exam Results (*N* = 25)

	Type of question		
	Textual	**Inferential**	**Reflective**
Students who responded correctly	21 (84%)	17 (68%)	14 (56%)
Students who responded incorrectly	4 (16%)	8 (32%)	11 (44%)
Students who passed: 20 (80%) Students who failed: 5 (20%)			

Considering the results obtained from the pre-test and the post-test and their corresponding analysis and contrast, a significant improvement in the student's reading comprehension level is evident. As shown in Table 3, the pre-test results show that 68% of the students did not have a high enough level of reading competence in English to pass a standardized exam such as the PISA and ICFES Saber tests. However, after the intervention and use of the designed material, this figure decreased to 20% of the population (see Table 4). There was also a considerable increase in the participants' ability to respond adequately to open-ended questions, going from 56% in the third module to 76% in the post-test.

Fourth Stage: Action Plan Reflection

We started by identifying the main difficulties students had when understanding texts written in English. Then, based on the shortcomings, we proposed and implemented a didactic sequence that met students' needs and helped them improve their reading comprehension skills. We also sought to provide students with a pedagogical tool and a series of reading strategies to reinforce their cognitive processes while tackling complex texts.

Monitoring and supervision strategies, for instance, helped foster the students' written production capacity and their reading and argumentative skills in English. Although the modules were designed for sixth graders, we believe that they can easily be used with other grades to achieve a higher level of performance in English reading proficiency.

The sequence of activities established for the modules turned out to be quite beneficial, as well as the students' familiarity with the topics of the reading exercises. The first module is directly related to the students since it alludes to the headquarters of the school in which they study; the second has a more general theme, connecting the known geography of Tenjo with monuments and places of interest; the third covers more general issues, highlighting the importance of the central park as the axis of the municipality's urban development.

Conclusions

The results show that the use of reading comprehension modules significantly contributed to promoting the learning of English through activities focused on developing reading competence. Beyond this, the proposed activities constitute valuable material not only for sixth graders but for the school in general due to the ease of linking students' interests with the topics presented there.

We found that, at the beginning of the process, the students had low literacy and communicative competence in English, significant difficulty in answering inferential and reflective questions, and a limited ability to answer open-ended questions and argue. Additionally, the pre-test instrument effectively specified the level of reading competence the students had at the beginning of the research and determined the most efficient strategy when designing the action plan.

The participants' role was a fundamental part of the research process since their learning experience and constant involvement made it possible to design materials that met the needs of both the school and the students. Likewise, the reading comprehension modules allowed sixth-grade students to better understand standardized tests and their most frequently asked questions, as they constitute a standardized assessment tool with clearly defined parameters and purposes.

The materials used throughout the action plan worked properly because, based on the evidence, the students responded to the proposed exercises adequately and without significant difficulties. Similarly, the post-test results improved over those obtained by the students in the initial diagnosis, considering that most participants answered the textual, inferential, and reflective questions correctly.

We recommend contextualizing and orienting the students about the material(s), clarifying the types of questions to solve, and the proposed exercises. It is also necessary to consider implementing new strategies that involve more communicative skills in the classroom, different from reading skills, and can comprehensively promote English learning. Although the study focused on the development of reading competence as a complement to grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic competencies, the use of activities focused on other skills and aptitudes can significantly contribute to the development of communicative competence and language learning in general.

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Appendix: Excerpt From the Second Reading Comprehension Module

Hills and Mountains of Tenjo

The geography of Tenjo is characterized by being mountainous and with a cold climate. Tenjo has several mountains that adjoin other municipalities in Cundinamarca, which are part of the cultural identity of the area. Among the many hills of the municipality, the most representative are the following.

Serranía del Majuy

This mountainous chain consists of more than 3,000 hectares that communicate the municipalities of Cota, Tabio, and Tenjo. Its name in the Chibcha language means "inside you," and it was considered a place of worship for the goddess Chía by the Muisca people. Several local legends narrate that between the months of April and May, the Mohan used to come down from the mountains to meet his lover, Huaika. Together, they protected the valleys and hills of Tenjo, preventing the Spanish conquerors from stealing their treasures.

Peña de Juaica

It is a mountain located between the municipalities of Tenjo and Tabio. Its name in the Chibcha language means "territory of the lady," a sacred place for the Muisca people in which they performed their religious rituals. It is said that the face of the Chibcha god, Bochica, is carved on the stone walls of the mountain and that, in the caverns, there are two large stones that were used to worship the sun and the moon. Other versions relate that many of the natives, seeing the proximity of the Spanish troops, preferred to jump into the void, from the top of the rock, rather than die at the hands of the conquerors. On numerous occasions there have been sightings of mysterious lights over the mountain, which is why many people think that there are UFOs in the zone.

Pan de Azúcar Hill

This hill is located in Chincé. It was used by the Muisca to perform their religious ceremonies dedicated to the sun and the moon. It was customary for the Muisca people to pay tribute through crops and cattle to receive the favor of the gods in times of need. Currently, the place is used for pilgrimages and catholic religious ceremonies. The cross that is located at the top of the hill is aligned with the cross erected on La Valvanera slope, located in the municipality of Chía.

Understanding the Text

1. Write "true" (T) or "false" (F) based on the information from the text. If the information is false, correct the statement.

Example:

Peña de Juaica is a mountain whose name is in the Chibcha language. **(T)**

Correct statement: _____

Pan de Azúcar hill is located in Chitasugá. **(F)**

Correct statement: Pan de Azúcar hill is located in Chincé.

a. The Muisca people worshipped the sun and the moon. ( )
   Correct answer: _____
b. Some people believe that there have been aliens in the Peña de Juaica. ( )
   Correct answer: _____
c. The Muisca people spoke the Spanish language. ( )
   Correct answer: _____
d. Pan de Azúcar hill has been used for catholic rituals only. ( )
   Correct answer: _____
e. The indigenous people preferred dying than being conquered. ( )
   Correct answer: _____

2. Choose the word that is a synonym of the underlined word.

a. Many <u>natives</u> preferred to jump into the void.
   Conquerors ( ) Inhabitants ( ) Hunters ( )
b. On <u>numerous</u> occasions there have been sightings of mysterious lights over the mountain.
   Few ( ) Limited ( ) Many ( )
c. Pan de Azúcar <u>hill</u> was used by the Muisca to perform their religious ceremonies.
   Mountain ( ) River ( ) Cross ( )
d. The cross is <u>located</u> at the top of the Pan de Azúcar hill.
   Lost ( ) Situated ( ) Heavy ( )
e. Tenjo has several mountains, which are part of the cultural identity of the <u>area</u>.
   Region ( ) Capital ( ) Inhabitants ( )
f. Several local <u>legends</u> narrate that between the months of April and May, the Mohan used to come down from the mountains to meet his lover, Huaika.
   Creatures ( ) Magic ( ) Tales ( )

3. Organize the following statements according to the order in which they were presented in the text.

- Its name in the Chibcha language means "inside you," and it was considered a place of worship for the goddess Chía by the Muisca people ( )
- On numerous occasions there have been sightings of mysterious lights over the mountain, which is why many people think that there are UFOs in the zone ( )
- Among the many hills of the municipality, the most representative are the following ( )
- The geography of Tenjo is characterized by being mountainous and with a cold climate ( )
- It was used by the Muisca to perform their religious ceremonies dedicated to the sun and the moon ( )
- Its name in the Chibcha language means "territory of the lady," a sacred place for the Muisca people in which they performed their religious rituals ( )

P R O F I L E

Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations

https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.94798

EFL Writing Studies in Colombia Between 1990 and 2020: A Qualitative Research Synthesis

La investigación en escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera en Colombia entre 1990 y 2020: una síntesis cualitativa

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This article provides a comprehensive qualitative synthesis of EFL writing studies published in Colombian journals between 1990 and 2020. We synthesised 63 research reports regarding authorship, publication year, focus, methodology (context, participants, research paradigm, design, and data collection methods and analyses), validity, reliability, ethics, findings, limitations, and further research. Our findings reveal that EFL writing is a developing research area in Colombia, characterised as a predominantly qualitative inquiry into adult writing instruction and learning at universities. From the findings, we propose a research agenda and some guidelines for authors and reviewers to enhance and evaluate research reports.

Keywords: Colombia, EFL writing, qualitative research synthesis

Este estudio presenta los resultados de una síntesis cualitativa de investigaciones en escritura en inglés publicadas en revistas académicas colombianas entre 1990 y 2020. Se sintetizaron 63 reportes de investigación con respecto a autor, año de publicación, objetivos, metodología (contexto, participantes, paradigma de investigación, diseño, métodos y análisis de datos), validez, confiabilidad, ética, resultados, limitaciones e investigación futura. Los hallazgos sugieren que en Colombia el estudio de la escritura en inglés es un área en desarrollo caracterizada por un enfoque predominantemente cualitativo centrado en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de la escritura en adultos universitarios. A partir de los hallazgos, se propone una agenda de investigación y unos criterios para mejorar y evaluar los reportes de investigación.

Palabras clave: Colombia, escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera, síntesis cualitativa de investigación

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Guapacha Chamorro, M. E., & Chaves Varón, O. (2023). EFL writing studies in Colombia between 1990 and 2020: A qualitative research synthesis. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *25*(1), 247–267. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v25n1.94798

This article was received on March 31, 2021 and accepted on May 14, 2022.

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of EFL Writing Studies in Colombia

English as a foreign language (EFL) writing has received widespread attention in second language writing (Pelaez-Morales, 2017). Writing is currently viewed as a cognitive and cultural activity involving writers, texts, and contexts (Shaw & Weir, 2007; Silva, 2016). We adopted this encompassing view of writing to conduct a qualitative research synthesis (QRS) of EFL writing studies in Colombia published during the last three decades.

QRS is a type of secondary research that provides a standalone systematic literature review of primary research on a specific area (Chong & Reinders, 2021). Unlike meta-analyses, which synthesise quantitative data, QRS synthesise qualitative data from studies (Chong & Plonsky, 2021; Chong & Reinders, 2021). Research syntheses employ systematic methodological protocols for literature search and analysis, comparable with primary research regarding systematicity, transparency, reliability, and replicability (Chong & Reinders, 2021).

QRS is becoming popular in education but is still less common in applied linguistics and TESOL (Chong & Plonsky, 2021). QRS helps examine qualitative findings of classroom-based studies and offers a comprehensive view of the outcomes of pedagogical interventions and the factors associated with instructional effectiveness, teachers' and learners' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences in various contexts on a common topic (Chong & Plonsky, 2021). QRS helps identify research trends, propose research agendas, and reach practitioners, enabling them to participate in the research–pedagogy dialogue (Chong & Reinders, 2021).

A QRS in EFL writing in Colombia is relevant as Colombian language policies have promoted English instruction, including writing, since primary school (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2014). However, as a skill, writing is not assessed in the national tests (i.e., Saber 11 and Saber Pro; Guapacha-Chamorro, 2022). This lack of writing assessment limits our view of Colombian EFL learners' writing proficiency. Despite primary research on EFL writing in Colombia, the lack of research syntheses in this context limits our understanding of the area's current state and the identification of strengths, weaknesses, and future directions.

Against this backdrop, a QRS of EFL writing studies may inform practitioners, policymakers, and researchers of the most common research trends and areas of development and improvement. A research agenda can be proposed from this synthesis.

Previous L2 Writing Syntheses

Previous L2 writing syntheses examined L2 writing theories, teaching, and research (e.g., Manchón & Matsuda, 2016; Pelaez-Morales, 2017; Riazi et al., 2018) and writing assessment research (Zheng & Yu, 2019). These syntheses provided essential overviews of the most salient research trends, themes, foci, theoretical and methodological orientations, contexts, participants, and findings in L2 writing. They have informed and advanced the L2 writing field, highlighting the need for further studies in (E)FL contexts (e.g., Riazi et al., 2018).

Riazi et al. (2018) argue that "EFL and FL writing differ from ESL [English as a second language] writing in terms of students' and instructors' needs, contexts, and purposes" (p. 50). These differences are relevant for the present study because Colombia is a representative EFL context. From that view, the research syntheses by Riazi et al. (2018) and Zheng and Yu (2019) informed the present QRS because they examined L2 writing studies published in journals and highlighted the need to document FL contexts.

Riazi et al. (2018) reviewed 272 empirical studies published in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* between 1992 and 2016. They analysed the contexts, participants, foci, theoretical orientations, research methodology, and data sources. The authors found that the typical research contexts and participants were undergraduates in U.S. universities (i.e., ESL contexts).

Feedback and instruction were the main foci, and cognitive, social, socio-cognitive, genre, contrastive rhetoric, and critical theories were the main theoretical orientations. Qualitative studies were predominant, alongside multiple sources, text samples, and elicitation data sources. From their findings, Riazi et al. characterised the field as centred on "adult L2 writing in English at universities" (p. 51). They suggested the need for a broader focus on "more diverse macro and micro contexts with participants from different levels of education" (p. 51).

Zheng and Yu (2019) reviewed 219 empirical studies published in the *Assessing Writing* journal (2000–2018) to provide a view of writing assessment development. The authors used content analysis to examine the studies' contextual, theoretical, and methodological orientations. They found that validity and reliability, feedback, and testing performance were the main research foci, whereas L1 undergraduates in US universities/colleges were the most frequent research contexts and participants. The most common theoretical orientations were generalizability theory, sociocultural theory, and writing as a cognitive process. Quantitative research and text data represented the most frequent primary data source and methodology. The authors called for mixed-methods studies including diverse participants.

Overall, the need to document the field of EFL writing in diverse contexts and the relevance of English writing in educational settings make the present study relevant.

Scope of the Study and Research Question

This historical QRS condenses EFL writing research published between 1990 and 2020 (September) in Colombian journals as these appeared in the early 1990s. This study aims to gain insights into the state of EFL writing in the Colombian context, identify common research trends, and provide suggestions for future development. This QRS contributes to developing the L2 writing field in local and global contexts.

The present QRS draws on previous L2 writing research syntheses. However, it is more comprehensive in examining most components of research reports, such as authorship, publication year, foci, methodology (context, participants, research paradigm, design, data collection methods, and analyses), validity, reliability, ethics, findings, limitations, and further research.

We analysed the studies' *authorship* (e.g., university lecturers, schoolteachers) to identify the principal contributors in EFL writing in Colombia and the extent of teachers' and scholars' involvement in this research area. The *publication year* gives insights into Colombia's EFL writing research development. The *focus* relates to a study's main interest, aim, and discipline (e.g., assessment, instruction) and casts light upon the most and least common research trends regarding theories and purposes.

Methodological aspects include context, participants, research paradigm, design, and data collection methods and analyses. The analysis of the research *context* and *participants* reveals the most and least researched settings (e.g., schools, universities), participants (e.g., university students, school students), and studies' scales (e.g., small, large). The analysis of the research paradigm, design, and data collection methods and analyses provides a view of how EFL writing has predominantly been investigated in the Colombian context.

Validity, *reliability*, and *ethics* were also discussed because their report ensures the research studies' robustness and ethical procedures (Phakiti & Paltridge, 2015). Although evaluating the reliability of qualitative studies is a controversial topic in the qualitative research community, it is frequently recommended as good practice, as it ascertains transparency of the analysis process and the trustworthiness of results (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

The studies' *findings* offer a view of the outcomes of pedagogical interventions, the factors that influence EFL writing instruction, learning, and assessment, and teachers' and learners' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences in various contexts on a common topic. *Limitations* inform the readers about the studies' critical

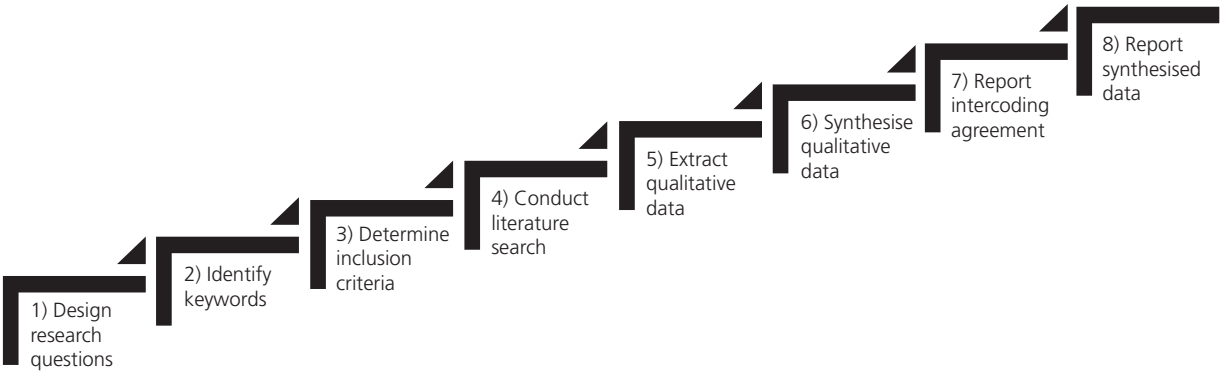
issues, whereas *further research* provides suggestions for further development.

This QRS synthesises EFL writing studies in Colombia regarding the following research question: What are the research trends on EFL writing in Colombia in the last 30 years regarding authorship, year, focus, methodology (context, participants, research paradigm, design, and data collection methods and analyses), validity, reliability, ethics, findings, limitations, and further research?

Method

We adapted Chong and Plonsky's (2021) QRS methodological framework because most Colombian publications were qualitative. We also synthesised the qualitative data of mixed-methods studies. Quantitative studies were absent. This section explains the eight systematic methodological steps implemented, including our proposed intercoding agreement step (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Methodological Framework for Qualitative Research Synthesis



Step 1: Design Research Questions. QRS is guided by one or several research questions. Our research question derived from the lack of QRS in EFL writing in Colombia and research interests.

Step 2: Identify Keywords. We searched for the relevant literature from Colombian journals using the following keywords: *EFL writing*, *L2/second/foreign language writing*, *academic writing*, *writing*, and *English writing*. We also searched titles, abstracts, keywords, introductions, and methodology sections.

Step 3: Determine Inclusion Criteria. Chong and Plonsky (2021) locate the inclusion criteria step after the literature search. We inverted the order because predetermined criteria helped us select the publications as we searched. Before the search, we defined research reports (RRs) to differentiate them from other publications (e.g., pedagogical experiences). RRs draw on primary data sources and have theoretical and methodological perspectives (Phakiti & Paltridge, 2015). We adopted five inclusion criteria for the selection of RRs:

- primary research (pedagogical experiences and thematic reviews were excluded),
- conducted in Colombia with Colombian participants,
- conducted in EFL writing contexts (studies in other languages were excluded),
- published between 1990 and 2020 (September), and
- published in Colombian journals, as they are generally peer-reviewed and meet high standards for publication. We excluded international journals (because they were beyond the scope of our study)

and unpublished studies (e.g., theses and conference papers due to their limited access).

Step 4: Conduct a Literature Search. We searched the EFL writing RRs using the keywords and inclusion criteria in Steps 2 and 3. The search was performed on Publindex, the Colombian indexer, to identify the Colombian journals in applied linguistics, linguistics, and education. There are no specialised journals on EFL writing in Colombia. Although some journals were not classified into the four ranking categories (A1, A2, B, C), they were included in our review to keep track of the history of EFL writing in Colombia since 1990.

We searched journals and articles independently to enable comparisons of search results (Chong & Plonsky, 2021). We also checked the references of each article to find more related publications. The search yielded 19 journals (Table 1) and 63 publications.[1]

Table 1. List of Colombian Journals Used for the Qualitative Research Synthesis

1	*Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*
2	*Cuadernos de Lingüística Hispánica*
3	*Cultura Educación y Sociedad*
4	*Enletawa Journal*
5	*Enunciación*
6	*Folios*
7	*Forma y Función*
8	*GIST – Education and Learning Research Journal*
9	*HOW Journal*
10	*Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*
11	*Latin American Journal of Content & Language Integrated Learning*
12	*Lenguaje*
13	*Lingüística y Literatura*
14	*Matices en Lenguas Extranjeras*
15	*Opening Writing Doors Journal*
16	*Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*
17	*Revista Colombiana de Educación*
18	*Revista Boletín Redipe*
19	*Signo y Pensamiento*

Step 5. Extract Qualitative Data. Qualitative data were extracted using data management software. We first conducted an exploratory data analysis independently in Excel 2016 using a predetermined coding scheme: authorship, publication year, focus, methodology (research paradigm design, length, contexts, participants, data collection methods, and analyses), validity, reliability, ethics, findings, limitations, and further research. We adopted Riazi et al.'s (2018) approach of not interpreting the information from our perspective but extracting and reporting the authors'

1 The list of reviewed publications can be consulted at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6541134

literal descriptions to keep their views. We did not analyse the theoretical orientations because they were not always stated clearly or explicitly. The data not provided was coded as unreported. After the exploratory data analysis, we compared and discussed our Excel matrices and refined the initial codes by renaming, adding new categories, and specifying descriptions. Next, the unified list of categories was input into NVivo 12 for a second independent round of analysis. The refined coding scheme is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Coding Scheme

Categories	Subcategories
Publication year	Three decades: 1990–2000; 2001–2010; 2011–2020
Author	University lecturers, schoolteachers, undergraduates, stakeholders
Research focus	Two types of classifications were used: Research area: *writing instruction* and *writing assessment* (Weigle, 2016) Writing view: *text-*, *writer-*, and *context-centred* (Hyland, 2010). Context-centred studies were coded regarding *theories*, *concepts*, *strategies*, and *materials*: • Theory: a body of concepts, principles, and hypotheses explaining a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Examples: *feedback*, *genre-based*, and *process writing approaches* • Concepts (or variables in quantitative research): building blocks of theories (Phakiti & Paltridge, 2015). Examples: *academic writing*, *text*, and *voice* • Strategies: methods, activities, techniques, and procedures that align with a teaching or learning theory (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Examples: *journal writing*, *brainstorming*, and *group work* • Materials: tools, resources, devices, and applications used to increase learners' knowledge and experience of the language (Tomlinson, 2011). Examples: *technological* (e.g., blogs, word processors) and *non-technological tools* (e.g., portfolios)
Methodology	
Context	Macro and micro contexts (Riazi et al., 2018) • Macro: city or geographical area (e.g., *Cali*, *Medellin*) • Micro: educational setting (e.g., *language institute*, *school*, and *university*)
Participants	EFL learners (primary, secondary, tertiary levels) and EFL instructors
Sample size	In quantitative research, 30+ participants might represent large sample sizes (Pallant, 2016). In qualitative research, sizable samples are not required (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)
Paradigm	Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)
Design	Qualitative research: action research, case studies, ethnographic, narrative, critical analysis, design-based (Hyland, 2016) Quantitative research: true experiments, quasi-experiments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) Mixed-methods research: explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, and convergent (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)
Study length	16 weeks (academic semester), 7 to 12 months, and > than one year
Methods	*Elicitation* (self-report through interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires), *introspection* (writers' data on writing processes through oral or written reports such as protocols, stimulated recall, diaries, or journals), *observation* (writers' writing behaviour data observed directly through audio or video recordings, eye tracking, and keystroke logging), and *text data* (writing samples; Hyland, 2016). Our study classified tests as text data and researchers' journals (or field notes) as observation methods

Categories	Subcategories
Data analysis	Qualitative data analysis: discourse, conversation, content and thematic analyses, and grounded theory (Friedman, 2012) Quantitative data analysis: t-tests, ANOVA, etc. (Pallant, 2016)
Validity	Appropriate sampling procedures, instrument piloting, member checking, expert checking, and triangulation (Friedman, 2012)
Reliability	Coding data reliably, a reliable coding protocol, coder training, and intra- and inter-rater reliability (Phakiti & Paltridge, 2015)
Ethics	Informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, potential risks, and benefits (Phakiti & Paltridge, 2015)
Findings	Positive and negative outcomes reported by the authors
Limitations	Reported by the studies' authors: sample size, instruments, among others
Further research	Reported or unreported

Step 6. Synthesise Qualitative Data. We used content analysis for "coding data in a systematic way in order to discover patterns and develop well-grounded interpretations" (Friedman, 2012, p. 191). The categories and subcategories were created deductively (from L2 writing literature) and inductively (from the data).

Step 7. Report Intercoding Agreement. We added Step 7 to the framework to ensure the reliability of the analyses and results. QRS is highly structured and usually involves multiple reviewers to reduce bias and show transparency (Chong & Plonsky, 2021). Intercoding agreement was calculated by comparing the frequencies in each category from the two researchers' independent analyses. We revised our differences in frequencies and content until reaching more than 90% agreement.

Step 8. Report Synthesised Qualitative Data. The synthesised findings of authorship, publication year, focus, methodology, validity, reliability, ethics, limitations, and further research are reported in frequencies (the most and least frequent categories and subcategories) through tables and figures. The report of the studies' findings is presented using a narrative approach, identifying similarities and differences in results and factors.

Findings and Discussion

The following section presents the findings and discussion of all the categories synthesised to identify common research trends, strengths and weaknesses, and other orientations.

RR's Publication Year and Authors

Table 3 summarises the results of publication years and authors.

Table 3. Years and Authors (*N* = 63)

	n(%)
Years	
1990–1999	1(1.6)
2000–2010	19(30.2)
2011–2020	43(68.2)
Authors	
University lecturers	39(61.9)
Schoolteachers	14(22.2)
University lecturers and schoolteachers	5(7.9)
Undergraduate students	2(3.2)
Schoolteacher–University lecturer	1(1.6)
University lecturers and stakeholders	1(1.6)
Unreported	1(1.6)

As shown in Table 3, RRs increased noticeably in the last two decades. This surge might be related to the increasing importance of EFL writing in Colombia and

worldwide in educational settings, the rise in journals, and the fact that university lecturers need publications to get promoted. As to *authors*, university lecturers are the main contributors to Colombian EFL writing research, authoring alone (39, 61.9 %) and co-authoring with schoolteachers (5, 7.9%) and stakeholders (1, 1.6%). Schoolteachers are in a distant second place (14, 22.2%). It could be that university lecturers have better research conditions (time and resources) and incentives to publish compared to schoolteachers.

Although infrequent, publications by schoolteachers, undergraduates, and stakeholders (e.g., coordinators, administrators, principals) are meaningful because they might reflect their attempts to close the research-practice nexus, a critical area in teacher professional development. It is crucial to encourage classroom language teachers to conduct and publish their research (Hyland, 2016) due to its positive implications for the authors and their communities.

Research Reports' Foci

Identifying the RRs' *foci* was challenging because they lacked explicitness and clarity. Table 4 summarises RRs' foci.

Table 4. Research Reports' Foci (*N* = 63)

	n(%)
Research area focus	
Writing instruction	61(96.8)
Writing assessment	2(3.2)
Writing view focus	
Context-centred studies	49(77.8)
Effect of theories	28(44.4)
Peer feedback (Cooperative/collaborative learning/work)	12(19)
Genre-based approach	8(12.7)
Writing process/process-based approach	4(6.3)
Process- and genre-based approaches	2(3.2)
Writing process approach and feedback	1(1.6)
Task-based approach	1(1.6)
Effect of materials	9(14.3)
Tech-based tools: graphic organisers (2), virtual environment (3), blogs (1), Duolingo (1))	7(11.1)
Instructional materials	1(1.6)
Portfolios	1(1.6)
Effect of theory–strategy–tool	8(12.7)
Collaborative writing, feedback, and technology: screencasts (1), hypertexts (1), Moodle (1), blogs (3)	6(9.5)
Critical literacy and argument writing activities	1(1.6)
Genre-process and e-portfolios	1(1.6)
Effect of strategies	4(6.3)
Writing course	2(3.2)
Writing assessment system	2(3.2)
Writer-centred studies	8(12.7)

	n(%)
Writing view focus	
Experiences and identities	6(9.5)
Beliefs and practices	1(1.6)
Internal/External factors	1(1.6)
Text-centred studies	6(9.5)
Linguistic features: language errors (2), cohesive devices (1), L1 influence on L2 written structure (1)	4(6.3)
Discourse features: voice and audience (1), genres (1)	2(3.2)

The RR's foci were classified into two major categories: *research area* and *writing view*. Within the *research area* category, writing instruction (61, 96.8%) was the main focus, compared to writing assessment (2, 3.2%), indicating a need for writing assessment research in Colombia. Although L2 writing instruction and writing assessment are independent areas, they inform each other. Moreover, "effective writing instruction requires appropriate assessment" (Weigle, 2016, p. 473).

As to the *writing view*, we identified that context-centred studies were more frequent (49, 77.8%) than writer- (8, 12.7%) and text-centred studies (6, 9.5%). Context-centred studies relate to social, political, and cultural factors influencing academic discourses and writers' learning, identity, and attitudes toward writing (Hyland, 2010). Pedagogical interventions were included as contextual factors influencing writing. Writer-centred studies examine writers' cognitive writing processes (planning, drafting, revision; Ong, 2014) and individual variables such as age, perceptions, experiences, motivation, beliefs, agency, and identity (Kormos, 2012). Text-centred studies examine the written products through text analysis (e.g., linguistic or discursive aspects) or scores (Matsuda, 2015).

As shown in Table 4, context-centred studies focused mainly on instruction and feedback, similarly to Riazi et al.'s (2018) and Pelaez-Morales's (2017) findings. Peer feedback, collaborative writing, cooperative work, peer tutoring, genre-based approach, and process-based approach were the most explored approaches to improving students' writing, compared to innovative theories such as task-based approach and critical literacy. The second focus of context-centred studies was technological tools (e.g., graphic organisers, virtual platforms, blogs, and Duolingo). Studies on non-technological tools (e.g., portfolios and instructional materials such as worksheets) were infrequent due probably to the increasing influence of digital tools in English writing.

Writer-centred studies' main focus was on EFL writers' experiences and identities, followed by beliefs and practices and internal and external factors influencing writing. Text-centred studies focused on analysing linguistic and discourse features.

Context-centred studies focused mainly on instruction and feedback reflects teachers' interest in improving students' writing and show a predominantly teacher-centred view of writing. It is necessary to investigate EFL writing from writers' and texts' perspectives to provide an encompassing view of writing (Silva, 2016).

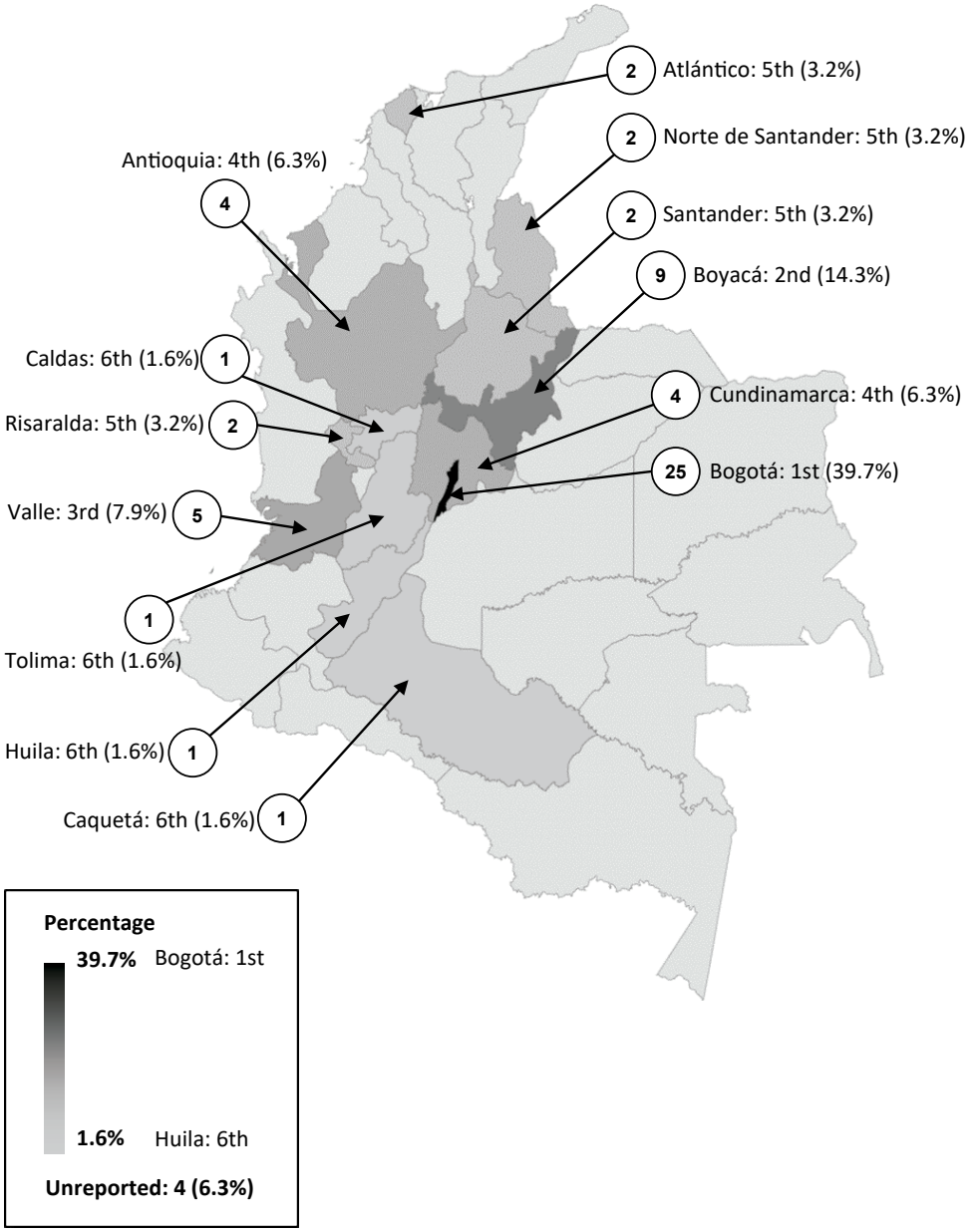
Research Reports' Methodology

Context, Participants, and Sample Size

Context includes macro and micro contexts. Regarding macro contexts or geographical areas, most studies were conducted in Bogotá, the capital city (25,

39.7%), whereas the rest were spread across different geographical regions (34, 54%), as shown in Figure 2. Four studies (6.3%) did not report the geographical context. Regarding micro contexts or specific research settings, universities (54%) were more predominant than schools[2] (38.1%) and language institutes (7.9%).

Figure 2. Macro Contexts



2 Research in schools is often carried out by teachers enrolled in professional development programmes or postgraduate studies.

The large number of studies conducted in Bogotá and universities might be due to the high number of universities in the capital city, university lecturers' appropriate conditions and incentives for doing research, and the relevance of academic writing for university students. These results suggest a need to broaden the geographical and educational contexts where EFL writing is researched in Colombia to identify other contexts' and writers' characteristics and needs.

Regarding participants and sample sizes, learners were the most common participants, with preservice language teachers being the most investigated (Table 5). Less research involved in-service teachers; secondary and primary school learners; children, adolescents, and adults in language institutes; and students with special needs. Most studies (40, 63.5%) employed large sample sizes, usually intact classes, whereas small samples (16, 25.4%) were less frequent. Several studies (7, 11.1%) did not report the sample size. In some studies, the sample size report was inaccurate because the whole class was reported as the study's sample size and later the researchers specified that the data belonged to a smaller sample of participants.

University learners were the most common participants, probably because most researchers were university lecturers. Also, university students produce more academic writing than school learners. Preservice language teachers were typically investigated because they are trained to teach and assess languages, making them an important research focus. Our results confirm Pelaez-Morales's (2017) and Riazi et al.'s (2018) findings, identifying universities and undergraduates as the most commonly investigated contexts and participants in L2 writing research. Consequently, we agree with Riazi et al.'s (2018) characterisation of the field as centred on "adult L2 writing in English at universities" (p. 51). Researching various participants might provide insights into their characteristics, processes, and needs. Most studies employed intact classes that give a view of small classroom contexts. There is a need for further studies in other educational settings and with larger sample sizes (e.g., schools) to broaden the scope of EFL writing.

Table 5. Participants and Sample Sizes (*N* = 63)

	n(%)
Learners	59(93.7)
Tertiary	32(50.8)
Preservice language teachers	18(28.8)
Other majors	10(15.9)
Unspecified	4(6.3)
Secondary	17(27)
Primary	6(9.5)
Children and adolescents in language institutes	2(3.2)
Adults in language institutes	1(1.6)
Students with special needs	1(1.6)
Instructors	3(4.8)
In-service EFL teachers	3(4.8)
Instructors and learners	1(1.6)
Language institute teachers and students	1(1.6)
Sample size (# of participants)	
Small	16(25.4)
1–10	16(25.4)
Large	40(63.5)
11–50	36(57.1)
51–99	2(3.2)
≥100	2(3.2)
Unreported	7(11.1)

Research Paradigm, Design, and Length

According to Table 6, qualitative studies (57, 90.5%) were predominant, clearly contrasting with mixed methods (1, 1.6%) and quantitative research (0%). Five studies did not report the research methodology. Within the qualitative paradigm, action research and case studies were the most common research designs, confirming Pelaez-Morales's (2017) and Riazi et al.'s (2018) findings that qualitative methods are typically used to investigate L2 writing instruction.

Table 6. Research Paradigm and Design (*N* = 63)

Research paradigm	Research design	*n*(%)
Qualitative		57(90.5)
	Action research	29(46)
	Case study	17(27)
	Ethnography	2(3.2)
	Design-based	1(1.6)
	Biographical/narrative	1(1.6)
	Experience systematisation	1(1.6)
	Unspecified	6(9.5)
Mixed-methods		1(1.6)
	Sequential exploratory and sequential explanatory	1(1.6)
Quantitative		0(0)
Unreported		5(7.9)

Hyland (2016) argues that the choice of methodology "will largely depend on what we believe writing is, the model of language we subscribe to, and how we understand learning" (p. 117). Hence, we could claim that the predominance of qualitative research might reflect researchers' sociocultural view of writing, looking into individuals and social interactions (Hyland, 2010). This is probably why most studies focused on developing students' writing through contextual factors (e.g., blogs, instruction) and interactions (e.g., feedback, collaborative writing).

The predominance of action research and case studies is perhaps more convenient for language teachers in their classrooms. Action research helps solve language learning- and teaching-related problems, whereas case studies help better understand a person, group, or context (Hyland, 2016). The fact that most studies took place in classrooms supports Hyland's (2016) claims that writing research tends to favour data gathered in naturalistic conditions.

The absence of quantitative studies related to observation and measurement (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) could be influenced by language teachers' lack of literacy in quantitative methods and assessment (Giraldo, 2019). Such reasons might also explain why writing assessment research is uncommon in the Colombian context, as it traditionally involves quantitative approaches and statistical knowledge (Weigle, 2016).

Most studies were relatively short regarding study length, lasting an academic semester (16 weeks; 30, 47.6%), followed by a small number of longitudinal studies (13, 20.6%). Short-term studies were common probably because they fit into the researchers' teaching periods (university semesters) and are more practical in terms of time than longitudinal studies. A relatively high number of studies (20, 31.7%) did not report the study length. This omission may threaten the studies' validity, as this information helps understand the findings' scope and impact and allows for further replications and comparability.

Data Collection Methods and Analyses

Most studies employed multiple data collection methods and sources (Table 7). *Text data* (52, 82.5%), *elicitation* (48, 76.2%), and *observation* (40, 63.5%) were more frequently used, compared to *introspection* (10, 15.9%). These results align with Riazi et al. (2018), who found that L2 writing researchers used multiple data sources, mainly text data and elicitation.

Table 7. Data Collection Methods (*N* = 63)

	n(%)
Text data	52(82.5)
Text samples, portfolios (non-testing conditions)	45(71.4)
Tests (diagnostic and post-tests)	7(11.1)
Elicitation	48(76.2)
Interviews and focus groups	33(52.4)
Questionnaires (including self-assessment forms)	26(41.3)
Observation	40(63.5)
Researcher's journal and field notes	32(50.8)
Audio/Video recording	12(19.1)
Lesson plans	2(3.2)
Introspection	10(15.9)
Student journal	9(14.3)
Stimulated recall	1(1.6)

Note. Some studies employed different techniques concurrently within the same data collection method. For instance, a study could have used interviews and questionnaires, classified into elicitation methods. This simultaneity explains why, in some cases, the addition of the figures of the subcategories seems to be higher than the total number for the general category.

Table 8. Data Analysis Report and Approaches (*N* = 63)

	n(%)
Data analysis approach not reported	26(41.3)
Data analysis approach reported	37(58.7)
Grounded theory	28(44.4)
Text analysis	12(19.1)
Scores–rubrics: descriptive statistics (6), inferential statistics (1)	7(11.7)
Linguistic analysis	4(6.4)
Discourse analysis	1(1.6)
Thematic analysis	2(3.2)
Content analysis	1(1.6)

Regarding the data analysis approach (Table 8), only 37 studies (58.7%) reported this information; the remaining studies (26, 41.3%) did not. We wonder why the authors and reviewers of such articles were unaware of this omission, which threatens a study's validity and reliability. The results show that grounded theory (28, 44.4%) was the most common qualitative data analysis approach, whereas text analysis (12, 19.1%), thematic analysis (2, 3.2%), and content analysis (1, 1.6%) were the least used. Qualitative data analyses were predominant probably because they are often rich or deep, revealing detailed and complex information about the human experience of language learning (Friedman, 2012). In contrast, quantitative data analysis approaches were infrequent.

The low frequency of text analyses (e.g., scores, linguistic and discourse analyses) and the minor focus

on text-centred studies appear to misalign with the high occurrence of reports of text data collected. In contrast, the high frequency of researchers' journals and field notes aligns with the high percentage of action research. Likewise, the low frequency of introspection aligns with the low number of writer-centred studies.

Students' writing improvement was generally analysed from students' and teachers' perceptions through elicitation (e.g., questionnaires) and observation (e.g., researchers' field notes and journals). Evidence of students' writing improvement also requires text analyses and scores to support the claims and the validity and reliability of the results. The lack of introspection methods confirms the need to study writers' cognition and personal experiences.

Research Reports' Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

Previous L2 writing reviews have not examined studies' validity, reliability, and ethics. We did not evaluate the validity and reliability of the authors' research but reported the aspects they mentioned. According to Phakiti and Paltridge (2015), *validity* (in quantitative research) or *trustworthiness* (in qualitative research) refers to the substantive and methodological soundness of a study, encompassing theoretical and methodological coherence. *Reliability* is about the quality of instruments, results, and consistency in data coding and constructs measurement. *Ethical procedures* include informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, ethics approval, and informing participants of the investigation's potential risks and benefits.

Many studies did not report validity, reliability, and ethics (Table 9). Validity was more frequently reported than reliability and ethics. Within *validity,* sampling procedures and triangulation of data sources or methods were commonly described, whereas instrument piloting, member checking, and expert checking were the least reported. Instrument validation and piloting were often mentioned without explaining the procedures. Furthermore, participants' language level description was not always informed and supported with language test evidence.

Table 9. Validity, Reliability, and Ethics (*N* = 63)

	n(%)
Validity	32(50.8)
Sampling procedures	18(28.6)
Triangulation	17(27)
Instrument piloting	3(4.8)
Member checking	1(1.6)
Expert checking	1(1.6)
Reliability	5(7.9)
Intercoding	5(7.9)
Ethics	14(22.2)
Consent forms	11(17.5)
Anonymity	7(11.1)

Note. The simultaneous report of several ethics, validity, and reliability aspects explains why, in some cases, the addition of figures of the subcategories seems to be higher than the total number for the general category.

Concerning *reliability*, only five studies (7.9%) reported having a second coder, or rater, analyse the data. Only one study reported intercoding agreement. *Ethics* was infrequently reported (14, 22.2%); only consent forms and anonymity were mentioned. The lack of rigour in reporting validity, reliability, and ethics might be due to word limit constraints or that these aspects were not emphasised previously, particularly in qualitative studies.

Research Reports' Findings

We synthesised the RRs' findings to identify common patterns, trends, and issues. A word of caution is necessary here because not all the studies reported all the information rigorously needed to understand the findings.

Context-Centred Studies' Findings

Context-centred studies investigated the effect of a theory, strategy, material, or tool in writing instruction.

Theories. The process-based writing approach, genre-based approach, feedback, cooperative work, collaborative work, project work, and task-based approach were reported as positive in improving students' writing learning, performance, motivation, attitudes, and perceptions. The process-based approach (PBA) reportedly increased the motivation, attitudes towards, perceptions, and awareness of the writing process of adult writers (Zúñiga & Macias, 2006), adolescents (Ariza, 2005), and young learners (Arteaga, 2017; Melgarejo, 2009; Sánchez & López, 2019). PBA helped students improve content (Sánchez & López, 2019), idea and paragraph organisation (Arteaga, 2017; Rivera, 2011; Sánchez & López, 2019; Zúñiga & Macias, 2006), vocabulary and grammar (Artunduaga, 2013; Melgarejo, 2009; Sánchez & López, 2019).

The *genre-based approach* raised young writers' genre and audience awareness when planning and revising their texts (Arteaga, 2017). Short stories and creative writing improved students' text coherence, cohesion (Hurtado, 2010), grammar (Pinto, 2017), authorial voice (Hernández, 2017; Hurtado, 2010), and identity (López, 2009). University students improved argumentative writing (Chala & Chapetón, 2013), whereas preservice teachers improved their understanding of context, purpose, and audience (Correa & Echeverri, 2017). Additionally, genre-based activities promoted university students' confidence and positive attitudes toward writing (Chala & Chapetón, 2013; Pinto, 2017).

Cooperative/collaborative work (CW), *project work* (PW), and *feedback* (e.g., peer tutoring, peer editing, peer support) improved students' writing development and motivation. Through PW and CW, primary school students improved their critical thinking, writing process (Ruiz, 2013), text organisation, grammar, and punctuation (Yate et al., 2013). Peer editing, peer feedback, and CW allowed high achievers to provide linguistic scaffolding to low achievers (Aldana, 2005; Díaz, 2010; Salinas, 2020) and helped them improve audience awareness (Aldana, 2005), writing process awareness, and vocabulary (Caicedo, 2016). CW and PW helped university students develop academic writing skills when producing a research paper (Carvajal & Roberto, 2014) and provided scaffolding (Vergara & Perdomo, 2017). Writers' texts improved aspects such as idea organisation, cohesion, coherence (Carvajal & Roberto, 2014; Díaz, 2014), length, fluency (Díaz, 2014), language use (Robayo & Hernández, 2013; Vergara & Perdomo, 2017), critical thinking (Robayo & Hernández, 2013), and metalinguistic awareness (Vergara & Perdomo, 2017).

CW, PW, and peer feedback provided peer scaffolding (Guerra, 2016), fostered teamwork (Carvajal & Roberto, 2014; Yate et al., 2013), attitudes (Aldana, 2005), autonomy (Vergara & Perdomo, 2017), motivation, confidence, and values (Carvajal & Roberto, 2014; Celis, 2012; Díaz, 2014; Ruiz, 2013). Students also increased their positive perception of writing (Díaz, 2014), error awareness (Celis, 2012), and performance (Salinas, 2020).

The *task-based approach* also improved students' vocabulary and grammar (Ciprian et al., 2015).

Strategies. The design of a writing course for preservice teachers and a writing assessment system were used as strategies to identify weaknesses in writing teaching, learning, and assessment and ways to improve them. Academic writing courses enhance preservice teachers' writing discourse (task and audience), syntax, vocabulary, and conventions (grammar, capitalisation, parts of speech, punctuation) in paragraphs and essay writing (Marulanda & Martinez, 2017). Likewise, a writing assessment system helped refine constructs, writing tasks, and scoring criteria to meet course standards. This system also helped students improve syntactic complexity (Muñoz et al., 2006; Muñoz & Álvarez, 2008).

Materials. Language-learning *technological tools,* such as Duolingo, helped Down Syndrome students improve in producing words and phrases (Salcedo & Fernández, 2018). Blogs and interactive digital stories fostered secondary school students' attitudes and motivation toward writing, awareness of language mistakes, and text length (Guzman & Moreno, 2019; Rojas, 2011).

Virtual courses, including games, online readings, videos, forums, and computers, boosted students' writing processes, linguistic and discourse aspects, and academic text production (Berdugo et al., 2010; López, 2017; Ochoa & Medina, 2014). Virtual courses promoted collaborative writing, self-assessment, and peer assessment and increased students' attitudes, interactions, and learning engagement (Berdugo et al., 2010; Lopez, 2017; Ochoa & Medina, 2014). Essential factors for successful learning include parental and social support, early stimulation of educational technologies (Salcedo & Fernández, 2018), more hours for the English language class (Rojas, 2011), and more technological tools (Berdugo et al., 2010).

Non-technological tools, such as graphic organisers, improved secondary school students' argumentative (Mora et al., 2018) and descriptive texts (Reyes, 2011). Portfolios developed first-semester university students' vocabulary and grammar (Sierra, 2012). Instructional materials, such as worksheets, positively influenced first-graders cognitive skills and teacher and peer mediation (Muñoz, 2010).

Integration of Theories, Strategies, and Tools. Feedback using screencasts (Alvira, 2016), Moodle (Espitia & Cruz, 2013), blogs (Gómez & McDougald, 2013; Quintero, 2008), Storybird (Herrera, 2013), and collaborative hypertext writing with concept maps (López, 2006) advanced students' writing process, motivation, interaction, and error awareness. The genre-process approach with e-portfolios enabled students to be decision-makers and critical thinkers and enhanced discursive and linguistic aspects (Cuesta & Rincón, 2010).

In general, context-centred studies claimed that PBA, genre-based approach, collaborative/cooperative learning, feedback, project work, and task-based approach were positive for improving EFL students' writing (processes and texts), attitudes, interactions, and motivation.

Writer-Centred Studies' Findings

Writer-centred studies examined writers' perceptions, beliefs, practices, experiences, identities, and factors influencing writing. Regarding EFL writers' perceptions and beliefs about writing, second graders' attitudes and perceptions about writing changed from personal to social conventions through CW and L1 use (Ruiz, 2003). In-service EFL teachers viewed academic writing as a way of reporting information. Their writing lacked rhetorical awareness (Anderson & Cuesta, 2019) and was hindered by their low language proficiency and lack of synthesising skills, writing practice, time, and peers' critical feedback (Cárdenas, 2003). In-service EFL teachers' personal and professional motivation helped teachers overcome the challenging demands of journal publishing (Cárdenas, 2014).

Regarding EFL writers' experiences and factors influencing writing, family and school were reported as the primary environments through which preservice EFL teachers accessed written culture (Colmenares, 2010). Writing can be deeply affected by "turning points" and change from a happy personal experience to a stressful, standardising school activity (Colmenares, 2010; Viáfara, 2008). Teachers' instruction and students' lack of L2 knowledge, insecurity, language transfer, and time constraints hindered students' writing, causing frustration and unwillingness to use the target language (Alvarado, 2014). However, writers find learning opportunities during challenging experiences (Colmenares, 2010), generally characterised by grammar-and-translation teaching practices (Viáfara, 2008). Preservice EFL teachers' identity was influenced by collaborative work (Caviedes et al., 2016).

Thus, writer-centred studies found that writers' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, practices, and identities are influenced by positive and negative instructional experiences and individual variables.

Text-Centred Studies' Findings

Text-centred studies investigated linguistic and discursive features. Linguistic analyses found that L1 (Spanish) interferes with L2 written production, as seen in frequent syntactic and lexical errors by first-year university students (Londoño, 2008; López, 2011) and in L1 written structures and word-by-word translation

identified in L2 texts (López, 2011). Discursive analyses found that university students' texts often lacked cohesion and coherence, authorship, audience awareness, and authorial voice (Arboleda, 1998; Colmenares, 2013).

Explicit instruction on grammar (López, 2011) and cohesive devices (Arboleda, 1998) was recommended to improve EFL learners' text quality. Students also need to be exposed to diverse genres (apart from essays), topics (e.g., personal experiences, autobiographical stories, and life stories), and digital magazines (Colmenares, 2020). Using EFL text corpora and computational corpus linguistics allows language teachers and researchers to do semantic, lexicographical, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, linguistic, register, and discourse analyses and identify EFL learners' interlanguage levels and their most frequent errors (Pardo, 2020).

Research Reports' Limitations and Further Research

Few studies reported their limitations (18, 28.6%) and areas for further research (21, 33.3%). The limitations reported included low participant engagement and attitudes, small sample sizes, time constraints for intervention and data collection, resource constraints, and shortcomings in data methods and analyses.

Conclusions and Research Agenda

This QRS examined 63 EFL writing RRs published in Colombian journals between 1990 and 2020 (September). It aimed to inform the state of this area in Colombia by identifying trends and areas of strengths and weaknesses and to propose a research agenda. To this end, we answered the following research question: What are the research trends on EFL writing in Colombia in the last 30 years regarding authorship, publication year, focus, methodology (context, participants, research paradigm, design, data collection methods, and analyses), validity, reliability, ethics, findings, limitations, and further research?

Based on our synthesis, the primary research trend is that EFL writing in Colombia has predominantly been researched from a qualitative perspective and focused on writing instruction and feedback at the university level, centred on pedagogical interventions and views of adult EFL writing. Less emphasis has been placed on the study of writers (e.g., cognitive processes, introspection) and texts (e.g., performance and text analysis), with the former contributing individual factors that affect writers and the latter reporting on actual outcomes. Based on the above findings, we conclude that EFL writing is a developing field in Colombia, and we, therefore, propose the following research agenda.

Research by Other Contributors

University lecturers are the main contributors to EFL writing research. Further research by schoolteachers and education stakeholders might provide insights into the initial stages of EFL writing in the Colombian educational context and the conditions and policies necessary to improve EFL writing teaching, learning, and assessment. It entails more support for preservice and in-service teachers' research and academic writing skills through professional development programmes and co-authorship with expert researchers.

Research Broadening Foci

Most Colombian EFL writing studies explored feedback, process-based, and genre-based approaches. Less is known about the complex dynamic systems theory (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007) and the sociocognitive (Atkinson, 2011) and identity (Matsuda, 2015) approaches. Such approaches provide an encompassing view of writing, allowing researchers to investigate writers, texts, and contexts.

Writing instruction has been the primary research focus, reporting the effectiveness of pedagogical interventions from teachers' and students' perceptions. Less research has been done on writing

assessment. Writing assessment studies inform instruction, language policies, test designers, and test validation. It examines variables affecting students' writing cognitive processes, performance, motivation, and teachers' and raters' performances. Statistical analysis of students' performance and linguistic measurements (e.g., complexity, accuracy, fluency) of text data might provide strong evidence of students' writing improvement, supplementing teachers' and students' perceptions.

Research Broadening Methodological Approaches

Qualitative studies, mostly action-research designs, were predominant. Longitudinal studies and analyses such as critical analysis, auto-ethnography, and text analysis would cast light on writing development and provide a view of writers and texts. Large-scale studies are needed to support robust generalisations on factors affecting EFL writing. Quantitative and mixed-methods research is also required to provide an encompassing view of writing from quantitative (e.g., performance) and qualitative (e.g., perceptions) perspectives. The lack of these studies might be related to their complex design and time requirements. It implies that academic programmes include a quantitative component to help pre- and in-service language teachers develop literacies in this research area.

Research Broadening Contexts and Participants

University students in main cities were mainly researched. Further studies might investigate the writing of students with special needs, children, adolescents, and instructors and explore other geographical areas and settings, such as small cities, rural areas, schools (public, private, rural, and urban), language institutes, and worksites. A broader spectrum of participants and settings would portray the features and needs of writers in other contexts and conditions.

Research Reporting Validity, Reliability, Ethics, Limitations, and Further Research

Our synthesis identified that most studies missed reporting validity, reliability, ethics, limitations, and further research. We encourage researchers to report on those aspects to enhance the robustness of their reports. We propose a set of guidelines for authors and reviewers to strengthen and evaluate the quality of RRs (Table 10) so they align with national and international publication standards.

Table 10. Guidelines for Research Report Evaluation

Sections and information to be reported, justified and described clearly/sufficiently/accurately	Reported			
	Yes	No	Partially	Comments
Introduction				
Topic relevance and gap/need				
Research aims and questions				
Theoretical approach				
Research area (e.g., writing instruction, writing assessment)				
Literature				
Updated				
Relevant				
Rigorous constructs definition and use				
Predominant use of primary sources				
Methodology				

Sections and information to be reported, justified and described clearly/sufficiently/accurately	Reported			
	Yes	No	Partially	Comments
Methodological approach (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods)				
Research design (e.g., case study)				
Participant recruitment Context Research site (e.g., language institute) Participant description (e.g., age, language, and academic levels), accurate sample size, sampling approach (e.g., convenience, purposive)				
Data collection methods and procedures Methods: definition, description, justification, piloting, implementation Procedures: participants'/teachers'/raters' training, time Study length				
Data analysis (sufficient information to support findings) Data analysis approach (e.g., content analysis) Data analysis procedures (coding scheme) and coding samples				
Information allowing for replication				
Findings and discussion				
Evidence (origin of categories/themes, quantity/quality of illustrative samples/examples; frequencies/percentages) descriptive statistics: *N* (sample size), *n* (sub-sample), *M* (means or other estimates), *SD* (standard deviation), and/or information about selected inferential statistics				
Results discussed in light of theory and previous research				
Conclusions				
Answer to research questions, implications for theory and practice derived from findings				
Validity, reliability, and ethics				
Validity (randomisation, instrument piloting, member checking, triangulation, other)				
Reliability (inter- or intra-coding, inter- or intra-rater reliability)				
Ethics (informed consent, anonymity, researchers' role, other)				
Limitations				
Further research				

Limitations of the Present QRS

The present QRS narrowed its scope to EFL writing and journal-based data. Further research syntheses might examine studies in languages other than English and search for sources, such as theses and international journals. Additional reviews might consider analysing the studies' theoretical orientations to provide a comprehensive analysis of RRs, as in our case, this aspect was difficult to analyse.

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Figure 2. Results of the Diagnostic Survey

Appendix A: Lesson Plan Sample

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Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans.). Bloomsbury. (Original work published 1968)

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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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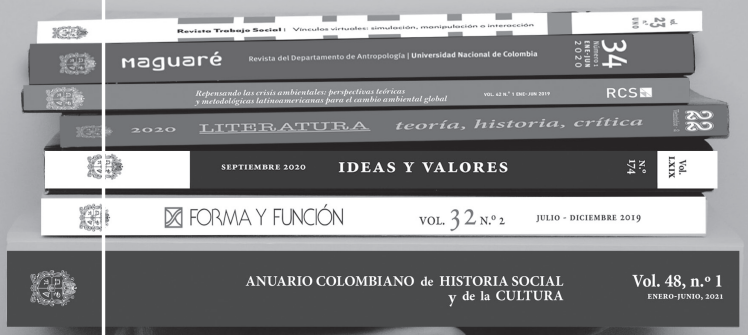

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