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Editorial

Edgar Lucero[1]

In the last three decades, HOW journal has published a great number of articles from both local and global English language teachers, researchers, and scholars. By steadily launching two issues yearly, HOW journal has contributed to the publication of varied opinion pieces, which are sustained with research studies or theoretical-practical insights that have discussed issues of immediate importance to the whole ELT community. Without doubt, we all have successfully achieved, and go forward in doing so, the main objective of the journal so that communication among English language teachers can happen through the journal both in Colombia and abroad. As long as possible, we will keep on offering opportunities for the dissemination of knowledge resulting from educational and research practices that concern English language teaching-learning issues.

This rich variety of knowledge from our authors is again embodied in this issue that presents diverse perspectives on core topics such as English language pre-service teachers' knowledge about intercultural communicative competence and perspectives about the importance of interaction when learning this language, blended learning in the teaching of English, and Colombian teachers of English entering the workforce in foreign countries.

In this order of ideas, in the section of Research Reports, María Teresa Esteban-Núñez presents an article that reports a descriptive case study on the knowledge about intercultural communicative competence that a group of pre-service teachers, belonging to a BA program in Tunja, Colombia, have constructed in their planned English language classes during the final stage of their pedagogical practicum. In the article, María Teresa Esteban-Núñez describes the way the participants understand this competence and use it to learn about their own and other cultures, and to change the savor/spice of the class.

Ximena Rocío Contreras-Espinosa and Karen Michell Villamizar-Mantilla also present gained knowledge of important consideration in her article. This paper describes a research

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study on the importance of interaction in an A1-English language course at a public university in Pamplona, Colombia. Apart from revealing five different emerging interaction patterns, the study provides the ELT community with enough information about the perspectives that the participants in the study have about the importance of interaction when learning a new language.

The third article in this section of Research Reports presents a quasi-experimental study on the influence of blended learning on the development of digital skills in an English language course at a private university in Bogota, Colombia. Yeimmy Rubiela Gómez-Orjuela, the researcher of this study, states that the blended-learning model did not meaningfully develop the skills chosen although the model did influence the creativity and communication skills of the participants. This study opens an opportunity to explore other research designs, which are not common in the ELT field, and to explore teaching and learning models.

In a similar line of thought, Addisu Sewbihon Getie presents another quasi-experimental design study but this one is on teaching vocabulary through the lexical-instructional approach in EFL intermediate level students in Ethiopia. The findings of this study show that teaching vocabulary with a lexically-based instruction can improve EFL learners' vocabulary competence or knowledge. Addisu Sewbihon Getie suggests that the lexical-instructional approach should be the focus in future experimental research.

The fifth article reports a mixed-approach research study on a pedagogical experience about Colombian graduates' methodologies in English language teaching. Carmelina Encarnación Mosquera, the teacher reporting this study, illustrates how the graduates tend to privilege the communicative and eclectic methods based on the relevance that these methods have as regards teaching contexts and students' learning needs. Carmelina Encarnación Mosquera states that there is a need in the curricular development of undergraduate programs in modern languages and in the professional development activities for graduates to be updated in more current ELT methodologies.

At the end of this section of Research Reports, Liana Mercedes Torres-Casierra presents the preliminary results of an enquiry on the work experience of Colombian language teachers who have entered the workforce in foreign countries. This study opens opportunities to discuss an issue of immediate importance to the whole ELT community: addressing aspects of the personal and professional experiences of graduates that might be relevant for international mobility within ELT-education undergraduate programs.

The second section of HOW journal, Reflections and Revisions of Themes, has also turned to varied topics recently. In this current issue, Yeraldine Aldana-Gutiérrez unveils the way peace construction is understood in ELT. From the analysis of 55 articles and 36 presentation abstracts about this topic, this article presents six tendencies that offer a profile of how peace construction has been understood in the ELT field. Undoubtedly, the gaps

and opportunities that Yeraldine Aldana-Gutiérrez unveils with her revision provides a solid point of departure to investigate this topic in English language teaching and learning.

The third section of HOW journal, Reports on Pedagogical Experiences, also presents another issue of importance to the whole ELT community. The article, presented by Ana Olga Rallón and Anna Carolina Peñaloza-Rallón, is about a pedagogical experience that reveals the way female English language learners' personal skills, which have been silenced in their cover letters for employment, are potentiated in a writing course at a university in Colombia. By considering principles of Feminist Pedagogy and narratives, this pedagogical-experience report shows how the participants learn to value their own decision-making abilities, which include organization, responsibility, and problem-solving, in their cover letters for employment.

We hope that this new issue, with its diversity of topics, offers more foundations for issues of immediate importance to the ELT community in Colombia and abroad.

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Pre-Service Language Teachers' Knowledge and Practices of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Conocimiento y prácticas de la competencia comunicativa intercultural de los docentes de lengua en formación

María Teresa Esteban-Núñez[1]

Abstract

This paper reports a descriptive case study developed in an English language teaching program at a public university in Colombia. The purpose of this study was to disclose what knowledge a group of pre-service teachers had about intercultural communicative competence and how they considered their approach to this competence in the English classes they had planned during their final pedagogical practicum. The instruments used to collect data were documents, interviews, and a survey. The outcomes were meaningful for the participants as well as for the researcher since it was possible to identify that pre-service teachers understand this competence as a visible concept to be approached in the classes, mainly to refer to and learn about other cultures different from the Colombian and Boyacense ones. It was also identified that the intercultural communicative competence was considered, by these pre-service teachers, as the "dressing" to change the taste of the class.

Keywords: culture, intercultural communicative competence, knowledge, practices, pre-service teachers

Resumen

Este trabajo reporta un estudio de caso descriptivo desarrollado en un programa de enseñanza en una universidad pública en Colombia. El propósito de este estudio fue el de revelar qué conocimiento tenía un grupo de profesores en formación con respecto a la competencia comunicativa intercultural y cómo ellos consideraban que estaban enfocando esta competencia en las clases propuestas para su

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práctica pedagógica final. Los instrumentos utilizados para recoger la información fueron documentos, entrevistas y una encuesta. Los resultados fueron significativos para los participantes, así como para el investigador, ya que fue posible identificar que los profesores en formación comprenden esta competencia como un concepto visible para ser abordado en las clases, principalmente para referirse y aprender de otras culturas diferentes a la colombiana y la boyacense. También se identificó que la competencia comunicativa intercultural es considerada, por estos profesores en formación, como el "aderezo" para cambiar el sabor de la clase.

Palabras clave: cultura, competencia comunicativa intercultural, maestros en formación, conocimiento, prácticas

Introduction

This paper reports the description of a study developed in an English language teaching program at a public university in Colombia. The research study aimed to identify and analyze the conceptualization that a group of pre-service teachers held about intercultural communicative competence (ICC henceforth) and their experiences regarding this competence.

The nature of this study relies on the significance that English language has gained around the world, and specifically in Colombia, where the current policies have approached this language as the key to open spaces to interact in the globalized world. Thus, teaching a language goes beyond the linguistic aspects of the language, since learning a language is also learning a culture or learning about multiple and varied cultures. Therefore, language teachers should not be trained to teach only the language in order to develop the communicative competence but also the ICC.

For different authors and theoreticians, such as Byram (1997), Liddicoat (2002), Kramsch (1993), Gómez (2012), and Ramos (2013), among others, ICC cannot be separated from the process of learning a language. In this progressively more globalized world, teachers should create opportunities for the exploration and knowledge of other cultures without leaving their own aside. It is in the classroom where students are best able to discern their cultural knowledge and discover their validity. Under these ideas, teachers change their roles from transmitters of knowledge to become mediators among diverse and multiple cultures. In their role as mediators, they integrate culture as part of their daily lessons, and they display questions and activities in which students not only learn about language but also about cultures as they enhance critical positions towards diverse cultural practices and products.

Therefore, pre-service teachers should understand the need to explore intercultural competence through the development of their classes. However, as a first step to turn this possibility into a reality, the exploration of the knowledge and experience that pre-service teachers have about the concept of culture and ICC become relevant. This first step

can become a possibility to open spaces for discussion, reflection and implementation of activities focused on the exploration and practice of these concepts in the English language classroom.

Language teachers are called to be promoters of cultures; not only to talk about the target cultures but also to learn about their own. Subsequently, the development of intercultural competence as part of the development of communicative competence should become the daily work of any language teacher. The current world requires citizens more aware of the multiple and diverse cultures around the world. Citizens able to tolerate and understand the others, able to see the differences and to identify the commonalities to be able to construct real communities living in peace and pursuing a common benefit. Thus, citizens consequently constructing scenarios of peace through the languages and cultures.

However, as an advisor of the final practicum space in the undergraduate program of the university where this study took place, I have been able to identify that the lessons proposed by a number of pre-service teachers rarely consider the possibility of opening spaces to put into practice the professional knowledge they have acquired along their studies, including the development of other competences beyond the linguistic one. This may be due to a limitation in the guidance given by the tutors when assigning the topics. I have observed this limitation when pre-service teachers share the topics given by the tutors to plan their lessons. Most of the time, these topics are focused on grammar ones as verbal tenses: present simple, past simple, passive voice, and adjectives, among others. Another reason could be because pre-service teachers are unaware of how they could develop the intercultural competence while steering their classes towards the other competences involved in the communicative competence.

The research study, here described, aimed to recognize what pre-service teachers considered ICC to be as well as their own experiences when proposing activities intended to raise the practice and appropriation of the concepts of culture and ICC in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom.

Statement of the Problem

ICC has been gaining ground in the processes of teaching and learning of languages. Nowadays, more than being proficient in the use of the foreign or second language, language teachers should also seek to produce culturally competent speakers. As an advisor of pedagogical practicum, during four different semesters, I have had the opportunity to observe and analyze the lesson plans that pre-service teachers proposed for the development of the English language class of which they were in charge. From my analysis, I could identify that their lesson plans proposed certain topics related to the development of the linguistic,

pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competences in English; nevertheless, their main focus was on its grammar and other linguistic aspects. This situation was also identified during my class observations in which I could recognize that these pre-service teachers focused their attention and efforts on teaching certain vocabulary or getting correct grammar use in English from their students.

Starting from that observation and based on the idea that teaching a language is teaching a culture, and that these two concepts cannot be separated as if they were two different dimensions of the same field of knowledge, I considered the need to explore the concepts of culture and intercultural competence that future language teachers held and how they considered they were approaching that competence in their English language lessons. In that sense, I stated the following questions for the research study herein described:

- What knowledge do pre-service teachers have about ICC?
- How do pre-service teachers consider they are approaching ICC in their English language lessons?

Theoretical Framework

The following is the discussion about the theoretical foundations that support the present study.

From Culture to Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

The concept of culture has deserved the attention of different theoreticians and authors. It has been defined from two different views: static and dynamic, or in the words of Kramsch (2013), culture with capital *C* and culture with small *c*. The first one, culture with capital C, refers to "the geography, history, literature and great achievements of a country and its people" whereas the latter concerns "facts having to do with custom, manners, and way of life or life-style" (Bueno, 1996, p. 362). It is this latter on which language teachers are called to focus their attention. As language is a living entity, culture is transformed by means of language. In that sense both are dynamic entities that cannot be separated because teaching a language or speaking a language is the way cultures are represented.

Liddicoat (2002) also stresses the idea that "the static view of culture does not recognize the link between language and culture" (p. 8) whereas "the dynamic view of culture requires learners to actively engage in culture learning, rather than only learning about the cultural information of the target culture in a passive way" (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 8). Additionally, culture is a heritage that permeates life and that remains with us by means of our ways of acting in diverse circumstances or scenarios. Esteban (2014) affirms that:

We learn those behaviors from our parents, our teachers or from other people who touched or have touched our lives in their different stages. Culture also involves all the beliefs we have about ourselves and the beliefs that others have about us. It means that culture is the result of a process in which people invent and re-invent their lives in order to feel they are part of a community or a social group. (p. 29)

Based on the previous authors' ideas, the role a language teacher plays in the classroom is crucial in terms of providing students with opportunities to reflect upon other cultures while their own representations are questioned, analyzed, and evaluated. Most of the time, culture in the English language classroom has been perceived as the learning and appropriation of facts, customs, and special dates of the target cultures rather than a possibility to explore, contrast, critique, and analyze, from different perspectives, those items of the cultures, including students' own cultures.

The new policies regarding bilingualism in our country consider it to be relevant to develop or include cultural understanding as part of the English language classes. However, most of the time, the cultural practices and products that are presented in the classes focused mainly on the target ones and rarely on the Colombian or Boyacense ones.

According to Liddicoat (2002), culture learning "becomes an engagement with cultural practices rather than exposure to information about a culture and cultural competence to be developed through language learning takes the form of intercultural behavior in and through the language being learned" (p. 8). Kramsch (2013) states that "learning about a foreign culture without being aware of one's own discursive practices can lead to an ahistorical or anachronistic understanding of others and to an essentialized and, hence, limited understanding of the Self" (p. 69). Therefore, language teachers should become mediators between cultures. "If language teachers are able to perceive, understand, and value their own culture and other cultures, they may be able to cope more efficiently with differences in their classrooms" (Ramos, 2013, p. 207).

In the same line of thought, Barletta (2009) claims for the need to think about how English language teachers want to represent themselves in interacting with other cultures and how other cultures are represented in the foreign language classroom. This author states the need to make decisions about how to incorporate the cultural dimension into the curricula or in the standards and how to evaluate it; on the contrary, "we will continue reading and hearing myths about what English can do for the country and its citizens" (Barletta, 2009, p. 154).

The previous ideas are closely connected to what Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) define as the best teacher. For these authors,

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> The 'best' teacher is neither the native nor the non-native speaker, but the person who can help learners see relationships between their own and other cultures, can help them acquire interest in and curiosity about 'otherness', and an awareness of themselves and their own cultures seen from other people's perspectives. (p. 10)

Therefore, developing ICC in pre-service language teachers should be mandatory. These new teachers are the ones in charge of opening spaces to place cultures into the language classroom. The result of that new scenario can become one of the opportunities for learners to develop a better understanding of the world and its changes in this new era of globalization and easy access to the information.

There are multiple and varied definitions to describe what intercultural competence involves. Bennett (1993) presents the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity to describe the evolutionary process that an individual internally follows from the stage of ethnocentrism (one's own culture is central to all reality), to the stage of ethnorelativism (one's own culture understanding in the context of other cultures). The first stage, ethnocentrism, involves sub-stages that Bennett (1993) has defined as denial, defense, and minimization of cultural difference. The second stage, ethnorelativism, presupposes other sub-stages as acceptance, adaptation, and integration of cultural difference.

Although this model presents a linear process for a person to move from a monocultural view towards an intercultural view, it would be difficult to identify in which stage a person is, since human beings' attitudes and behaviors change depending on the circumstances and, even more, on the same personal experiences they have lived or are living. In that sense, one day a person can be very ethno-relativist and able to recognize and value cultural differences; on a different day, the same person can be very ethno-centrist though, feeling that his/her culture is the best and unique referent for the whole world.

Another author that has approached this competence is Deardorff (2006). She proposes a Process Model of Intercultural Competence. This model provides a different idea about the development of the intercultural competence. For this author, this development involves a continuous process different from the linear one proposed by Bennett (1993). Deardorff (2006) considers that the journey is never ending as the learner continues to learn, change, evolve, and become transformed throughout time. This model also denotes the relationship between the personal and the interpersonal interaction levels.

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Byram (1997) considers a model of intercultural competence as an essential skill for language teaching professionals. This author proposes a group of competences or '*savoirs*' to understand ICC: knowledge (*savoirs*), attitudes (*savoir-être*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and political education including critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). This last *savoir* or competence is the one that connects and entwines all the other *savoirs*. This *savoir s'engager* is developed

with a constant reflection and identification of the self when compared with others and vice versa. That is why language education and teaching-learning practices are relevant to develop this critical cultural awareness competence and the other ones related to ICC.

Byram (1997) defines each one of the *saviors* as follows: Knowledge includes learning about social groups, products, practices and processes of interaction. Attitudes involve curiosity and openness towards the other as well as readiness to revise cultural values and beliefs and to interact and engage with otherness. Skills of interpreting and relating mean the ability to identify and explain cultural perspectives and to mediate between, and function in, new cultural contexts. Skills of discovery and interaction are related to the ability to acquire new knowledge about a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication. Finally, "critical cultural awareness is defined as the ability to evaluate critically the perspectives and practices in one's own and other cultures" (Byram, 1997, p. 124).

With his model, Byram (1997) invites language learners and teachers to explore and approach the skills, attitudes, and understanding necessary to develop a more reflective and analytical vision into both their own and other cultures. By doing so, both can move beyond the common stereotypes that emerge when cultural issues are approached in language classes.

Since I wanted to identify whether or not the participants' understanding and experiences were related to what Byram (1997) stated as the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes inherent to the ICC, I focused mainly on his model. That was the main reason to consider his model and not the other ones reported previously. Byram's (1997) model can be considered as a framework for the implementation of ICC in the language classroom as it provides teachers with practical ideas to approach the different *savoirs*.

Culture and Interculturality in the EFL classroom

Based on the idea that culture and interculturality are more than topics to be approached in the language classes, different researchers and teacher-researchers have been opening rich scenarios where they have involved these two concepts as part of their languages classes, and they have obtained interesting results to promote continued inquiry about culture and its inseparability in the language teaching processes. Some of those experiences are reported here.

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Gómez (2012) conducted a study to identify, on the one hand, how EFL learners develop ICC through the study of literary selections and, on the other hand, which teaching approaches might be useful to help EFL learners develop ICC through the study of literary selections. Gómez (2012) could demonstrate that integrating language and literature in English as a foreign language not only constitutes a communicative reading practice, but also the opportunity to construct cultural knowledge through social interaction.

Rico (2012) also reported an action research study to find out the ways language materials promoted the development of students' ICC. This study evidenced that the *savoirs* were not developed in the same way and that the dimensions of knowledge and awareness were the ones in which the participants had more disposition. Rico (2012) states that "teaching from an intercultural perspective goes beyond teaching contents. Culture is not easily teachable" (p. 147). That is the reason why materials and especially course books should be adapted by teachers' awareness of their cultural load; on the contrary, the "old school of thought remains the same" (Rico, 2012, p. 147).

Olaya and Gómez (2013) carried out a qualitative research study to explore pre-service English teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward the aspects of culture and intercultural competence addressed in their English language classes in the undergraduate programs of three Colombian universities. Findings revealed that pre-service teachers are mainly taught elements of surface culture and lack full understanding of intercultural competence. They also see culture as a separate aspect of their future teaching careers.

Ramos (2013) shares a pedagogical experience where she analyzed how intercultural competence skills emerged in pre-service teachers after the implementation of an intercultural component in a Research and Pedagogy class. The author identified that pre-service teachers started to develop intercultural competence by developing skills to interpret and contextualize cultural practices and by raising awareness of contextual complexities.

These four Colombian studies were the basis I considered for approaching my study. They were also relevant because they provided me with insightful ideas about the importance of involving and approaching our classes in the exploration of other competences that are part of the communicative competence and that are required to become citizens of the world.

Pre-service Teaching

According to Schön (as cited in Wallace, 1991), pre-service teaching is "the stage where beginning teachers obtain substantial on-campus course work that they expect to transfer directly to their practicum settings, where they begin to act as a teacher" (p. 13). In the institution where the study was conducted, during the pre-service teaching experience, language student teachers are assigned at least one cooperating teacher or tutor from the school where the teaching practicum takes place. Pre-service teachers can serve as a novice teacher practicing the art and craft of language teaching by working with actual learners and performing teacher-related duties. A university practicum director or advisor works with the pre-service teachers and the cooperating teacher in order to enrich the practicum and guide the student teachers towards the construction and exploration of pedagogical and

methodological tools. The cooperating teacher and the Practicum advisor serve as both guides and evaluators, completing formative and summative reports of pre-service teachers' achievements or areas for improvement.

In this sense, pre-service teachers are always experiencing what they learned and identifying possibilities to enrich their practicum and their future as professional teachers. During this stage in their life as student teachers, they face different processes; they care about what to teach, how to teach, where to teach, and whom to teach (Huertas, 2014).

Research Method

To answer the research question and to achieve the objectives stated, I conducted a descriptive case study. According to Merriam (2009), a descriptive case study report "provides a detailed account of the phenomenon under study" (p. 27) and a "rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43).

The participants were five female pre-service teachers developing their final practicum at a public school in Tunja. They were working with preschoolers and primary learners from different grades: pre-school to sixth grade. The pre-service teachers were developing their final pedagogical practicum in teaching English. As a researcher, I was concerned with the protection of my participants' personal identity and the data collected from them. In that sense, I designed a consent form that these participants knew about and signed before starting the research process. In that letter, they were invited to participate in the research and were informed about their roles, risks, anonymity, confidentiality and privacy considering the information they provided. They also stated a pseudonym to identify themselves: Ana, Camila, Perla, Vanessa, and Luisa.

With the intention of gathering the information to answer the research questions, I analyzed the lesson plans they proposed; then, I applied one survey and one semi-structured interview.

Document Collection

These are the sets of documents relevant to the research context (Burns, 1995). In this study in particular, the lesson plans that the pre-service teachers designed were considered as to whether or not they approached ICC in their classes.

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Survey

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), the purpose of a survey is "to learn about the distribution of characteristics, attitudes, or beliefs of participants" (p. 129). The survey applied during this research study was designed and implemented to identify how

the participants defined and characterized the term ICC and the skills or knowledge they considered a language teacher should have to become a mediator of cultures.

Semi-Structured Interview

An interview was applied at the end of the process in order to collect more data about their intercultural experiences as well as their opinions and perceptions about ICC. This was a face-to-face verbal session. I had planned some questions in advance; however, some other questions emerged along the interview. I invited the participants to hold a 10-minute interview to clarify some answers they had provided in the surveys and with the intention of sharing their personal and professional experiences and understandings regarding the ICC. DeMarrais (as cited in Merriam, 2009) defines an interview as a "process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (p. 87).

Data Analysis and Findings

A process of triangulation was done with the intention of giving validity and reliability to the research process. This triangulation was conducted by using multiple sources of information (Freeman, 1998). Denzin (1970, as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1995) describes different types of triangulation: time triangulation, space triangulation, combined levels of triangulation, theoretical triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation. The methodological triangulation uses either the same method on different occasions, or different methods on the same object of study.

In this particular study, a methodological triangulation was implemented with three data collection instruments. According to Merriam (2009), there are three phases for approaching the data analysis: data preparation, data identification, and data manipulation. During the data preparation, I read and analyzed the different lesson plans that my students presented weekly and I identified that they were not planning activities that focused on the ICC. Therefore, I decided to apply a questionnaire to identify whether or not those pre-service teachers were aware of that competence and the way they defined and characterized it. I also prepared and organized a semi-structure interview to go deeper into their experiences, opinions and perceptions towards ICC.

During data identification, I looked for the information that I considered was giving an answer to my research question and my research objectives. In that sense, I identified common patterns in the information collected with the three instruments. Finally, I highlighted sentences, comments, and expressions that were common or similar in the survey as well as in the interview. During this last stage, data manipulation, I used small pieces of paper of different colors to differentiate and identify the information collected. Based on the previous

data analysis process, I could establish the next categories that constitute the answers to my research questions.

The Tip of Which Is Visible From Others

Although ICC was not proposed explicitly in their lesson plans, as they did not include any activity mainly towards this competence, it was possible to identify that participants considered this competence as an ability required to be learned through an interaction with other cultures. They understood this competence considering only the superficial issues related to the iceberg concept of culture (Brembeck, as cited in Lázár et. al., 2007, p. 7). To this concept, culture has been compared to an iceberg, because much of what is related to culture is undetected, similar to an iceberg where the biggest part is under the surface. Regarding culture, a good number of cultural practices and products, although invisible, should also be approached by language teachers interested in developing ICC.

Their answers as to how they defined and characterized the term of ICC pointed to common aspects related to sharing cultural experiences and to understanding customs from other countries rather than to more complex situations in which people could be involved in an intercultural situation as relativizing the others' behaviors or beliefs or evaluating one's and others' cultural practices and products. These situations can involve definitions of appropriateness, beauty, and respect, among others, as well as the values each particular culture has regarding abstract concepts like love, death, and respect. A number of the participating pre-service teachers' answers pointed towards these superficial issues related to the ICC. Some of their answers were:

> I believe that Intercultural Communicative Competence is a way to learn through the interaction between other cultures, also as a way to know and share cultural experiences. (Ana. Survey. Q1)

Noting the same aspect, Lucía reported,

> I define the ICC as a competence to communicate successfully with other cultures, understanding the different customs. (Survey. Q1)

In the same question, Camila wrote:

> ICC is a way when the students can talk and transmit different ideas about their own and different customs. It is an interesting and attractive idea for practicing other languages. (Survey. Q1)

Ana and Perla also commented on the same issue:

> It is an ability that allows to communicate and understand cultures in different ways. (Ana. Survey. Q3)

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I think that it is when I have the contact with people of other countries and we can interchange the customs. (Perla. Survey. Q1)

These accounts revealed how most of the participants refer to the word *customs* as an important issue of the ICC to be addressed in the language classroom. These answers exposed that although they were able to provide a definition to the concept of ICC, they largely focused only on the superficial level of the iceberg of culture. It can also be said that, regarding Byram's (1997) theory, which supports this study, the participants could be placed in the *savoir faire* since they considered knowing from others to be a requirement to become interculturally competent.

Additionally, their definitions scarcely account for the possibilities that they, as pre-service teachers, and their students could have to approach a critical analysis of cultures, cultural practices, and cultural products involved in the language learning and teaching processes. This analytical practice is what can enrich and transform the language class into a space to learn from others and to evaluate who each one is and where each is in the current world.

During the same survey, it was possible to identify that the participants considered it necessary to develop the ICC with the aim of learning and interacting with people from other cultures or from other countries. For example, Perla says:

I understand this concept like a process of learning, through this [ ] the students can improve their learning and at the same time they can do an intercultural interchange to learn about other cultures and they can transmit their own knowledge. (Perla. Survey. Q3)

Considering the same issue, Lucia reported:

I think that is a concept created to improve the knowledge about other cultures, sharing with people who are from other countries. [sic] (Survey. Q3)

Camila highlighted the importance of identifying differences among cultures:

To be aware that each culture has many differences and some points as accents, idioms and something like that. (Survey. Q3)

22   During the interviews, when the participants were asked about the aspects of culture that they considered most important to be approached in teaching a foreign language, they evidenced the learning about other cultures, too. Their answers were very similar and most of them pointed towards the same topics related to the visible aspects of the iceberg of culture. In this sense, Lucia for example said:

The beliefs because it helps us to understand and communicate in a good way with the other people. (Interview)

Similarly, Camila and Perla commented:

I think customs, food, religion, and music". (Camila. Interview)

Maybe customs, food, holidays to make a comparision between both. [sic] (Perla. Interview)

Vanessa highlighted the importance of knowing those aspects of culture to learn from others:

Customs, idioms, because those things are important to know about another culture, the customs are different in each country. (Vanessa. Interview)

The concept of ICC held by these participants can also be situated in the *savoir* (knowledge) proposed by Byram (1997). All of them considered social groups and their products and practices as essential elements to be approached in intercultural encounters. It can be stated that these participants likely perceived this competence as a one-way process; none of them mentioned the need to include the cultural practices and products from their home country as part of the competence.

On the other hand, during the interviews, too, when they were asked about the opportunities that they created for their students to understand and experience other cultures, their answers pointed to the use of videos or other audiovisual aids as resources to support these issues during their lessons. In this sense, for instance, they said:

In some cases, they have contact with other cultures through videos, movies, and if we could meet foreign people. (Camila. Interview)

Perla also reported:

The use of audiovisual materials can help them to understand the way other cultures live. (Interview)

To synthesize this category related to pre-service teachers' knowledge about ICC, according to their answers, this competence is more concerned about the possibilities they can create to foster knowledge about or from other cultures than being related to the development of skills and values.

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Considering that the development of ICC is a never-ending process, with more opportunities to explore this concept, pre-service teachers may be able to enrich their current teaching practices and become better mediators between cultures. These pre-service teachers can develop abilities and competences to identify differences and similarities among cultures and to state critical positions in front of the variety of cultures that can come into contact when any language learning process takes place.

Therefore, the foreign language program should define or design a more intercultural curriculum so that its pre-service teachers can have ampler possibilities to reflect, conceptualize, and experience, based on different theoreticians and researchers. Thus the inclusion of the other *saviors* or knowledge could enrich the language teaching practice towards a more intercultural approach that really connects language and culture.

To sum up, I want to highlight Ramos (2013), Barletta (2009), and Gómez (2012) who consider it fundamental that teachers (pre- or in- service) constantly reflect on whose knowledge, whose culture, and whose ideas they are sharing with their students. Jokikokko (2010, p. 27.) states that an ideal is that the school supports the identity and culture of all students and creates a safe and equal learning environment for all, rather than only for those who belong to the so-called mainstream.

The next finding is connected to the participating pre-service teachers' traditional view of culture for the English language class. This view considers culture as something that can be separated from the usual topics developed in the English language classroom; therefore, approached in isolation as if its implementation were another source to change the mood or the taste of the class. This is the reason why I have called this category *A Dressing for the Class*.

A Dressing for the Class

Regarding this second category, I identified that the pre-service teachers considered it necessary to know more about ICC in order to enrich their English language lessons and to provide their students with more possibilities to increase their cultural knowledge. In this sense, when they were asked about the importance that they attached to teaching the ICC compared to other grammar topics, vocabulary, or the four basic language skills, they reported:

> The intercultural communicative competence is very important because the learning of a foreign language includes the understanding of the situations where the speaker is involved. The social interaction is the aim of the language, in that way the culture involves all the activity of the human being. [sic] (Camila. Interview)

Luisa also commented around this issue and the need of connecting all the teaching process to the English skills as well as to the ICC:

> I think that everything has to be connected with the English skills and the Intercultural Competence because we need to create a link between both, and also that could improve the knowledge about other cultures [´] teaching process. [sic] (Luisa. Interview)

Additionally, Ana reflected on a possible mistake she was making because she had not approached that competence in her classes:

I don't use that competence. Maybe that is a mistake because we need to share the other cultures with our students and make that they like to know about it. We use to teach just grammar and vocabulary. [sic] (Ana. Interview)

For Perla, knowing a culture can help to learn a language; then, she reported:

I consider it is necessary because the culture is an important piece in the language. In that way knowing the culture let us to learn better a language. [sic] (Perla. Survey Q5)

Ana considered that involving the ICC in her classes could guide her to have more interesting, interactive, and creative lessons:

It is an interesting and creative idea in an English class. It helps to motivate to students in the class, since the topics can be interesting for them and promotes the participation in the class. [sic] (Ana. Survey. Q5)

Luisa also regarded that by working on this competence students would be able to understand and adapt to other cultures.

Students need to have knowledge in relation with this term to develop and understand each culture and to adapt to any culture. [sic] (Luisa. Survey. Q5)

The pre-service teachers also consider it necessary to give more attention to this competence since during their undergraduate studies they were not given enough opportunities to explore what the competence involved in terms of intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. During the interview, they were asked about the importance of placing emphasis on the ICC; some of their answers were:

I think the intercultural competence should be given more emphasis in language teaching because it is necessary if we want to be an integral teacher. (Perla. Interview)

Similarly, Luisa reported:

I think that in foreign language teaching we should give more emphasis because the importance to know foreign cultures and foreign people could help to improve skills and cultural knowledge. (Luisa. Interview)

Considering the benefits this competence has, Ana expressed:

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I think this competence has many benefits to learn a foreign language, the student can learn cultural aspects that reinforce or help to introduce some topics, grammar, writing among other. [sic] (Ana. Interview)

Camila perceived the competence as a complement for her studies:

I think that ICC is an important part to complete my career. (Camila. Interview)

By reading and analyzing these pre-service teachers' statements, I can say that these participants consider it important to approach the ICC in their lessons, although this competence is for them an entity that can be separated and developed in certain specific moments of their lessons. In that sense, I may state that that they consider this competence as a fifth language skill. In comparison to what Kramsch (1993) claims as the fifth language skill, it is for a different position of language regarding culture. This author states the urgent need of conceiving language as a social practice, therefore "culture should become the core of language teaching to the extent that cultural awareness should be viewed as enabling language proficiency" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 8). Regarding the same consideration, Byram et al., (2002) state that:

> What language teachers need for the intercultural dimension is not more knowledge of other countries and cultures, but skills in promoting an atmosphere in the classroom which allows learners to take risks in their thinking and feeling. Such skills are best developed in practice and in reflection on experience. (p. 34)

The previous concepts argued not for a complete and perfect competence, but for the need of opening spaces to identify the existence of diverse cultures. The concepts also argued for the relevance of reflecting upon cultures by assuming critical positions and not merely displaying a passive acceptance of promoting certain knowledge without considering its veracity and reliability.

Based on the previous concepts and the information collected during the study, it is possible to conclude that pre-service teachers identify certain aspects related to ICC, although they still lack a reasonable appropriation of the concept to become the cultural mediators that the current world requires. Nevertheless, I could say that they are taking their first steps on the long road of their life as professional teachers since they have the attitude to understand and accept people from other cultures which is the foundation of intercultural competence (Byram et al., 2002).

The analysis of data led me to identify the relevance of promoting activities and opportunities for pre-service teachers to have the possibility to reflect on and learn from other cultures so that they can discover that they are also part of a culture that deserves to be analyzed and studied in their language lessons. In this sense, what we, teacher educators or practicum advisors, can do is to open spaces to ask more questions related to cultural practices and products of pre-service teachers in their lesson delivery.

Language teachers do not need to have a diploma that certifies they are interculturally competent; however, it is necessary to guide them to identify that the current world requires more responsible decisions about what language teachers are doing or proposing to develop in their classes. The new language teachers should be aware that their classes can be approached to foster the development of the skills, knowledge, and values that learners

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require to understand the existence and respect of those others outside the four walls of their classrooms.

Conclusions

This study was designed to recognize what knowledge a group of pre-service teachers had about ICC and how they considered they were approaching it in their lessons. They were invited to answer a series of questions in a survey and to participate in a semi-structured interview that comprised the sources to answer the research question. The data collected by means of students' lesson plans, interviews, and the survey revealed that their understanding of ICC is more related to the *savoirs* knowledge and *faire* than to the others *savoirs* proposed by Byram's (1997) model.

While participants answered the questions and participated in the interview, they were talking about their experiences as pre-service teachers with situations they considered to be related to ICC. Their understanding of this competence is more connected to the traditional view of culture since they were referring mainly to customs and ways of living in other countries rather than their involvement in more critical activities in which they could reflect on other types of cultural issues. The same issues that sometimes are not easy to be approached in the language classroom.

This was also the opportunity to recognize that these participants have not had enough opportunities to become involved in situations more favorable to develop the ICC since their classes at university were approached toward other aspects of the communicative competence. However, from the data analysis I could identify that they were on the road to continue learning more about this competence. I also saw that they were aware of the need of giving their grammar-based lessons a different orientation that requires also the development of other competences as the intercultural one as well.

At the end of the study, my participants recognized the importance of gaining more knowledge about how to approach ICC in their lessons. They were also able to identify their role as cultural mediators who not only communicate information but also should develop better social relationships with people of other cultures and languages. However, they recognized that this role requires more practice and more commitment with the English language classes which they will have in their future professional life.

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On the basis of this research, it seems that pre-service teachers were aware of ICC, but they lacked opportunities and theoretical support to bring this competence into practice. It is necessary for the language program in this institution to think of alternatives to provide students with more opportunities to explore, learn, and inquire about this competence; alternatives that go beyond the perfect language speaker and that are a requirement in the

current globalized world. These alternatives require the revision of the different syllabuses proposed for the English courses to propose a more intercultural language teaching approach; what is more, the didactics classes should also include information and practice about how teachers and researchers around the world have implemented ICC in their teaching practices. For me, as a researcher and a teacher educator, I realize that pre-service teachers make their best efforts to plan their lessons, but sometimes they are limited by their practicum advisors because they have to prepare their lessons based on what their advisors ask. The pre-service teachers have their hands tied as to proposing other activities to involve their students in different scenarios that could enrich both their practicum and students' knowledge.

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HOW

Understanding Basic English Users' Classroom Interaction: A Case Study

Comprendiendo la interacción en clase de los usuarios básicos de inglés: Un estudio de caso

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Abstract

This qualitative case study seeks to understand the importance of interaction in an A1-English language course at a public university in Colombia. Data were collected through six non-participant observations and four semi-structured interviews. Data were organized and analyzed by using MAXQDA software. These instruments provided enough information of the participants' perspectives about the importance of interaction when learning a new language. With these instruments, it was also possible to find the types of interaction that occurred between the participating teacher and students in the observed foreign language classroom. The findings reveal five different interaction patterns that emerged depending on its purpose, who started them, when they occurred, and how they were given.[3]

Keywords: case study, classroom interaction, learning strategy, interaction patterns

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Resumen

Este caso de estudio cualitativo busca comprender la importancia de la interacción en un curso de inglés A1 en una universidad pública de Colombia. Los datos se recopilaron por medio de seis observaciones de no participantes y cuatro entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los datos se organizaron y analizaron con el software MAXQDA. Estos instrumentos proporcionaron suficiente información de las perspectivas de los participantes sobre la importancia de la interacción al aprender un nuevo idioma. Con estos instrumentos, fue también posible encontrar los tipos de interacción que ocurrieron entre el docente participante y los estudiantes en el aula de lengua extranjera observada. Los hallazgos revelan que surgieron cinco patrones de interacción diferentes dependiendo de su propósito, quién los inició, cuándo ocurrieron y cómo se dieron.

Palabras clave: estudio de caso, interacción, estrategia de aprendizaje, patrones interaccionales

Introduction

Learning a foreign language involves mastering four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) categorizes the ability to produce and communicate ideas to others into six different levels as a guide to learning a new language by keeping in mind general concepts and abilities, ranging from a basic user to an advanced user (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2). In this way, learning a language requires the development of the competencies described by each level of proficiency in order to use the language adequately.

In a foreign language classroom, interaction varies depending on the objective of developing skills like memory, reasoning, attention, and language. Those activities create a mediation process in which students could have a social reflection from an individual reflection. Notably, language is a crucial aspect for cognitive development since people are cognitive agents in the environment where they live.

In this way, foreign language teaching should include different strategies that engage learners in active interaction throughout the learning process. Nunan (1989) states that, "Language is now generally seen as a dynamic resource for the creation of meaning" (p. 12). Every activity completed in a foreign language classroom should foster meaningful target language use and teacher-student dynamic interaction. The way we interact with our classmates and teachers plays a tremendous role in our personal learning experience of foreign languages. This type of interaction could be closely related to Walsh's concept of Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC), which is defined as, '[t]teachers' and learners' ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning' (Walsh, 2013, p. 158). We have come to understand that this competence has helped researchers improve their language skills, exchange personal ideas, thoughts and beliefs, and overcome common pronunciation mistakes and language use difficulties. Researchers also benefited from this

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reciprocal learning experience during class activities in which they acquired and exchanged knowledge with their classmates and teachers.

In the Bachelors of Arts in Languages program in which this study took place, speaking skills are considered as one of the most useful and important skills of a language because these are related to the transmission and reception of information. As foreign language (FL) learners, we experienced a series of drawbacks linked to oral interaction in the classroom, such as lack of time to complete class activities, use of poor strategies, and low levels of participation. When performing a role play, the peers' pressure and time constraints did not let us use the language in an appropriate way due to the stance/conviction that completing the task was more important than the use of the language. Moreover, those drawbacks were noticed in group activities as debates in which not all the students participated because of lack of security and the fear of being judged by teachers and peers. Given those experiences, we became aware of the difficulties a learner may face in expressing their ideas in ordinary class activities.

Rivers (1987) explained the role of interaction while learning a language saying that, through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even when they absorb output from their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals. In interaction, students can use all they possess of the language – all they have learned or casually absorbed – in real life exchanges (Rivers, 1987, as cited in Trong Tuan & Kim Nhu, 2010, pp. 4-5). This means that the role of interaction goes beyond communicating with others; the interaction in class helps students to improve their language skills putting in practice the language in different ways.

Several studies about the importance and analysis of interaction have been carried out in different educational contexts around the world in order to understand how participants are involved in spoken interactions and tasks in the target language. Nóbrega's (2008) and Kuśnierek's studies (2015), among others, stated that interaction in the FL classroom is important because it helps students to communicate their ideas and thoughts by using the target language as well as to create a better atmosphere in the classroom. In Colombia, some studies have been carried out about it in high school contexts, for example Gómez (2012), Gutierrez (2005), Hernandez (2013), Ochoa et al. (2016), Parga Herrera (2009), Bohórquez et al. (2011), Rosado-Mendinueta (2012) and Lucero Babativa (2015); those studies reflect on the necessity of understanding the role of interaction in a foreign language classroom.

Consequently, this study focused on understanding the importance of interaction in Basic English Foreign Languages courses at a public university of Colombia. Taking into account that these courses look for developing learners to reach an A2-level of proficiency in English, learners develop an understanding of the basic structures of the language. The

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learners should be able to express themselves by giving basic personal and family information, and to describe routines using simple and direct exchange of information. This course is guided by a textbook of an A2-English level of proficiency, which includes an introductory section of new vocabulary related to the topics, then an explanation of the grammatical tenses, followed by activities such as reading passages, listening exercises, writing production, and a communicative task. The total amount of hours per academic semester is 128, or seven hours weekly.

The data were collected over four months in a course of Basic English language level through class activities and students' perspectives. This study attempted to answer this research question: What type of student-student and student-teacher interaction takes place in a foreign language class?

Literature Review

Language classroom interaction is the set of communicative events (conversations or exchanges) that teachers and learners co-construct from the context to promote language learning and/or language use (Ellis, 1994, as cited in Lucero, 2015, p. 92). Johnson (1994) establishes that teacher-learner interaction occurs when the teacher controls the content, use of language, and learners' participation in class (as cited in Lucero, 2015, p. 93). In learner-to-learner interaction, the learners use the target language with one another in classroom activities" (as cited in Lucero, 2015, p. 93). Concerning learner-teacher interaction, some say "…this type of classroom interaction occurs when a learner volunteers to provide content during a discussion opened for using and/or learning the target language. In the learner-teacher interaction, the learners provide the content; thus, they create the opportunities to use the language in class" (Richards and Lockhart, 1994, as cited in Lucero, 2015, p. 93).

Through interaction students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals. In interaction, students "can use all they possess of the language – all they have learned or casually absorbed – in real life exchanges" (Rivers, 1987, as cited in Trong Tuan & Kim Nhu, 2010, pp. 4-5). These two definitions describe all the interaction processes from physical actions to how interaction helps students in the development of students' language skills.

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Oxford (1990, p. 8) defines strategies as "specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. As researchers, we realized that Oxford's definition neatly matches the purpose of this study given that she showed strategies as a vehicle for learning

in which not only students take advantage but also teachers; therefore, making the learning process better.

With regard to prior studies, we classified them into two groups: Classroom interaction and learning strategies in a foreign language classroom. The first group explains the significance of student-student and student-teacher interaction (see Van Lier, 1996, to know what each of these types of interaction means). Parga Herrera's (2009) action research revealed that verbal and non-verbal strategies are important to improve oral interactions among students. She also found that teachers can achieve a better social classroom atmosphere for learning, including cooperative learning in their class, while improving their performance in the EFL course. Similarly, Nóbrega (2008) found that oral interaction engages teachers and students in learning language processes in which students and teachers exchange and understand the information. Similarly, Kuśnierek (2015) concluded in her study that oral interaction activities not only provide students with the ability to communicate their thoughts and ideas, but also with the ability to exchange information with others highlighting the importance of transmission and reception of information. Gomez (2012) stated in her study that this exchange of information could be done by using the mother tongue. She concluded that not only the use of the mother tongue is fundamental for students to understand the class topic and communicate with their teacher and students, but also to participate in class activities. Also, Lucero (2012) found two types of interaction patterns given in class between the teacher and the students: asking about content and adding content. These interactional patterns are given by means of the speech acts that emerge in classroom interaction when there is a need for communication by the actors. Finally, Ochoa et al.'s (2016) study revealed that communicative activities are motivating for both students and teachers. They found that students feel highly motivated when participating in communicative activities because these enhance their fluency. They were also confident when they helped each other during interaction in activities.

The second group of studies describes the role of learning strategies in a foreign language classroom. Hardank (2013) explained the definition of strategies by using different authors as Oxford (1990). Some researchers have guided studies in order to analyze how the use of interactive learning strategies help improve student's language skills in EFL contexts. For example, Henriquez et al. (2017) conducted a quasi-experimental investigation in which they found that the use of social strategies like working in groups or presenting a topic, among others, encouraged students to collaborate and helped to improve students' speaking skills at the same time. Similarly, Cruz Rondón & Velasco Vera (2016) concluded in their case study that the way the teacher implemented a pedagogical intervention integrating the four language skills promoted interactive learning among students. Darancik (2018) revealed that the language skills that students want to develop the most are speaking skills because these allow them to exchange their ideas and information in a better way. Likewise,

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Gutiérrez Gutiérrez (2005) found that carrying out interactive and communicative tasks helped students develop speaking skills that allowed them to interact in different situations. Similarly, Soraya (2017) argued that role play was an effective strategy that urged students to speak directly in the target language and face real situations. Moreover, they considered that role play developed communicative competence that placed students as active learners and improved their participation in the class. Besides, Lafont Mendoza (2007) concluded that activities as interactive and group tasks eased students' oral participation in class while others limited it, provoking anxiety in students. She also found that self-esteem, anxiety, empathy, and relationships among students were factors that affected students' oral production.

Other authors who focused on the task-based approach obtained similar findings: Hernandez (2013) found that Task-Based Learning used communicative learning strategies to enhance students to develop their oral interaction skills and allowed them to become more confident and motivated to learn the language. Similarly, Gonzalez Humanez and Arias (2009) found that Task-Based Learning activities not only helped to encourage students' participation in class but also helped them to improve the quality of oral interaction as well as to interact meaningfully and spontaneously. Even when those strategies were used as strategies to improve the students' interaction, Perneth Parra (2012) revealed that they should not be repetitive because they may lose their effectiveness in the classroom since they may become monotonous.

Finally, Lucero (2015) wrote about classroom interaction taking into account three different research works conducted by him; in the first work, he found that the mother language was used for students in order to supply communication needs, and to understand meanings and grammatical structures. With regard to his second work, it revealed that the interaction in the classroom was given among teacher and learners in two main situations to ask about content and add content. Finally, in his third work (Lucero, 2011), he found an interaction pattern that he named the request-provision-acknowledgement (RPA) sequence; this interaction pattern was co-constructed by teachers and learners when the latter did not know how to express an idea in English and asked the former for answers using the L1, creating a negotiation of meaning among them.

Research Methodology   35

The study presented in this article is of a naturalistic inquiry because it took place "in real-world settings and the researcher [did] not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest…" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). In other words, we, the researchers and authors of this article, observed a group of foreign language learners interacting with their teacher in an ordinary English language classroom. We followed a case study methodology because we were interested in conducting an in-depth understanding on the importance of interaction

as a means of improving English language basic users' speaking skills. Creswell (2007) stated that "a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection" (p. 14). Thus, this study is an attempt to describe second-semester students' activities to evaluate their progress in the learning of English. In this study, the unit of analysis is represented, in terms of space, by an English language second-semester course of the Bachelor in Arts in Languages program at a public university of Colombia. In terms of time, this study was conducted during the first academic semester in 2019.

We were interested in working with students at the English language basic-user level because we considered that they were starting to develop their language and communicative skills as English language learners. Moreover, in this stage of the language course, students were more exposed to work in different communicative and interactive activities that allowed them to improve their English language skills. Participants were a teacher of English as a foreign language and a group of 22 learners at an A2 English language proficiency level. Two key informants were voluntarily selected from the learners group to be interviewed.

Data were gathered through six non-participant observations and four interviews with open-ended questions. According to Creswell (2007), "observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents and reports [comprise] a case description and case-based themes. For example, several programs (a multi-site study) or a single program ([an inside] study) may be selected for study" (p. 73). The non-participant observations helped to investigate this issue without interfering in the participants' interactions. In addition, four semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowed the participants to share their perspectives in their own words by giving a more detailed experience in order to explain their ideas.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics are considered in research as the legal and moral considerations that are taken into account when an investigation is conducted. That is why we considered various ethical issues at different levels of this process to protect the participants' rights by following rigorous procedures such as the use of pseudonyms, letters of consent of participants of the study, and letters of permission to the participants. With regard to the use of pseudonyms, this allowed participants to protect their identity. Throughout the data collection, each participant selected a nickname not associated with him or her. The letter of consent and the letter of permission provided a detailed description of the procedures of the investigation. This way, the participants knew the role they would play and their responsibilities. In addition, we explained that they could drop out the project if they considered that the research study interfered in any way with their personal or academic development. We also stated that non-economic rewards were given for participating in this study and that no risks or secondary

effects were associated with the participation in this research. Finally, the data were protected and saved in a password-protected document that only we, as the researchers, had access to.

Findings

Data were analyzed following Hatch's (2002) interpretative analysis, i.e. "Interpretation is about giving meaning to the data. It is about making sense of social situations by generating explanations for what's going on within them" (p. 180). In doing so, we interpreted the data gathered in light of the research question. This interpretation allowed us to identify the types of student-student and student-teacher interactions that took place in the observed classroom. These interactions were classified taking into account the six non-participant classroom observations done during the gathering information process. The classified interactions were the most predominant ones in the learning atmosphere. Besides, we used MAXQDA software to classify the interactions from codes and sub-codes. Consequently, five different interaction types were identified: teacher-students, teacher-student, student-teacher, students-teacher, and students-students.

Teacher-Students' Interaction

It describes the way the teacher addressed all the students at once. This type of interaction allowed the teacher to give instructions, explain topics and activities, and provide them with new vocabulary in English. With regard to giving instructions, the teacher provided students with specific directions for them to complete each activity in class. For example, specific instructions on how they had to do each activity. During the third classroom observation, the teacher decided to start the class by explaining to the students how a quiz would be conducted. The quiz consisted of presenting orally and voluntarily the passive voice in English in groups of three people. This example shows the aspects that the teacher took into account when giving instructions, such as: the activity that was to be developed, the topic that was going to be assessed, the number of participants, and the way they needed to present it. Another example was during the fourth classroom observation, the teacher introduced new vocabulary in English related to slang and urban language by saying words/phrases out loud and letting students guess the words' spelling and their meaning; after a couple of minutes, the teacher wrote all the vocabulary down on the board and explained each lexical item by using sentences as an example of how and when to use it.

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Teacher-students' interaction was also reflected while explaining a topic. The teacher interacted with all the students while introducing a new grammatical topic of English from the textbook. In the second classroom observation, for instance, the teacher explained how, why, and when to use countable and uncountable nouns in English. He also gave some examples. Then, the students completed the different textbook activities. Finally, the teacher

asked the students to prepare an oral report in English about a typical Colombian dish by using countable and uncountable nouns and explaining the cooking process. This interaction shows the way the teacher introduced and explained a new grammar topic by including examples to facilitate for students a better understanding.

Teacher-students' interaction also occurred while introducing new vocabulary in English. The teacher included new terms or expressions not only related to more colloquial words/expressions but also to academic language in English. For example, the teacher dictated the words to the students to check their listening skills and comprehension in English and to assess their vocabulary. That vocabulary was used in oral activities and some quizzes during each term. The teacher stated that he would give the new vocabulary composed of five academic expressions and five slang expressions. He started to dictate the words one by one. He repeated each word twice while he was moving around the classroom to check students' written spelling of the dictated words. Finally, he wrote the words down on the board and explained their meaning by using several examples. The teacher assessed the use of these words during the oral exam of each term.

In the interviews, the participants in this current study stated that the methodology that the teacher used when introducing the new vocabulary was difficult. At the beginning of the course, the teacher talked rapidly in English and they did not understand what he was saying. However, they tried to guess the word or expression that the teacher wanted them to learn. This type of interaction helped them improve their target language skills of listening, speaking, and writing.

We realized that teacher-students' interaction was frequently used in the development of the class. Even though there were some changes in the topics explained, the pattern was almost the same during each classroom observation: The teacher gives instructions, explanations, and vocabulary of the class, while the students listen attentively and do as instructed. No further exchange of information occurs: the teacher talks and the students do as instructed.

Teacher-Student Interaction

This second type of interaction happens when the teacher initiates an interaction by addressing only one student in particular. This interaction gave the addressed student the opportunity to use English, and the teacher to assess him or her. In doing so, the teacher asked the one particular student direct questions for him or her to use the learned vocabulary in English. We realized that, since the first classroom observation, the teacher orally asked only one student questions such as "how is your day?" or "what do you think about the weather?" Sometimes, the student who had been asked did not know how to answer. Therefore, the

teacher asked their peers for help. After that, the addressed student was supposed to have an idea about what had been asked and what she or he was able to answer.

In this type of interaction, most of the interviewed students expressed that, at the beginning of the course, they did not understand the questions that the teacher asked because of the teacher's higher English language proficiency level. However, they considered it to be a good strategy because they were losing their fear of listening to and using English. At the end of the course, they felt that their oral production had improved.

Teacher-student interaction was also reflected while the teacher was checking one particular student's English language level of speaking. To do so, the teacher asked a student open questions about random topics. This way the student had the opportunity to speak and express his or her ideas. After that, the teacher provided the student with feedback about the vocabulary used, pronunciation of the words, grammar structure, or English language command. For instance in one of the class observations, teacher asked one student what a research task was, and the student gave his own concept about research, then the teacher gave him feedback and he gave a complete meaning about what research was; another example was noticed when the teacher asked one student the meaning of jet lag, given that they were reading about trips; the student was in shock and she could just say that she did not know, then he explain the meaning of the word and told the student not to be afraid of answering. The teacher usually repeated the student's mispronounced words or incorrect grammatical structures. Then, he asked his students in class to reflect on whether or not it was correct. Finally, he gave them the correct pronunciation or appropriate sentence organization.

At other times, the teacher interacted with a particular student through written notes in English. According to the participants, after finishing the oral exam, the teacher gave them a sheet of paper on which he had highlighted the mistakes they had made in the activity. Typical mistakes included commonly mispronounced words, misspelled words, and misused sentence structures. It was common when a student made a mistake that the teacher provided the correction of the mistake in a written way. This written exchange allowed the students to correct their language mistakes with the aim of improving their English language proficiency little by little. The teacher feels that this way of correcting students' mistakes ensures that they do not ingrain mistakes in their memory. Unfortunately, this type of teacher-student interaction was not frequently used by the teacher during a lesson due to time constraints.

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Student-Teacher Interaction

This third type of interaction describes when only one student interacts with the teacher during the classroom activities of a lesson. Here, different from the previous type of interaction, only one student starts interacting with the teacher because the student needs the teacher's help to go on with the classroom activity. In this case, the student perhaps did

not know how to express an idea in English, or the student wanted to know the meaning of a word. In both scenarios, the student received the teacher's help while being favored by having the opportunity to express his or her ideas and to deduce how to pronounce the word or its meaning.

The student-teacher interaction allows the teacher to answer all questions that the students ask. For example, in observation number six, one student did not understand the meaning of the word "lingua franca"; that word was necessary to understand the topic of the text given for the lesson. The teacher explained its meaning by using examples; he gave the student a little explanation of the word. Another example of this interaction was evident in the first observation. In that class, the student had to perform and write a role play with the peers; one student was unsure about how she could say "*deja de molestar*". After being asked by this student, the teacher told her that she could use verbs as "to annoy, to bother, or to disturb" plus various examples by using these verbs. In the interviews, the students and the teacher agreed that this type of interaction fostered a better class atmosphere. Most of the time, this interaction was given when the students prepared an oral or written report.

Students-Teacher Interaction

This fourth type of interaction describes the interaction of the whole or a small group of students with the teacher during a classroom activity. It took place when one student asked the teacher, on behalf of all his or her classmates, to clarify doubts about the class activity, or to talk about classroom situations. An example of clarifying doubts happened throughout the development of the observed lessons when various students did not understand how to complete a specific activity; then, one of the students asked the teacher how to proceed. For instance, during the second observed session, the teacher asked the students to write a role play in English by using the auxiliary *will* or the phrase *going to* to talk about future plans. They did not understand how to complete it and which vocabulary they had to use. Then, one of the students asked the teacher to explain it again. Then, the teacher provided more details on how to complete the activity. The teacher said that they had to work in pairs or groups of three. He also added that they needed to use the vocabulary of unit six. This time, it made it clearer for the students to fully complete the task.

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The students-teacher interaction also happens when the students talk to the teacher about some classroom issues. Sometimes, they interacted in Spanish to have a better explanation of the situation. In the fourth class, for instance, we realized that they spent one hour talking about the performance and the logistics for a cultural English language event. That day, they agreed on different roles and responsibilities to guarantee an outstanding presentation. The teacher and the students started talking about how to allocate roles and responsibilities. At the end, each student had a specific task to accomplish.

Another instance that exemplifies this students-teacher interaction was when the teacher gave them their grades. The students asked the teacher how he had obtained the grades and which aspects he had taken into account when deciding on them. First, the teacher gave them the grades as a group. After that a student asked him about the percentage of each language skill evaluated on the exam. Second, the students asked the teacher specific questions about the aspects that he had taken into account for assessing them.

Students-Students Interaction

Finally, this type of interaction occurred at two levels: individual level (student-student) and group level (students-students). This interaction describes the oral exchanges among students in the classroom. Both levels of interaction commonly occurred when the students worked in groups, when they needed to ask for their partner's help or when they did not understand the teacher's instructions. During all sessions observed, we realized that the teacher frequently proposed group activities that allowed the students to communicate with one or more of their classmates in English. The group-level interaction occurred not only with the members of the work group but also with members of other groups. In the second classroom observation, for example, they were divided into six groups dispersed around the classroom. Most of the groups were talking to each other. They attempted to practice a role play and to look for vocabulary and ideas in their textbooks. Member of different groups gave expressions and ideas to complete the role play. The individual level happens when students interacted in pairs, one with the other. For example, when a student did not know about a topic or did not know how to pronounce a word in English. In the interviews, the students stated that this type of pair interaction allowed them to engage in cooperative work and to learn from each other.

 This students-students interaction was frequently done through verbal and nonverbal language. The students not only communicated with each other by using verbal utterances but also some facial gestures, body language, and even imitation according to the activity given such as worksheets, oral presentations, and exams. In the case of oral presentation and oral exams, they were done with the purpose of evaluating each student's language skill and the ability of communicating using the target language.

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Conclusions and Discussion

Carrying out a naturalistic inquiry allowed us to better understand the importance of interaction in an English as a foreign language classroom mediated by five types of classroom interactions.

Mainly, we conclude that, in a foreign language classroom, there are five interaction patterns that emerge from the context depending on its purpose, who started it, when it occurred, and how it was given. Similar to Lucero's (2015) findings, "a language classroom interaction is composed of varied interaction patterns that the teacher and the learners create, co-construct, and then maintain, all in line with the particular interactional context and the established conventions of the class" (p. 109). These interaction patterns were teacher-student, teacher-students, student-teacher, and students-students. These were intrinsically connected as one complemented the other for the development of the students' speaking skills. These patterns occurred during one or several stages of the session in progress.

Interacting with other people is an ability learned since childhood and started with the social environment that surrounds the individual by giving information about how to communicate with others with a purpose. Interaction favored the development of the language skills in students while working in a cooperative learning manner in which they learned from their classmates and the teacher. Van Lier (1988, as cited in Hermanto, 2005, p. 145) stated that interaction is essential for language learning which occurs in and through participation in speech events; that is, talking to others, or making conversation.

Language classroom interaction is defined as the set of communicative events (conversations or exchanges) that the teacher and learners co-construct from the context to promote language learning and/or language use (Ellis, 1994, as cited in Lucero, 2015, p. 92). The promotion of the language is done through activities carried out during the lessons as communicative tasks in which students are involved in working with their partners by interacting through verbal and non-verbal language in real-life time and a natural context. This process is very similar in a foreign language classroom: each individual is surrounded by an environment that facilitates the use of the foreign language for communicating their ideas, beliefs, and experiences, among others. Language learners need to use, explore, and adapt their language skills to the current linguistics needs and input. That is why different types of classroom interaction, according to their purposes, emerge. These have been organized and classified, highlighting their most relevant and common aspects such as the time and place each one of them took place.

Finally, classroom interaction allowed the participants to communicate their own opinions, beliefs, thoughts, and ideas with their classmates or teachers through their language learning process in class.

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HOW

Digital Skills for Communication and Content Creation: Can B-learning Greatly Influence Them?

Habilidades digitales para la comunicación y la creación de contenidos: ¿Puede el aprendizaje bimodal influenciarlas?

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Abstract

This article reports the results of a study that took place at a private university in Bogota, Colombia. An English language course was the scenario for applying a set of sessions that sought to determine how blended learning could influence the development of digital skills for creativity and communication via a pedagogical intervention during an academic term. A quasi-experimental design was carried out to measure the variable 'communication and content creation skills' by conducting a pre- and post-test survey. From the statistical test, the general hypothesis was accepted for the scope of this study, stating that the b-learning model did not develop the skills chosen in this implementation meaningfully. These findings imply that creativity and communication skills can be influenced by this model; also, thought-content-creation skills received a major influence according to the internal statistical tests. However, the statistical tests that comprised this method also suggested that the impact was not high enough to prove the main hypothesis. Furthermore, findings provide an opportunity to explore research designs that are not common in this field of education.

Keywords: b-learning, content creation, communication, collaboration, digital skills

Resumen

Este artículo muestra los resultados obtenidos de un estudio llevado a cabo en una universidad privada en Bogotá, Colombia. Un curso del programa de inglés fue el escenario de aplicación para unas sesiones didácticas que buscaban establecer cómo el aprendizaje bimodal influenciaba el desarrollo de

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las habilidades de la comunicación y la creación de contenidos en la intervención pedagógica durante un periodo académico. Para este alcance, se desarrolló un estudio con diseño cuasi-experimental para la medición de la variable 'habilidades de comunicación y creación de contenidos' por medio de un diseño de encuesta pre y post test. Las pruebas estadísticas aplicadas al análisis de resultados arrojaron datos que aceptan la hipótesis general propuesta en el estudio, señalando que el aprendizaje bimodal no ejerce una influencia significativa en el desarrollo de las habilidades involucradas. Los hallazgos revelan que las habilidades de creación de contenidos y de comunicación pueden ser influenciadas de acuerdo con las pruebas estadísticas internas, más sin embargo también señalan que su influencia no generó suficiente impacto. Al mismo tiempo, los resultados abogan por explorar diseños de investigación poco comunes en este campo académico.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje bimodal, creación de contenidos, comunicación, colaboración, habilidades digitales

Introduction

Twenty-first century skills for educators have heightened a training wave for digital competency mostly for teachers, instructors, and educators (Rodriguez Armenta, & Padilla, 2007; Area Moreira, Fariña, & San Nicolás, 2012). However, few studies have recently explored the students' domain of digital competency in the national educational context (González-Zabala, Galvis, & González-Zabala, 2016; Casillas & Cabezas, 2017). Some of these formal studies have dealt with the technology and digital literacy as a means to have students excelling in their educational path.

During teaching practices in the EFL field, it is perceived that students' needs face a tremendous fast adaptation yet they are struggling to implement ICT tools use skillfully in education environments. If this situation persists, teachers, educators, and institutions may also struggle with some distant and not easy ways to access and facilitate language learning activities, such as students and teachers feeling incompetent or dealing with unsatisfactory classwork or tasks taking place in training activities which involve ICT use.

In order to tackle the previous pedagogical background in the educational context of this pedagogical intervention, the scope of the research study presented in this article explores a set of skills known as the digital competency framework (DigComp) by the European Commission (Ferrari et al., 2013). The key factor was to explore these skills in professional practices in foreign language courses such as English language courses. In this way, this study inquired about how the b-learning model can provide influence on the development of digital skills for communication, collaboration, and content creation within a group of Business Administration students while taking an English language course at a higher education institution. In terms of the application, a non-randomized control group, pre-test and post-test research design was used for the analysis of data in this pedagogical implementation.

An important initial attempt has been investigated by a research group whose aim was to design an instrument in which digital competency could be measured to guarantee better academic performance in a private university (Cantor, Corchuelo, Montenegro, & Pinzón, 2016). Findings of this study have resulted in one instrument that has been used inside the institution to classify levels of competency and performance of the students of the university.

Other research studies[2] have found great importance in the same context of higher education, mainly involving b-learning implementations in higher education institutions as in Spain (Aznar Díaz, 2005; Echeverría, 2017). The findings discuss the positive aspects of quality and innovation practices associated with this education model. Other studies involving resources and online tools were evaluated as a consistent methodology for the b-learning courses in higher education (Álvarez, Rodríguez, & Ribeiro, 2011). Furthermore, in Mexico, a study explored scientific competencies through a b-learning model (Gay, 2014). The major results pinpointed a development of professional skills and teaching strategies that were beneficial to learning experiences and proposed the limitations of the b-learning model. Finally, in Colombia, a study which sought teachers' and students' perspectives in higher education, after years of implementation with b-learning, (Arango Vásquez, Quinceno, & Vásquez, 2016) presented a case disputing four main characteristics of the pedagogical and didactic implication for the b-learning model implementation.

Encouraged by this current status, the research study in this article proposes the following general research question: How significant can b-learning influence the development of digital skills for communication and collaboration, and skills for content creation within an English course in a group of business administration students?

Conceptual Framework

In order to review the elements regarding digital competency in the higher education field, I will embark on an encompassing conceptualization of the core concepts for this study as being blended-learning education, digital competency, and its areas comprehended by digital skills for communication and collaboration, and digital skills for content creation.

Blended-learning as an Alternative Model for Higher Education

B-learning education has been defined as the balanced mix or blend of two learning modalities; the first takes place on site and the second takes place online anytime a student

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2   The studies cited in this paragraph were done within many professional programs, not exactly in EFL. However, they were conducted under advice of professionals in education. These also focused on statistical analysis, which is congruent with the type of analysis presented in this current study.

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devotes him or herself to independent learning. B-learning has also been referred to as hybrid learning by many authors (de Benito Crosetti, Gisbert Cervera, Pérez García, & Salinas Ibáñez, 2018; Marsh, McFadden & Price, 2003), meaning the same within the education model, and in this research report adopted as b-learning. This concept has been flagged by authors such as Llorente (2010), and Sharma and Barrett (2007), among others, with a strong emphasis on time distribution not only as a pedagogical and institutional decision but also as an attempt for the best ICT incorporation practices in teaching and learning endeavors.

Since models in education were framed by the use of emerging technologies registered back in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, such as computer-based learning (CBL) and more so with the Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Levy, 1997); there have been certain transformations which can shape educational programs differently from a single face-to-face teaching model.

Nowadays, technological tools and a variety of services can highly improve the amount of time, effectiveness, and the modality in which learners can choose how learning is carried out. No longer can onsite classrooms be provided with resources of spaces for learning environments, but some b-learning strategies can be adopted as an institutional decision for academic programs to develop.

This research study finds the concept of b-learning as Llorente (2010) claimed: a learning modality that combines the best face-to-face teaching strategies with the best flexibility from online learning, all of this integrated towards the benefits of student-centeredness with technology support.

Furthermore, some essential considerations by other authors need to be reflected upon for this complete, let us say, 'recipe'. For Hooie (2013), this educational model gains effectiveness over the teacher's role since it is mentioned that:

> It allows us to keep the best of existing practice, while trying new strategies designed to make us more effective; when applied correctly, blended learning enables us to focus on the most essential teacher roles. In other words, blended learning pinpoints the strategies that makes us most effective and frees time for us to focus on those strategies. (Hooie, 2013, p. 6)

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For this author, the b-learning model shares that kind of formula in which all learning activities take place in two settings: one that takes place on site with the best strategies to extend upon for students, and the other that takes place online to take the best advantages of it. Additionally, this model explains that what is being 'blended' is any kind of traditional instruction that obtains the best of its complements with online instruction (Bersin, 2004). That is precisely why the research study presented in this article considers an empowering opportunity to take the best advantage of this model

for education rather than a traditional path. Professionals are facing the trend of rapid change in higher education, which requires them to possess a set of skills suitable for the 21st Century.

What Digital Competency Diverges

The second concept I will be looking at is digital competency. Concerning the current research study, this competency stems from the vast theme of digital literacy, and later sorts itself into sets of areas of competency. Digital competency is a grouping of knowledge, attitudes, and abilities that permit a citizen, in this case a student, to have a critical choice and use ICT tools, so that work, learning, and leisure goals are achieved with inclusion and social participation (Ferrari et al., 2013).

In particular, the framework referred to as DigComp by the European Commission Joint Research Center has been avowed as a set of skills which implies the knowledge and attitudes to achieve a certain goal as a confident, critical, and creative ICT user (Ferrari et al., 2013). The competency can be used for all areas of human activities such as working life, professional training, learning, and even leisure. The digital competency and areas are well distinguished from information literacy in the sense that they require much more effort and conscious technical capacities for a citizen to identify, use, and handle well, any kind of ICT resource for personal use. More assertively, digital competency is made up of these skills since they imply the use beyond a simple canny choice of digital means. As a final point, for a citizen to become digitally competent, she or he must possess the ability to decide and discern from the good works within a digital world (Esteve & Gisbert, 2013, p. 31).

Considering that the broad and complex taxonomy of digital competency is made up of numerous skills and six or eight levels of performance, the current research study only targets these two areas: communication and collaboration as well as content creation because these areas were the ones most related to the pedagogical intervention. The following paragraphs expand on these areas.

Digital Competency: Skills for Communication

On the one hand, this main area of competence refers to the necessary skills to establish communication and collaboration with others within digital environments (Carretero, Vuorikari, & Punie, 2017). With a set of six skills, this area is classified into a complex taxonomy which bears those related to (1) interaction within digital technologies, (2) sharing through digital technologies, (3) getting involved in citizenship, (4) collaboration through digital technologies, (5) using proper ways, and (6) administering digital identities.

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Digital Competency: Skills for Content Creation

On the other hand, this area refers to the skill to create, edit, integrate, and modify digital contents in both ways, pre-existing ones or those created from scratch. Divided into four skills, this area contains the following skills descriptors: (1) using digital content creation forms, (2) integrating and re-elaborating digital content, (3) understanding and protecting rights and authorship, and (4) programing skills domain (Carretero et al., 2017).

In closing, this conceptual framework greatly assists the research in defining a current state of the art that has, rather, been scarcely explored nationwide as a means of measuring digital competency and skills handled by students in higher education levels.

Research Design

Concerning exploring the combination of b-learning and digital skills for communication and content creation, these two skills areas became variables for the research design and are explained as follows. A quantitative and quasi-experimental pre- and post-test design was carried out to measure the influence gained, with the dependent variable against the independent variable under the pedagogical intervention or treatment for the following reasons. The quasi-experimental research consists of the deliberate manipulation of at least one independent variable in order to observe its behavior and effect on other variables (Hernández, Baptista, & Fernández, 2014, p. 151). In this study, the focus on the variables was established as the independent variable being b-learning, and the dependent variable as the digital skills. By independent variable, it implies that the experimental group will receive the treatment and control using b-learning sessions. Also, the dependent variable implies that digital skills for communication and collaboration will be integrated in the sessions for both groups, control and experimental.

Additionally, the quasi-experimental study uses a random sample selection criterion that does not feature the nature of the study. As a result, to perform the sampling and apply the research design, the quasi-experimental designs are similar to the experimental design of random samples because it involves the manipulation of variables and also differs in that subjects are not randomly chosen for the treatment group (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2010, p. 328). It is important to keep in mind that these criteria chosen for the research design can provide control over the variables which were handled in the study. This means that the variable *digital skills for communication and content creation* was controlled during the pedagogical intervention by providing the same learning practices and all participants were taught within the same English program goals. Nevertheless, the variable b-learning was part of this treatment in the experimental group only.

Three single steps were considered for implementing this research design as follows:

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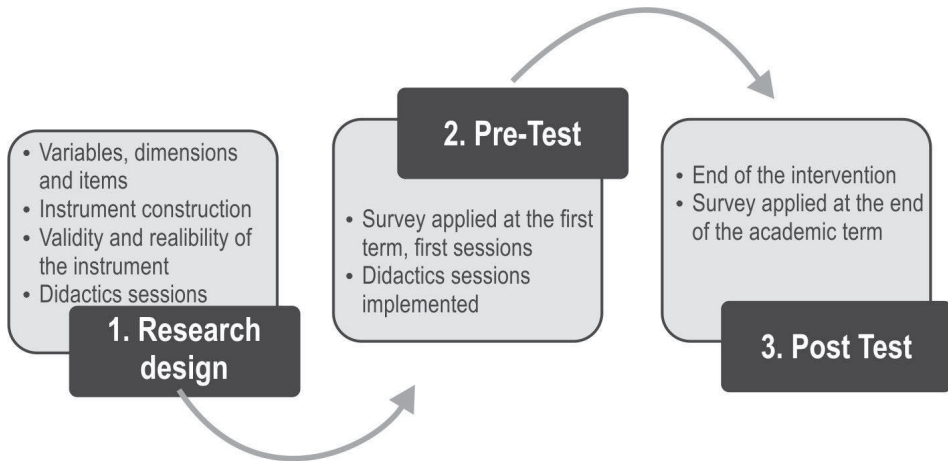
Figure 1. Steps of the Research and Data Collection

This design permitted the implementation of a pedagogical intervention with two different groups of students under certain conditions in a normal learning process and to observe the phenomenon of the development of digital skills.

Pedagogical Implementation: A Blend between English Language Lessons and Digital Skills

In this current study, the two areas of digital competency were considered within the following scenario especially addressed to explore, understand, and implement learning tasks for the digital skills training. This intervention was conducted during a single academic term in an English language course at a private university in Bogota, Colombia. The atmosphere and characteristics of the groups in this English course for the implementation were a guarantee that bias factors could alter the experiment, such as participants enrolled from other professional studies, other teaching styles, or students enrolled in superior English language proficiency levels. In this way, the factors could interfere with the variable, at least for digital skills development. This explains choices and criteria required to manipulate the variables for the quantitative analysis properly.

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Finally, a set of didactic sessions were designed based on the syllabus for the current English language program at the institution in which some activities had to be carried out during b-learning distribution by the teacher (See Appendix A, sample of didactic sessions design). The sessions were authorized and shared with the academic head of the department

to be functional in the academic term. The purpose of these sessions was to provide certain tasks to be achieved by means of collaboration and creation of digital content according to each of the groups.

Instrumentation

In the first step, the instrument for this study was devised as an adapted summary taken from the skills proposed by the theory constructs of digital competency areas (Ferrari et al., 2013). Afterwards, having the dimensions established and their specific indicators per skill, the selection of items in the survey was a group of statements articulated as a capacity, ability, behavior, or attitude against certain domains.

Furthermore, the construction of this survey required validity and reliability to be used to avoid bias in the study (Ary et al., 2010). Validation was applied by having the instrument examined under careful analysis by a panel of three expert ICT professors in order to classify items in the survey with the criteria of relevance, sufficiency, clarity, and coherence. After this, the first piloting survey was reduced from 39 to 34 items (See Appendix B).

Subsequently, the survey was piloted with a group of a similar population before being applied to the focused groups. Finally, the internal reliability coefficient test was run to determine the Cronbach's alfa coefficient (Bryman, 2012). In this reliability test, this coefficient obtained a high reliability and consistency number with a value of $\alpha = 0.953$, which could corroborate substantial consistency among items for the strength on the final version of this survey.

To determine the influence in the experiment analysis, three categories were established as the level of perception that participants had about their own performance relating to each ability. The categories matched the ones in the theory by Ferrari et al. (2013) in which levels of performances of the digital competency are basic, intermediate, and advanced[3].

Population and Sample

Fifty business administration students, enrolled in the same English level I course, willingly participated in both groups. In this population, 52% were male participants and 48% were female. Also, 68% of the participants were from 18 to 25 years-old; 20% were from 26-33 years-old; and 12 % were over 34 years-old.

On the one hand, the experiment implies a control group of 25 students which received regular teaching sessions with the traditional English language program, same syllabus.

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[3]   Please, look at Ferrari et al. (2013) for a detailed description of these three levels of performances of the digital competency.

Lessons for this group took place on campus with no emphasis on digital skills implicitly provided. On the other hand, an experimental group of 25 students was taught the same English language lessons with adapted blended-learning sessions which required certain communication and collaboration or content creation digital skills in certain tasks online directly.

Data Collection

This research was implemented within a regular academic program. The English level I program consisted of 16 weeks and 32 hours of direct work, and students were instructed in a single two-hour weekly session. From these regular sessions, just 10 of them were chosen as the pedagogical intervention sessions with the syllabus and tasks oriented to the digital skills development. The survey previously described was applied in two different moments with both groups; first, as a pre-test at the beginning of the academic term 2019-I, and a post-test after the pedagogical implementation was completed.

The first stage called pre-test helps the statistical analysis determine whether the data obtained presented normal or abnormal distribution, and thus, this step helps decide which test corresponds to the data analysis. To illustrate how this survey can reveal and account for the influence the research pursues, these were the hypotheses being tested once the survey was applied during the academic term:

Main Hypothesis
- H_0 B-learning does not influence meaningfully the development of digital skills for communication (Dimension 1) and content creation (Dimension 2).

Specific Hypotheses
- H_{0-D1} B-learning does not influence meaningfully the development of digital skills for communication and collaboration.
- H_{0-D2} B-learning does not influence meaningfully the development of digital skills for content creation.

Further on, the implemented tests provided the analysis in the following direction: a survey was applied comprised of tests to prove this hypothesis per group and per moment; this is the pre-test and post-test. Due to this need, two kinds of statistics were run, and a significance level was provided to prove each hypothesis as explained in the next section.

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Statistical Tests for Hypotheses

Firstly, the study opted for nonparametric techniques in data interpretation. The Mann-Whitney U test was chosen because of the need of analysis over the two groups, and to

establish if the difference found in ranked values is statistically meaningful against the hypothesis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012, p. 237). Also, as this group of experts declared, this test is used when the data were obtained from two independent samples (Ary et al., 2010). Additionally, the Wilcoxon signed rank test was used in the values obtained due to the nature of the descriptive categories and items used in the data interpretation procedure as two paired groups are compared using descriptive and ordinal categories.

The significance level was established as 5%, which means that the value determined to reject the null hypothesis in each section of the study must show a value of p. ≤ 0.05 (equivalent or under) to prove statistical and meaningful difference.

Findings

The general findings shared in this section correspond, at first, to the general hypothesis and the analysis of both dimensions (dimension 1- communication, and dimension 2- content creation). For this purpose, the results present both moments of the survey application of the pre-test and post-test, and the two groups, experimental and control samples. Therefore, some techniques of inferential statistical analysis were used when data were analyzed. The following figure shows percentages on the skills improvement by level of performance obtained with the survey:

In Figure 2, we can observe the pre-test and post-test results showing that only two categories were found in the results: intermediate and advanced. In the experimental
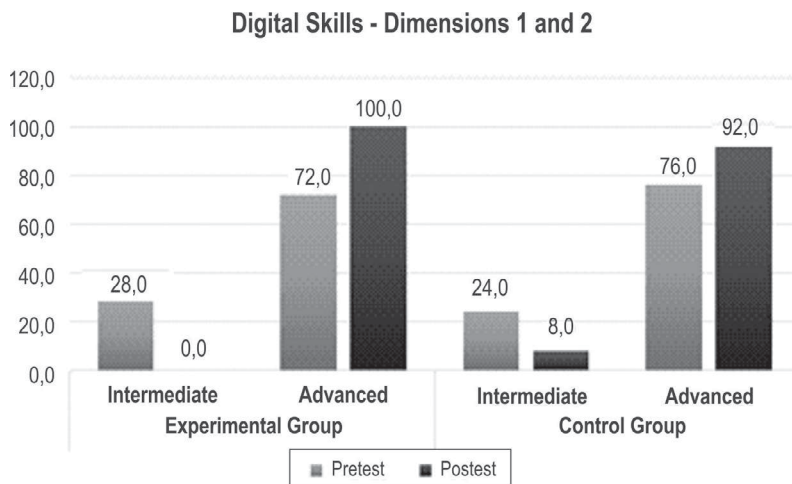
Figure 2. Digital Skills General Test Result

group, there was an evident improvement of all skills from 72 % to 100% in the advanced category, which explains that many individuals evolved after the pedagogical implementation. While in the control group, from 76% to 92 % in the category of advanced, this shows an improvement of just a 16%. These results merely indicate that there was somewhat a progression in digital skills during the moments the study took place; however, it judges 28% in the experimental group as a slight indicator to convey as a successful method in this study.

The following figure represents the values obtained when running the analysis of skills for communication and collaboration dimension isolated.
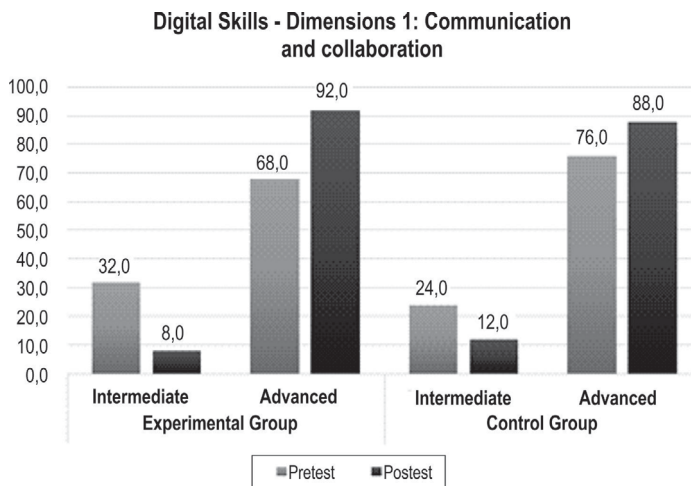
Figure 3. Dimension 1- Communication and Collaboration Results

We can observe in Figure 3 that dimension 1 items account for the data behavior in communication skills. In the experimental group, there were from 68% to 92 % of participants who were scored in the advanced category, which denotes an improvement of 24% in these skills. On the other hand, in the control group a 76% changing to 88% of advanced participants were classified in the advanced category, which is interpreted as a high domain level after the implementation was done. This reveals that just 24% (intermediate) and 12% (advanced) of the participants moved amid categories and provided the study with deficient evidence of improvement of digital skills for communication.

As a summary for the data analyzed about skills for content creation, Figure 4 is presented.

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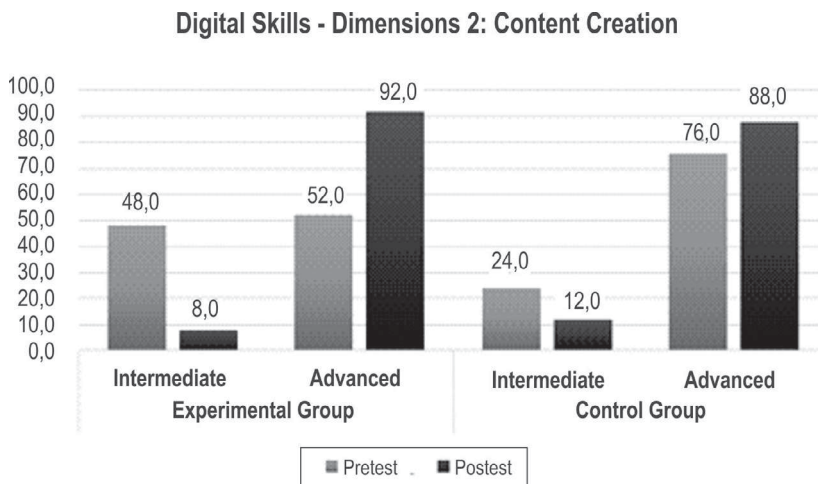
Figure 4. Dimension 2- Content Creation Results

In Figure 4, the behavior of items regarding dimension 2 are observed in digital content creation. In the experimental group, most of the participants who felt their content creation skills were intermediate could highly progress towards the advanced category by the end of the intervention; from 52% to 92 % showed a positive shift of their development of skills by 40%. And in the control group, those participants who increased from 76% to 88% on the post-test, achieved an unexpected low change of just 12%. Alternately, this issue could be viewed as favorable for the impact of the b-learning model on the development of digital skills for content creation.

Results for Statistical Tests for Hypotheses

The first statistical test performed with the values in the general hypothesis found a value of significance Sig. 0.750, in the pre-test; as a consequence, this could guarantee that all participants were on par with the stage and category of skills development. In other words, at the moment the pre-test was carried out, there were not any incongruent differences in the 50 participants related to their level of performance and it means most of the values were even or at the same level.

Presently, the value found at the moment of post-test, was Sig. 0.153, which makes the study assesses the main hypothesis as accepted. What this means is, there was not a significant level of change within the values obtained to demonstrate that the control group

is meaningfully different from the experiment group. There is no statistically significant influence from b-learning in the development of these skills in the setting.

Subsequently, the other statistical tests Mann-Whitney U tests and Wilcoxon were performed to analyze the values obtained in each detailed segment separately; this is, values obtained across experimental and control groups to compare the level of performance, values obtained across the pedagogical implementation span (pretest and posttest) to compare improvement, and those obtained individually in each dimension of the digital abilities (communication and content creation) to compare elements of the competency. These values were Sig. 0.014, Sig, 0.083, Sig. 0.002, and according to the stated value of significance, these figures indicate that there was not enough relevant difference in any of the analyses mentioned. (See Appendix C for statistical figures).

As a consequence, for this research study, it was found that, according to the accepted null hypothesis, there is no significant statistical evidence to determine that b-learning can highly influence the development of the skills in these dimensions given the research settings.

Conclusion and Discussion

The main conclusion of this study claims that the statistical tests show little to no significant difference to reassure that b-learning can significantly influence the development of the digital skills considered in the experiment. Many astonished reactions may provoke a lack of faith in the nature of quasi-experimental study and quantitative research alone. In spite of this misconception, I dare to question whether traditional teaching and styles fail, or the technology is pervading all teaching methods now, and that some digital skills are acquired at a certain degree transcending work, school life, and learning.

The main findings of this study overlap with González Montero (2017), since in the higher educational context, students do not obtain instrumental digital competencies, but are only found to be competent users for those tools of frequent access and use. More precisely, the development of digital skills should encounter a system of beliefs, attitudes, and emotions acquired by the actors in this education context. This research also coincides with Flores, Gómez, and Zambrano (2015), whose research found low levels of performance in knowledge when measuring some categories of digital literacy such as the use of ICTs for learning related tasks. They mentioned that even though there exists certain evidence on know-how over certain tools and programs, they are found to be limited to the use and application for the academic task, yet are not beyond this requirement.

Moreover, this research study confronts Echeverría (2017) when presenting the use of b-learning as a method that overcomes and surpasses the traditional method applied in higher educational contexts alike. I agreed on the view that empowering roots of b-learning

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are recommendable uses as a perfect complement for a learning and teaching best practice 'recipe', but not quite as a whole change.

Blended learning can efficiently empower those scenarios in which learners can be using their learning time and the manner in which they use some technology resources is part of what needs to be properly blended for this 'learning recipe'.

With this research study, the main conclusion to be drawn is that even though learning processes can highly influence digital competency training, many of the other learning activities in progress and traditional learning can potentially provide indirectly such development; the blended learning approach should receive a more precise cross-curricular implementation. The most outstanding conclusion in this research is that b-learning is just one of the vast sets of influential components in learning to account for digital competency. As concerns English language instructors and educators, they have always applied teaching and learning activities which permit that 'blend' to happen, even if they are working from the best traditional practice. One example of this blend is taking place when adopting flipped learning practices (Buitrago & Díaz, 2018). Educators can always provide some alternatives to ´blend´ their own practices by benefitting from ICT tools incorporated wisely to pedagogical practices which are not always framed under a certain educational model; however, there is a need to name and embrace new frameworks for education to go beyond the classroom, to generate a meaningful impact.

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Appendix A. Sample of didactic sessions design

Syllabus English Level- I

Group	English 1	
Goal Session No. 4: Students will be able to use interaction questions to start a conversation by exchanging personal bio-data information		
Digital skill area 2- creation of digital content- Skill: creates, edits, makes digital resources with a personal expression form.		
Language Competence	**Experimental Session 2**	
By the end of this week, the student is able to identify and use personal question forms to exchange personal information in an interaction by using Wh. questions (present simple form)	Week 4	Weekly Hours: 2 Hrs on Campus. 2 Hrs Online Tasks
Learning Activities		**Digital Resources**
2.1. Students identify and use information questions and forms in present simple to interact with others		Class materials: – Audio- Textbook and its own online platform – Digital resources for content creation: Audio recording creation and storage: – Vocaroo.com – Online-voice-recorder.com – Ivoox.com Resources for autonomous extra tasks - blended session: Online virtual class LMS, and textbook platform
2.2 Students use and express questions using proper grammar with Wh. words: (what do you do? -where do you live-who's …- when is your birthday? - how old are you /is she?, etc.)		
2.3. Students exchange information related to situations where personal bio data is required in a fictional scenario. The use of intonation and sounds are checked in audio recordings. Questions used: (E.g. What's your name? How old are you? What's your address? When's your birthday? Where do you live? etc.).		
2.4 Control Group: Students are able to express personal information through a live conversation, and are also able to exchange information. (Class time role-play) **Experimental Group**: Students are able to express personal information through a live interaction with a peer (online audio-recording), by means of topics practiced during this session. Then, students should share the audio recording material for class feedback.		

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Assessment Activity
Shareable Audio Recording:
Teacher will assess the audio-recording (or role-play in case CG) interaction in which two or three students are exchanging personal information, jobs, occupations/ studies, and other personal details
Assessment Criteria & Instrument
– **Instrument**: Class activity assessment rubric- Language Skill: Speaking- Format is adjusted in a virtual class platform. – *Criteria*: pronunciation, use of grammar (possessive adjectives, verb to be, simple present, basic opinion adjectives), language and content (how many questions used or how many personal details were exchanged).
Further Autonomous Tasks Preparation
Reading and Listening strategies (From the textbook used)

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Appendix B. Summary of the instrument

Dimensions	Indicator	Item No.	Items
D1- Communication And Collaboration	I1. Interacts through means of digital technology	1	I can use any basic digital means to communicate with others (e.g., instant messaging, email, smartphone, video calls, etc.)
		2	I can manage many digital means of communication to interact with others
		3	I can manage, add, modify, adapt digital means to communicate, interact and work with others
		4	I can guide others and explain how to modify, add, search contacts, and adapt digital means of communication
	I2. Shares information with others through digital technologies	5	I can share simple data and information with others (e.g., send, attach audio, media, images, text, files, videos, etc.)
		6	On my own, I can share data, information and other media through digital technologies
		7	I can show others and give solutions against various digital means of communication to share data through digital technologies
		8	I can create solutions and integrate my own forms of sharing data through digital technologies properly
	I3. Participates and engages in social practices and citizenship through digital technologies	9	I can use basic forms of social networking or participation services (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, instant messaging groups, virtual classrooms, etc.)
		10	On my own, I can use a wide range of social participation and website services, portals or social communities (e. g., follow, hashtag, tags, among others)

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Dimensions	Indicator	Item No.	Items
D1-Communication and Collaboration	I3. Participates and engages in social practices and citizenship through digital technologies	11	I am an active online user of many online services (personal accounts, platforms, online virtual classroom in LMS, apps for learning, etc.)
	I4. Uses digital media to collaborate with others	12	I can use basic tools to collaborate online with others (e.g., drive, blogs, forums, etc.)
		13	I can manage to work in teams about a certain task assigned online
		14	I can handle a variety of online team collaboration tools and I can also guide others how to manage to use them
		15	I am willing to work online, share, work, collaborate with others according to certain tasks
	I5 Shows adequate behavior in the use of digital technologies: ethic online	16	I can use basic behavior rules and standard online good manners (e.g., writing skills, tone, level of formality and proper spelling with English language usage)
		17	I can make sure and check on what I write before publishing online
		18	I clearly distinguish the proper language to be used in certain online environments
		19	I can guide others on how to use good manners, rules, and online behavior (netiquette)
	I6. Manages and protects one's own identity in the digital environments	20	I use my personal data carefully and reasonably (users, passwords, browsers, phone numbers, addresses, etc.)
		21	I can create my online profile in academic or social contexts online
		22	I know and recognize basic forms of data protection and security online
D2-Digital Content Creation	I1. Develops digital content to express and connect with others	23	I can manage to create simple and basic multimedia using digital technologies (e.g., images, infographics, video, audio, slides, online documents, etc.)

Dimensions	Indicator	Item No.	Items
D2-Digital Content Creation	I1. Develops digital content to express and connect with others	24	I can use a wide range of different digital tools to create multimedia content for my tasks
		25	I can modify and edit digital pre-existing content to express myself
		26	I can guide others on how to create, edit, modify digital content by digital technologies
	I2. Integrates, modifies and adapts digital content	27	I can re-elaborate, modify and edit new digital content according to my own purposes (e.g., blogs, wikis, forums, websites, micro-sites, etc.)
		28	I can re-design my own illustration tools and means of organizing information with digital technologies (slides, online mind maps, infographics, etc.)
	I3. Identifies and explains licenses and copyrights in digital environments	29	When using information from the digital technologies, I acknowledge authorship, sources and references and /or quotes
		30	I understand what plagiarism is and I can act cautiously on using the information found in digital technologies
		31	I can recognize and acknowledge copyrights found in any source by digital technologies
		32	I understand the existence of licenses and ethic proper acting in the responsible use of information
	I4. Domains certain configuration and programming procedures	33	I understand basic forms of operating a technological device like a smartphone, tablet or laptop and its apps
		34	I can follow simple steps for installing applications on devices to be used in certain tasks

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Appendix C. Statistics Figures

1. Wilcoxon tests performed (Analysis of data obtained comparing related samples)

Statistic test assessing related samples in pre and post text - General variable*

		Postest-Pretest
Experimental	Z	-2.646[b]
Group	Sig.	0.008
Controlled	Z	-2.000
Group	Sig	0.046

a Wilcoxon test based on negative ranks
b Based on Signed rank test
Note: Significance level 5%

2. Mann- Whitney U test performed (Analysis of data obtained comparing independent samples)

Statistic test comparing independent samples - General variable*

	Pretest	Postest
Mann-Whitney U test	300.000	287.500
W - Wilcoxon	625.000	612.500
Z	-0.319	--1.429
Sig A (bilateral)	0.750	0.153

Note: Significance level 5%

3. Statistics tests for analyzing general variable

Group of test for the general variable: Digital skills

Statistic test comparing independent samples - General variable*

	Pretest	Postest
Mann-Whitney U test	300.000	287.500
W - Wilcoxon	625.000	612.500
Z	-0.319	-1.429
Sig A (bilateral)	0.750	0.153

Note: Significance level 5%

Statistic test assessing related samples in pre and post text - General variable*

		Postest -Pretest
Experimental	Z	-2.646[b]
Group	Sig.	0.008
Control	Z	-2.000[b]
Group	Sig.	0.046

b Based on Signed rank test
Note: Significance level 5%

4. Statistics tests for analyzing dimension 1

Group of test for Dimension 1. Communication and collaboration skills

Statistic test comparing independent samples - Dimension 1. Communication and collaboration skills

	Pretest	Postest
Mann-Whitney U test	287.500	300.000
W - Wilcoxon	612.500	625.000
Z	-0.624	-0.467
Sig.	0.533	0.641

Note: Significance level 5%

Statistic test assessing related samples in pre and post text - Dimension 1. Communication and collaboration skills

		Postest -Pretest
Experimental	Z	-2.449[b]
Group	Sig.	0.014
Control	Z	-1.732[b]
Group	Sig.	0.083

b Based on Signed rank test
Note: Significance level 5%

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5. Statistics tests for analyzing dimension 2

Group of test for Dimension 1. Communication and collaboration skills

Statistic test comparing independent samples - Dimension 2. Content creation skills

	Pretest	Postest
Mann-Whitney U test	237.500	300.000
W - Wilcoxon	562.500	625.000
Z	-1.750	-0.467
Sig.	0.080	0.641

Note: Significance level 5%

Statistic test assessing related samples in pre and post text - Dimension 2. Content creation skills

		Postest -Pretest
Experimental	Z	-3.162[b]
Group	Sig.	0.002
Control	Z	-1.342[b]
Group	Sig.	0.180

b Based on Signed rank test
Note: Significance level 5%

HOW

The Effectiveness of Using the Lexical Approach to Developing Ethiopian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Competence

La efectividad del uso del Enfoque Léxico para desarrollar la competencia de vocabulario en estudiantes etíopes de inglés como lengua extranjera

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of teaching vocabulary through the lexical instructional approach in EFL intermediate level students. Ninety-five (95) students participated in a non-equivalent pre-test-post-test quasi-experimental design study. The participants were given vocabulary competence pre-test in order to check their homogeneity in terms of their vocabulary knowledge. Then, following the similitude of the results they scored, the participants were randomly assigned as experimental group and the control group. For sixteen (16) weeks, the experimental group was taught by providing students with chunks and/or collocates of words through using collocation dictionaries, concordance programs, chunk-for-chunk translation activities, and corpus-based activities etc. Whereas, the control group was taught the new words in isolation with conventional teaching techniques; for example, translation at single word level, synonyms, antonyms, and definitions. After the instructional intervention, both groups participated in a vocabulary competence post-test. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 22 was employed to analyse the results. In this regard, an independent Samples T-test was run and the findings of the study showed that the experimental group outperformed the

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control group in the post-test which implies that teaching vocabulary with a lexically-based instruction can improve EFL learners' vocabulary competence or knowledge. Furthermore, the study results suggest that the lexical instructional approach should be the focus of future experimental research.

Keywords: collocation, lexical approach, lexical chunks, lexical instructional intervention, vocabulary competence

Resumen

Este estudio investigó los efectos de la enseñanza del vocabulario por medio del enfoque lexico instruccional en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel intermedio. Noventa y cinco (95) estudiantes participaron en el estudio de diseño cuasi-experimental con pre- y post-test. A los participantes se les dio un pre-test de competencia de vocabulario con el fin de revisar la homogeneidad en su conocimiento sobre el mismo. Luego, siguiendo la similitud en los puntajes resultantes, a los participantes se les distribuyó aleatoriamente en un grupo de control y en otro experimental. Por dieciséis semanas, al grupo experimental se le enseñó con bloques y parejas de palabras usando diccionarios, programas equivalentes, y actividades de traducción de bloque a bloque y de corpus; mientras que al grupo de control se le enseñó las nuevas palabras por separado con técnicas de enseñanza convencionales, por ejemplo, traducción de cada palabra, sinónimos, antónimos y definiciones. Luego de la intervención instruccional, ambos grupos participaron en un post-test de competencia de vocabulario. Para analizar los resultados, se usó el software SPSS, versión 22. En este sentido, se usó también un T-test de muestra independiente cuyos resultados mostraron que el grupo experimental sobrepasó el grupo de control en el post-test, lo que implica que la enseñanza del vocabulario basada en el enfoque léxico puede mejorar la competencia o el conocimiento de vocabulario en los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Es más, los resultados del estudio sugieren que el enfoque lexico instruccional debería ser el foco de futuras investigaciones experimentales sobre el tema.

Palabras clave: bloques léxicos, competencia en vocabulario, enfoque léxico, intervención léxico-instruccional, parejas léxicas

Introduction

The ever-growing need for good communication skills in English language has created a huge demand for teaching this language around the world. Millions of people today take different opportunities such as formal instruction, study abroad, media etc. to improve their command of English language. From these opportunities, the first one i.e. formal instruction is highly required to target an enormous demand for quality language teaching and language teaching materials (Richards, 2006). In relation to formal instruction, it is a known fact that there are different teaching approaches and methods which have been used to teach English language in different contexts and settings. Lexical approach is one of the communicative approaches that is being practiced these days. Theoretically, efforts were made to bring a paradigm shift on what traditionally claimed vocabulary and its teaching; for instance, language experts started recognizing the meaning-making potential of words

and their importance for the second and foreign language learners (e.g. Singleton, 2000; McCarthy, O'Keeffe, & Walsh, 2010). Different corpus-based evidences, which are the basis of lexical approach (Selivan, 2018), began to state the major role of vocabulary, later claimed to be lexis, in languages. Some innovative developments took place in lexicography which involved, as Carter (2001) puts it, "extensive corpora of spoken and written language and the creation of sophisticated computer-based access tools for such corpora" (p. 43) in the late 1980s and 1990s. Examples of such developments are the Collins Birmingham University International Language Database (COBUILD), Cambridge International Corpus, British National Corpus, etc.

The empirical data offered by these corpora studies enabled researchers to study the behaviour of words and expressions which in turn led them to question the traditional notions about the primacy of grammar in language and language pedagogy. This dominance of grammar and/or the relegation of words was highly opposed by Lewis (1993) who put forward his lexical approach--focusing on developing learners' lexical proficiency as an alternative to grammar-based approaches. Briefly speaking, the lexical approach, in second language acquisition, is an approach which concentrates on the role of lexis in English language learning rather than a primary focus on grammar (Lewis, 1993; Barcroft, 2004). It is an approach which considers the use of chunking and collocations at the centre of language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Scrivener, 2011). Thus, lexical approach can be summarized as a practically applicable methodology (Westfall & Weber, 2005; Lewis, 2008), which places communication of meaning at the heart of language and language learning.

What is more, the Lexical Approach introduced a new paradigm for second language education, claiming that language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalised grammar (Lewis, 1993). More clearly, grammaticalized lexis refers to a word grammar approach in which the learner moves out from a word to discover its collocations and dominant grammatical patterns. For example, take this utterance: My mother holds very strong views on the subject of marriage. From this sentence target language learners notice that we can 'hold a view' that 'a view can be strong' and the word view is followed by the preposition 'on'. This leaves the learner with a chunk of a language: to hold very strong views on (something). Grammaticalized lexis which is sometimes referred as Word Grammar Approach tends to dissolve the strict dichotomy that we draw between grammar and vocabulary. Whereas, lexicalized grammar refers to the traditional 'slot and filler' approach in which prominent structures such as the tenses are highlighted. For example, in a typical lesson on the present perfect tense, the target language is presented with: I have been to …, but I haven't been to …yet. Here, the learner is encouraged to complete this frame with suitable vocabulary items. Example, I have been to America, but I haven't been to Italy yet. Thus, the lexicalized grammar, which is sometimes referred to as the slot-and-filler approach, enables the target language learner to produce huge amounts of grammatically well-formed language.

Lexical Approach plays significant roles in improving EFL/ESL learners 'vocabulary competence. For clarification, Vocabulary/lexical competence is the ability to use words (i.e. their forms, meanings, and uses) in appropriate and effective ways in verbal interaction (Nation, 2001); it is a part of the communicative competence (Decarrico, 2001). According to Nation (2001), vocabulary competence directly shows the question of 'what does to know a word mean?' Therefore, lexical instruction is perhaps most compatible with communicative, task-based, text-based, and content-based approaches in which there is an emphasis on rich exposure to input (Timmis, 2008). Lexical Approach focuses on the concept 'lexis' to broaden the traditional notion of vocabulary, including under his (Lewis's) umbrella term both individual words and 'lexical chunks', i.e., groups of words that are commonly found together. To be brief, Lewis's notion, i.e. lexical approach in this paper, mainly includes: words and poly words, collocations, fixed expressions, and semi-fixed expressions.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain that Lexical Approach holds the belief that "the building blocks of language learning and communication are not grammar, functions, notions, or some other unit of planning and teaching but lexis, that is, words and word combinations" (p. 132). The immediate implication of Lewis's Lexical Approach for ELT is that teachers should help in the development of the learners' store of words and, especially, lexical chunks. Then, learners can retrieve these repertoire of chunks from their memory during language use. In other words, teachers should help in the development of learners' vocabulary/ lexical competence, which, among other things, includes the ability to use words and chunks in a variety of contexts in which their use is possible. Pedagogically, there are views about how teachers possibly do to enable target language learners develop their vocabulary/lexical competence. In this concern, there are three broad approaches to vocabulary teaching and learning. The first one is incidental learning, as Richards and Renandya (2002) put it, "learning vocabulary as a by-product of doing other things such as reading or listening skills" (p. 256). The second is an explicit teaching that is teachers teach directly by engaging learners in activities that centre round the development of vocabulary, and the third one is, teachers can develop learners' strategies that they would then be able to use independently for expanding their vocabulary bank.

There is a good psycholinguistic basis for believing that the mind stores, retains, and processes lexical chunks as individual wholes. The main reason stems from the structure of the mind itself; it can store vast amounts of lexical-chunks knowledge in long-term memory (Junying & Xuefei, 2007). As far as literatures are concerned, EFL/ESL learners who are taught vocabulary through the lexical approach tend to develop their vocabulary competence and retain information in their long term-memory (e.g. Bircan, 2010; Lewis, 2008; Nation, 2001; Nation, 2005; Tremblay et al., 2011). Furthermore, learning in chunks is more effective than breaking into pieces (Lewis, 2008). Nation (2001), the advocate of collocations, confirms that there are three significant processes that may eventuate in remembering

vocabulary: noticing, retrieval, and creative (generative) use. Noticing is paying attention to the vocabulary and being conscious of it. He generalizes that introducing different groupings (collocations) of new words can help students notice them and go through the first process to remember words. Teaching vocabulary through collocations enhances the expansion of vocabulary retention more than classical techniques such as definition, synonym, antonym, and mother tongue translation (Ghezelseflou & Seyedrezaei, 2015).

Lexical chunks were read more readily than similar groups of words that were not considered as lexical chunks; as well, sentences constituting lexical bundles had more odds of being accurately remembered compared with sentences without lexical bundles (Bircan, 2010; Tremblay et al*.,* 2011). Provided that the notion of chunks has been established in theories of language and SLA, empirical research into the most effective ways of teaching formulaic sequences/chunks remains limited (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012). This is to mean that despite the fact that lexical chunks are recognized in second and foreign language contexts, an extensive research was not done as per their roles in language teaching. The researcher shares this idea in the case of Ethiopia, and that is why this research work is intended to be carried out.

Literatures show that if we study the role of a certain language instructional approach to know its effects on the teaching/learning process, we can at least take some modifications and/or changes in our EFL/ESL classrooms. Lexical approach and its impact on students' vocabulary knowledge has to be tested, is the intention of this study. These days, the emphasis given to the carrier of meaning that is vocabulary, later expanded to lexis, is becoming high since the natural way of acquiring language is stored and retained in words and multi-words (Lewis, 2008). However, different language experts state that vocabulary is not given sufficient emphasis in EFL/ESL classrooms. Lewis (1993) describes, "There have been changing trends—from grammar translation to direct method to the communicative approach- but none of these has emphasized the importance of learners' lexical competence over structural grammatical competence" (p. 115). Likewise, Meara (1980), for example, called vocabulary a neglected aspect of second and foreign language (L2/FL) learning. Yet in recent research in various types of ESL classes, Folse (2010) concluded that vocabulary is indeed still neglected by many teachers, as the amount of "explicit vocabulary focus in a week of classes he observed was surprisingly low" (p. 139). The current researcher shares these claims because deliberate attention is not being paid to teach vocabulary in Ethiopian EFL classrooms (Alemu, 1994, Atkins et al., 1996, Dessie, 1988, Jeylan, 1999, as cited in Hailu, 2007; Minda, 2003; Hailu, 2007; Ismael, 2007; Gebreegizabiher, 2016). As the findings of these local studies show, grade nine learners (i.e. intermediate level in this context) are not capable of comprehending and producing something to the expected level due to the deficiency of appropriate vocabulary knowledge. As the findings of the aforementioned local studies indicate, EFL learners at grade nine level do have lexical problems in their production

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and comprehension skills. Therefore, even though plenty of studies have been done in order to alleviate EFL learners' lack of vocabulary knowledge, none of these has investigated the impacts of lexical approach vis-à-vis a conventional approach on the referred group of learners' vocabulary/ lexical competence in Ethiopia. The current vocabulary teaching method (i.e. conventional approach in this context) mainly provides opportunities for the learners to focus on translating English as a Foreign Language vocabulary into Amharic language, in the context of this study, at word-for-word level, looking for synonyms and/ or antonyms for certain single words (i.e. words in isolation), and explaining the definitions of the given list of words taken from reading and listening texts. Therefore, grade nine EFL textbook presents vocabulary activities and exercises in a manner that EFL learners can employ the referred strategies in their vocabulary learning. However, the conventional method has been found to ineffective, as the findings of local studies show. Thus, the researcher believes that lexical instructional approach can be a remedial mediation to teach vocabulary. In this regard, Willis (1990) makes an attempt to provide a rationale and design for lexically-based language teaching and suggests that a lexical syllabus should match an instructional methodology that puts particular emphasis on language use.

Unlike the lack of research works to the current researcher's context, there are studies conducted internationally, on the impact of lexical approach/lexical chunk instruction on the learners' writing, speaking, reading, and listening skills performances/proficiencies. For instance, recent studies have examined various topics regarding Lexical Approach. Researchers (e.g. Tang, 2012; Eidian et al., 2014; Chun-guang, 2014; Chao, 2016; Qader, 2016; Rahimkhani & Hemmati, 2016; Abdulqader et al., 2017) showed in their studies that applying lexical approach or lexical chunks instruction in English language classrooms has positive effects on students' writing performance. Others (e.g. Attar & Allami, 2013; Shooshtari & Karami, 2013; Tuan & Nguyen, 2014; Zafarghandi et al., 2015) found that the application of lexical approach /lexical chunk instruction has significant effects on students' speaking skills proficiency or performance.

Likewise, it is indicated that lexical collocation instruction has positive effects on learners' reading comprehension (e.g. Sahragard & Sadighi, 2013). Tang (2013) did an experimental study and found out that acquisition of chunks can effectively help L2 learners to improve their listening competency. Again, Xu et al. (2012) and Rahimi and Momeni (2012) found out that using lexical approach and collocations (respectively) have positive effects on learners' English language proficiency in general. Some investigators found out that lexical collocation instruction has significant effects on learners' vocabulary learning and retention without difficulty (e.g. Seyedrezaei & Ghezelseflou, 2015; Reza & Ashouri, 2016). To be evident enough, the researcher conducted a preliminary study on grade nine EFL student textbook evaluation at Fasilo General Secondary and Higher Education Preparatory School found in Bahir Dar City, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. He collected data from the textbook by using

document analysis and EFL teachers through interview. He found out that the vocabulary contents were not treated lexically in the textbook, and the EFL teachers did not have the awareness of teaching English language lexically. Therefore, the preliminary study findings confirm that there are no opportunities for learners to get the appropriate lexical input from the textbook as well as the teachers. This in turn surely leads the students to lack considerable vocabulary knowledge. Following those leading research findings, the researcher proposes his research problem. Therefore, this study intends to investigate whether or not lexical approach has significant effects on EFL learners' vocabulary competences.

Concerning rationales, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no research work conducted on lexical approach in Ethiopia, and it is the first reason why the investigator become enthusiastic to instigate his study on it. The second reason that inspires the researcher to do his work in this area is because of different research findings that previous international researchers found so that the issue is unsettled. The third reason that made the researcher focus his work on this topic is the scholarly suggestions which come from known vocabulary expert, Nation (2001). He added that:

> From a vocabulary learning point of view, we need research into collocation to tell us what the high frequency collocations are, to tell us what the unpredictable collocations of high frequency words are, to tell us what the common patterns of collocations are where some examples of that pattern would need special attention but where others could be predicted on the basis of this previous attention, and to provide dictionaries or information for dictionaries that help learners deal with low frequency collocations. (Nation, 2001, p. 529)

Thus, even if the Lexical Approach plays a part in enhancing target language learners' vocabulary acquisition, it is not known and investigated yet in Ethiopia, and the researcher would like to see if teaching vocabulary for EFL learners through this approach affects their vocabulary competences or knowledge. Therefore, this study attempted to answer the following research question:

RQ: Is there any significant difference between the vocabulary competence of the students who are instructed through the lexical approach and those who are instructed through the conventional approach?

Review of Related Literature

During the 1990s, there was an increased interest in vocabulary teaching and learning. Vocabulary teaching aspects like meanings, uses, and forms (spoken and written) were considered (Nation, 1991, 2001). At the same time, the advent of corpus linguistics and the COBUILD project of John Sinclair (1987) gave new impetus to theories on language acquisition. The studies then put forward a theory that is almost contrary to Chomskyan

theory of language that holds the view that native speakers have a capacity of creating and interpreting unique sentences which they have never heard or produced previously. Moreover, Chomskyan theory believes that, "Linguistic competence consists solely in the ability to deploy an innate rule- governed sentence-making capacity" (Thornbury, 1998, p. 8). However, with the advent of corpus-based analyses, many linguists departed from the Chomskyan view to uphold the new theory of language, i.e. lexically-based instruction. According to Lewis (1993), the lexical instructional approach focusses on developing learner's proficiency with lexis, or word and word combinations. The Lexical Approach as a way of teaching language is devised by Lewis who views that language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks. His idea is that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases in such unanalysed 'wholes' – chunks (any pairs or groups of words which are commonly found together or in close proximity).

If the Lexical Approach is all about lexical chunks and/or collocations, it is better to elaborate the meanings of those concepts. Many attempts have been made to define lexical chunks. A chunk is "…a unit of memory organisation, formed by bringing together a set of already formed chunks in memory and welding them together into a larger unit" (Newall, 1990, pp. 124-125). Becker (1975) defines lexical chunks as a particular multiword phenomenon that is presented in the form of formulaic fixed and semi-fixed chunks. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) describe them as chunks of language of varying length and each chunk has a special discourse function. Biber et al. (1999) define them as "recurrent expressions regardless of their idiomaticity and regardless of their structural status" (p. 990). Yet again, Wray (2000, p. 465) added a mental explanation to the definition saying that, "a lexical chunk is a sequence of prefabricated words that are stored and retrieved as a whole from memory at the time of use." It is possible to put and generalize all these definitions as lexical chunks are a group of word combinations that frequently occur in a language with special meaning and function. As to Lewis, language is first about meaning, and meaning is primarily connected with the lexis. His term – lexical chunk – covers all the other terms connected with parts of language: words, collocations, fixed expressions, prefabricated phrases, and multi-word phrases. Lewis's theory follows from the language research that was based on the large computer-based corpora (collections of natural written and spoken text).

The Role of the Lexical Approach/Lexical Chunks to Developing Learners' Vocabulary Competence

Different scholars state that the lexical approach plays significant roles in enhancing the vocabulary capacity of EFL learners in different contexts. For instance, Schmitt (2004) has maintained the idea that lexical patterning affects the use of most words in discourse. This involves that language ability includes both the ability to produce fluent language

syntactically and the ability to generate lexical chunks such as multiword units. One of the most compelling research-driven evidence on vocabulary learning has been provided by lexically-based language teaching (Willis & Willis, 1989, Sinclair, 1991, as cited in Rahimi et al., 2012). Furthermore, Nation (2001) asserts that collocation has a lexical pattern. He claims that knowledge of collocation helps contextual vocabulary knowledge. In this regard, chunking words is one of the strategies that are often useful when putting large amounts of information into memory; by grouping disparate individual elements into larger blocks, information becomes easier to retain and memorize (Thornbury, 2002). Chunking is obvious in recall tasks, one can anticipate a higher proportion of correct recalls. Cognitive psychology claims that vocabulary knowledge is retained in a mental lexicon (Carroll, 2000; Aitchison, 2003).

Aitchison (2003) emphasizes that the large vocabulary size and efficiency of retrieval suggest that these words are carefully organized, not just stacked in random heaps, in the nature of a human word-store, or mental lexicon. The long-term stored mental lexicon, much like a paper dictionary, contains language information such as spelling, phonemes, meanings, and syntax. Even though it is rational to a certain extent that grammatical knowledge allows for the creative recombination of lexis in novel and imaginative ways, it cannot function in its role until learners have accumulated a sufficiently large mental lexicon (Lewis, 2000). It is vital to make students aware of chunks, giving the opportunities to recognize, organize, and record words in chunks. Recognizing chunks requires follow up, especially, for beginners and intermediate levels; they demand a lot of help and guidance. EFL teachers should play the important role in accelerating chunk noticing to occur. Noticing characteristics of the input, particularly the nature of the component chunks of the text has a facilitative value.

The Needs to Chunking

The concept of chunking has played a major theoretical role in cognitive psychology (Miller, 1956). This scholar introduced the concept of 'chunking' in his paper entitled 'The magical number seven, plus or minus two.' Chunking refers to a strategy for making more efficient use of short-term memory by breaking down large amounts of information into smaller chunks. Chase and Simon (1973, as cited in Moeller et al., 2009) suggested that the capacity of short-term (working) memory is limited to seven items, or chunks that is the formula 7 ± 2. Yet, chunking had been used to model a wide variety of memory phenomena (memory organization); however, in recent years, chunking has also been proposed as the basis for a model of human practice (Newell & Rosenbloom, 1981; Rosenbloom & Newell, 1987).

Mainly, Newell and Rosenbloom (1981) changed this concept into a model of practice by describing how performance could be improved by the acquisition of chunks that

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represent patterns of objects in the task environment. Even though it is believed that short-term memory is limited to seven items only, the notion of vocabulary items or chunk varies. According to Moeller et al. (2009), chunking can mean both the breaking down of large amounts of information as well as grouping small chunks into larger categories. The main reason for the need of chunking vocabulary items is that the ability to break large language chunks into smaller ones, and to group small chunks into larger ones extends the process of retention of information and allows for greater compression of information in working memory (Kalivoda, 1981).

Major Approaches for Chunking

There are three major approaches to help learners chunk known components of words and word combinations (Nation, 2001), including: *chunking through fluency development*, *chunking through language focused attention*, *and memorizing unanalysed chunks*. To explain each briefly, the first and most important strategy is to help students develop the skills and knowledge that make it more efficient for them to chunk language items in larger units. It is likely that this fluency development is to some degree skill-specific so that learners would need to have fluency practice in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Schmidt (1992) presents a comprehensive survey of a wide range of theories that can be used to explaining fluency development. The most accessible theory that describes the development of chunking through fluency development is McLaughlin's (1990**)** *restructuring theory*. The second major approach to help learners to chunk is through deliberate language focused attention. This attention can involve practice in chunking text containing familiar items, and the deliberate teaching and learning of collocates of known items. This can include "the use of concordances, matching activities, and the development of collocation tables" (Nation, 2001 p. 542). The third one that Nation (2001) indicates is memorization of unanalysed chunks which is an important learning strategy. This strategy can be applied to both regularly formed and irregularly formed chunks.

Method

Research Design

The researcher used a quasi-experimental design. Creswell (2009) shows that we use such a design when participants cannot be randomly selected or randomly assigned to groups (either control or treatment group). As literatures indicate, those designs are used when it is not possible to control all potentially confounding variables. Besides this, he believes that it is not possible to measure all the variables by using true experimental design so that quasi-experimental design is an alternative one instead. The researcher intends to employ a non-

equivalent (Pre-Test and Post-Test) Control-Group Design. Both groups take a pre-test and post-test. Only the experimental group receives the treatment.

Context and Participants of the Study

The study was carried out at Fasilo General Secondary and Higher Education Preparatory School, grade nine, found in Bahir Dar City, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. The participants in this study were 95 (i.e. 48 students in section H and 47 students in section F) Amharic native speakers learning English as a foreign language at intermediate level. There were 27 female students in the former section and 25 female students in the latter section. Their ages range from 15 to 21 years old. There are 16 sections of grade nine students at this school, and the researcher selected two sections by using simple random sampling technique.

Data Gathering Instrument

Tests

In order to gather the quantitative data, the researcher employed pre-tests and post-test as explained below.

Pre-tests. The intent of the pre-tests were to know whether the participants of the study in the two sections have equal lexical competences or vocabulary knowledge. Because it was essential to inspect the homogeneity of the two sections prior to randomly assigning them as experimental and control groups, vocabulary competence tests at intermediate level were undertaken. To do so, the researcher adapted the concepts in order to design the tests. The sources from which he adapted concepts for the tests are: *Intermediate Collocational Test* designed by Cambridge University, *Oxford Collocations Dictionary: for Students of English* (2003). The pre-tests consist of three parts: 18 multiple choice items, 6 matching items, and 6 filling the blank spaces items that totally comprised 30 items on lexical chunks. The value weighted for each item in each part of the test was equal. The contents of the tests were taken from the ninth graders textbook which is being used regularly in the EFL classrooms. The time allotted for the participant to complete the test was an hour. The time given for them was determined in consultation with the EFL teachers who regularly teach at grade nine level.

Post-tests. After undertaking the intervention, both groups took post-tests (achievement tests) which were designed in a similar mode with the pre-tests. The intention of these tests was to examine if there were significant differences between the experimental group and the control group due to the delivery method provided (intervention). In addition to the sources from which the researcher adapted concepts, as done in the pre-tests, some criteria were also adopted and considered to prepare the post-tests. The following criteria were set out for identifying lexical chunks: modifiability versus non-modifiability, substitutability versus

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non-substitutability, compositionality versus non-compositionality (Lewis, 1993; Manning & Schutze, 1999), and function versus form (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). Furthermore, by adapting procedures from the works of Garces et al. (2012), Rahimi et al. (2012), Hyun-Jeong (2013), Yu (2013), Seyedrezaei and Ghezelseflou (2015), and Reza and Ashouri (2016), the researcher prepared the post-tests as well.

Reliability and Validity of Data Gathering Instruments

The researcher considered mechanisms to get the tools reliable and valid. Because there is no statistical test to determine whether a measure adequately covers a content area or adequately represents a construct, content validity usually depends on the judgment of experts in the field. Thus, the researcher consulted grade-nine EFL teachers, supervisors, and colleagues to check the validity and reliability of the tools, and received constructive comments. Besides this, the tests were pilot-tested.

Preparation of Material for Intervention

The researcher prepared the intervention material with the viewpoint of the Lexical Approach. The material prepared for the intervention reflected the pedagogical importance of chunks in an EFL/ESL classroom. According to Lewis (1993), pedagogical chunking should be a frequent classroom activity, as students need to gradually develop awareness of language to which they are exposed, "not only assembling parts into wholes, but also identifying constituent bits within the whole" (p. 195). The researcher adapted and incorporated different activities from Lewis (2008) such as *intensive and extensive listening and reading in the target language*; *first and second language comparisons and translation -carried out chunk-for-chunk, rather than word-for-word- aimed at raising language awareness, and repetition and recycling of activities.*

Besides this, the researcher focused on the activities about *guessing the meaning of vocabulary items from context*, *noticing and recording language patterns and collocations*, *working with collocation dictionaries and other reference tools*, and *working with language corpuses created by the teacher for use in the classroom or accessible on the Internet,* etc. while preparing the intervention material. The primary purpose of incorporating those activities in the teaching material was to raise students' awareness of lexical chunks, rather than teaching different ways of constructing sentences. The researcher depended on different sources to prepare the material as*: The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and a Way Forward* by Lewis (1993), *Teaching collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach by* Lewis (2000), *Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting Theory into Practice* by Lewis (2008*), Rules, Patterns and Words: Grammar and Lexis in English Language Teaching by* Willis (2003), *Oxford Collocations Dictionary: for Students of English* (2003) etc.

Intervention

The intervention lasted for sixteen weeks. Concerning the number of hours per a week the intervention took place, one classroom session lasted for 43 minutes. That was the culture of the school for all subjects. Considering the natural process of the learning and teaching process of that school where the study was conducted, both the experimental and control groups had three English as a Foreign Language vocabulary classroom sessions independently (i.e. each session lasting for 43 minutes) in a week. That means, the intervention lasted for 129 minutes (i.e. 2.15 hours) per a week. The experimental group students were instructed by using the new teaching method (Lexical Instructional Approach) whereas the control group students were taught with the conventional method i.e. the usual teaching method. However, the input given for both groups was alike; for example, both group students were provided the same vocabulary contents but the mode of teaching was dissimilar. The intervention was carried out starting from October 14, 2019 - February 8, 2020. The time schedule was the same for both the experimental group and control groups. After the researcher gave him (the teacher experimenter) training, about the techniques how to implement the newly designed intervention material, the intervention went on. To avoid artificiality and bias, the researcher believed that the teacher experimenter was a best fit to conduct the intervention. To proceed the intervention, the teacher experimenter and the researcher prepared lesson plans. Unlike the PPP (Present-Practice-Produce) teaching methodology, which is being practiced in the conventional teaching method, the study followed the OHE (Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment) teaching methodology.

Thus, the teacher experimenter was advised in the training to follow the OHE model which was devised by Lewis (1993). The diagram is designed by the researcher as shown below.
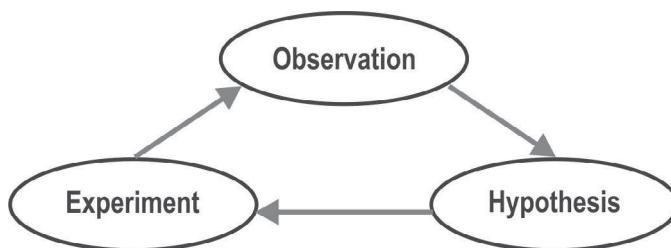
Figure 1. Intervention Framework: Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment Model
(Lewis, 1993)

To describe each of the phases, in the observation stage, students were presented with oral and written input. In the second phase, students compose a hypothesis about principles based on the perceived linguistic behaviour, and in the experiment phase, learners test their theories in a communicative context.

Data Analysis Technique

Data gathered through quantitative methods i.e. tests in this case, were analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 22. Thus, since this study includes one independent variable (Lexical Instructional Approach) with two groups and one dependent variable (vocabulary competence), an independent samples T-test was an appropriate method to run.

Findings

Following the data collection, the participants' vocabulary competence scores on the pre-tests and post-tests were measured. Prior to doing the main analysis of the results obtained from the tests, the assumptions of an independent-sample T-test were tested as noted in a research question part of this study, the question is: Is there a statistically significant difference between the vocabulary competence scores of the experimental group and the control group? Thus, to answer this question, it needs to test the assumptions before carrying out the detailed analysis. Checking the assumptions is a step forward in order to get valid and reliable results that make the whole study practical.

Assumption Testing

The assumptions of an independent samples T-test was tested before doing the analysis of the data obtained from the pre-test and the post test. Considering the remaining assumptions, which cannot be tested using SPSS, the normality of tests and homogeneity of variances were checked as presented below.

Normality of Scores

The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to check the assumption of normality of the vocabulary competence scores of students. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Considering the obtained Sig. values in Table 1 above, both of which are greater than 0.05 (i.e. $P > 0.05$), the normality of the intended variable (pre-test) was supported at a significant level of 0.05. Therefore, the assumption of test normality was met.

Considering the obtained Sig. values in Table 2 above, both the Shapiro-Wilk test results are greater than 0.05. The normality of the post-test was supported at a significant level of 0.05 so that the assumption was met again.

Table 1. Normality Test of Vocabulary Competence Pre-Test in Both Sections

	Sections	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Vocabulary competence pre-test	Section H	0.106	48	0.200*	0.968	48	0.202
	Section F	0.124	47	0.067	0.962	47	0.130

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 2. Normality Test of Vocabulary Competence Post-Test in Both Groups

	Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Vocabulary competence post-test	Experimental group students	0.113	48	0.160	0.970	48	0.263
	Control group students	0.141	47	0.020	0.958	47	0.093

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Homogeneity of Variances

Before randomly assigning the two section students into experimental and control groups so as to carry out the lexical instructional intervention, a pre-test was given for both. The purpose of giving pre-tests for both section students was in order to know whether students were homogenous in their lexical knowledge or not. The Tables 3 and 4 below show this.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Vocabulary Competence Pre-Test

	Sections	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary Competence pre-test	Section H	48	11.71	2.333	0.337
	Section F	47	11.45	2.483	0.362

As Table 3 in the above indicates, the scores of the two sections on the vocabulary competence test showed remarkable similarities. The results indicate that the mean score of

section H is (M= 11.71 and SD= 2.333), whereas the mean score of section F is (M=11.45 and SD= 2.483). Therefore, the two sections seemed to have mathematically similar achievement. However, an independent-sample T-test was run in order to make certain that the two sections did not differ significantly before they were exposed to the lexical instructional intervention. The Table below clearly shows this.

Table 4. Vocabulary Competence Pre-Test: Significance of Groups'
Mean Scores Difference

		T-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Vocabulary Competence pre-test	*Equal variances assumed*	0.529	93	0.598	0.262	0.494	-0.720	1.243

An independent-sample T-test was run to check the homogeneity of the two sections (section H and section F) in their vocabulary competence before the intervention was carried out. As indicated in Table 4 above, t(93) = 0.529 , $P>0.05$ which suggests that the two sections were homogeneous in terms of their vocabulary competence or knowledge. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met. Impliedly, since there was not significant difference between the two sections in terms of their vocabulary knowledge, it was possible to randomly assign them as experimental and control groups in order to conduct the instructional intervention.

The Results of the Analyses of Vocabulary Competence Post-test

After the experimental and control group students were exposed for the lexical instructional intervention, a post-test was given for them. Then, the exam papers were marked. The results obtained were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The Tables 5 and 6 below clearly show this again.

After the intervention, a 30-item vocabulary competence test was given as the post-test. As depicted in Table 5 above, the mean score and standard deviation for vocabulary competence post-test of the experimental group are 22.17 and 2.215 respectively whereas the control group scored the mean (M=20.81) and the standard deviation (SD =1.676). From these scores it is possible to say that there was a mathematical difference between

experimental group and the control group. The difference might come about owing to the instructional intervention provided. Nevertheless, the independent samples T-test was run to make sure that a statistically significant difference occurred because of the mode of teaching (intervention). The table below shows this.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Vocabulary Competence Post-Test

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary Competence post-test	Experimental group students	48	22.17	2.215	.320
	Control group students	47	20.81	1.676	.245

Table 6. Vocabulary Competence Post-Test: Significance of Groups' Mean Scores Difference

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
									Lower	Upper
Vocabulary Competence post-test	*Equal variances assumed*	3.484	0.065	3.364	93	0.001	1.358	0.404	0.556	2.160
	Equal variances not assumed			3.374	87.478	0.001	1.358	0.403	0.558	2.158

As indicated in Table 6 above, an independent samples t-test was run again to see whether there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups of students in terms of their scores on the vocabulary competence post-test measured after the instructional intervention was carried out. In this regard, $t(93) = 3.364$, $P < 0.05$ which indicates that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of the vocabulary competence post-test. That is to say, the former group's improvement was statistically significant with

respect to vocabulary competence (i.e. *P*=.001). Generally the question, "Is there a statistically significant difference between the vocabulary competence scores of the experimental group and the control group?" was answered in such a way that the lexical instructional approach had positive impacts on students' vocabulary competence. Therefore, the state of the arts (i.e. contemporary theories on teaching language lexically) which state that lexical instruction improves students' vocabulary knowledge was actually tested and had noticeable effects on their learning generally.

The Aspects of the Lexical Knowledge that the Experimental Group Students Improved

In the context of the present study, there were aspects of the lexical knowledge in which the experimental-group students improved after they were instructed through the lexical-approach-based teaching. For example, students' abilities to combine words which can go together naturally were developed. Besides, the students were able to identify lexical chunks from the given authentic texts which were utilized during the intervention. After they were informed about how to identify the lexical items from texts, the experimental-group students became clear about looking for the nodes for a considerable number of collocates. Before they were doing activities based on texts, the students were given simple exercises; for instance, for the collocates like take a _____, re-take a _____, fail a _____, pass a _____, get a good score on a _____ etc., the students were requested to think and look for the node (i.e. the word "Test" in this context). Then, they developed their knowledge of chunking words as take a test, retake a test, fail a test, pass a test, get a good score on a test, etc. Accordingly, their knowledge of chunking/combining words, in which the students are not familiar with, found in the texts were improved. For instance, in a reading text entitled "*Places to visit*", students were requested to recognize the collocates of the word "*recommended*". By using collocation dictionaries uploaded in their mobiles, the students could chunk words like *highly recommended, definitively recommend, personally recommended, heartily recommended, warmly recommended, to recommend, recommend something/somebody for___* . In such a vein, the experimental-group students were able to chunk words they already knew and words in which they were not familiar with.

What is more, students' knowledge of homonymous words was developed. For instance, words like *Kind* (to mean type/caring), *bark* (to mean a tree's out layer/the sound a dog makes), *address* (to mean location/solve a problem), *right* (to mean correct/direction opposite of left) etc., were the examples in which the experimental-group students improved. In addition, the students developed their idiomatic expressions (fixed expressions in this context) like *bread and butter* (which mean the basic source of income), *kick the bucket* (to die), running cats and dogs etc. Generally, the students developed their collocational and/or lexical knowledge because of the mode of teaching. The main emphasis of the intervention was to get students to become aware about the strategies how to combine words that can

co-occur naturally. They recognized the ways that can help them identify lexical items from texts. Then, the type of lexical items they have already identified and chunked was grouped under the category which includes words and poly-words, collocations, fixed expression, and semifixed expressions. All in all, whatever category a certain lexical item is put, the students recognized the structure and function of it as the criteria to use in their language learning. While doing the lexical chunk activities, the students understood and then developed the grammar patterns of words, too. Finally, students' word grammar, word usage, function etc. were found improved.

Discussions

The findings obtained in this study led to the conclusion that there was a statistically significant difference between the vocabulary competence mean score of the two groups allowing the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis assumes that there is no significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group that was instructed with the lexical instructional approach and the control group that was instructed with the conventional approach. However, considering the findings, it was possible to say that the two groups had statistically significant differences in terms of the vocabulary improvement after the intervention. Hence, this study safeguards the effectiveness of the Lexical Instructional Approach activities in teaching vocabulary to EFL learners at intermediate levels i.e. in high schools. Likewise, the study advocates that implementing the Lexical Instructional Approach activities can help learners improve their knowledge of vocabulary or vocabulary competence. Concerning the process of the intervention and its ultimate impacts, there was sufficient time to appropriately do each and every activity, task, and exercise. The research findings indicated that since the students were requested to identify chunks from texts, group the words in accordance with their associations, look for the nodes for the collocates, look for the collocates for the nodes or key words, and apply the concordance programs to extract word patterning, they were more active and lively in class while they were learning the vocabulary contents. They undertook all these activities by themselves after they were given the examples, exercises, and tasks in their handouts. This implies that lexical instructional approach was also a better fit for an independent learning to take place.

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This study is in congruent with studies by Tang (2012), Eidian et al. (2014), Chun-guang (2014), Chao (2016), Qader (2016), Rahimkhani and Hemmati (2016), and Abdulqader et al. (2017) who conducted their research works on the impacts of lexical approach and/or lexical chunk instruction on students' writing performances, and they found out that this instructional approach had positive impacts on students' writing improvements. They suggested that this approach should be implemented in EFL/ESL contexts. Furthermore, the

findings of the study are in line with the findings of Attar and Allami (2013), Shooshtari and Karami, (2013), Tuan and Nguyen (2014), and Zafarghandi et al. (2015) who concluded that lexical approach/lexical chunk instruction is effective in improving students' speaking skills proficiencies or performances. Likewise, the results of the present study give more support to the findings of many studies (e.g. Rahimi & Momeni, 2012; Xu et al., 2012; Abdellah, 2015; Seyedrezaei & Ghezelseflou, 2015; Ördem & Paker, 2016; and Reza & Ashouri, 2016) conducted on the effects of collocation and lexical chunk instruction on students vocabulary development. These researchers found that using collocations, in particular, and the Lexical Approach, in general, has positive effects on learners' English language vocabulary competence.

Conclusions

The current research work reveals the importance of the lexical instructional approach in teaching English as a Foreign Language vocabulary and to develop learners' vocabulary competence at the ninth-grade level. Therefore, EFL learners need to be exposed for high volume of input texts that contain frequently used and natural lexical chunks that can fit different situations in the whole teaching and learning process. From psycholinguistics point of view, learning words with chunks or in chunk forms could reduce the much amount of efforts that both teachers and learners have probably exerted (Lewis, 2008). As indicated in the literature review part of this study, more meanings are carried by words and word chunks rather than grammatical structures. Thus, it can be concluded that appropriate and deliberate attention should be paid for teaching vocabulary with chunk forms rather than single words (words in isolation) as is the case in the currently in-use method of the ninth-grade level. Hence, with regard to the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that teaching vocabulary through the Lexical Approach or lexical chunks instruction substantiates to be more valuable and suitable for the EFL learners than through the currently implemented method or conventional method at ninth-grade level. Besides, the newly implemented vocabulary teaching method, i.e. lexical instructional approach, has positive effects not only on vocabulary competence, but also on linguistic creativity at word level, motivation, and potential value of technology-mediation (i.e. student interaction with computer-based technology-intrapersonal interaction) in order to use concordance programs. It can also be concluded that Ethiopian EFL learners at high schools-intermediate levels are positively in need of a suitable, practical, and culturally-inspired lexical-based instruction to improve their vocabulary knowledge in particular and the English language proficiency in general.

Recommendations

Therefore, as far as the results of the current study imply, it is possible to make some recommendations. To begin with, the findings are congruent with other internationally

conducted research works which are directly or indirectly in connection with vocabulary teaching through lexical approach. The indirectly connected researches were done on the impacts of lexical approach on learners' writing and speaking skills performances, and the findings indicate that this approach had positive effects on their performances in terms of the skills referred. The rest studies were directly connected to this study and the results show that this approach had good improvements on students' vocabulary knowledge, or competences in general. Therefore, all these findings could corroborate and strengthen the implications of the present study. From the researcher's context, he would like to kindly suggest that vocabulary learning should be a major concern in teaching EFL because theorists on Lexical Approach assert that the centre of language learning should be on word combinations or lexical chunks in general and the practices (the research findings obtained) could substantiate this, too. Theorists on lexical approach or lexical instruction argue that the lack of vocabulary knowledge or competence affects all other aspects or contents of EFL damagingly and unnaturally; thus, in order to alleviate this, the vocabulary activities, tasks and exercises should be designed in the context of Lexical Approach. In this regard, syllabus designers and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, should give the appropriate status for Lexical Approach-based teaching in the syllabus and curriculum. Furthermore, it is implied that by incorporating lexically-based teaching as additional techniques, the EFL teachers should make their activities and tasks suitable and sufficient so as it is possible to complement the textbooks of EFL in intermediate levels. All over again, it is suggested that EFL teachers should make efforts to design and develop their own Lexical Approach-grounded activities that can suit their pupils' needs, cultures, norms, and educational levels rather than simply adopting the approach as it is. Finally, following the study results, lexically-based teaching and its impacts should be the focus of future experimental research.

Limitations

Like any other research works, studies on language teaching and learning cannot be without limitations. This study does have limitations. The first limitation is that the duration of the intervention provided. As the study lasted for sixteen (16) weeks, the researcher admitted about the insufficient time. He claims that it needs, at least one year, to carry out the Lexical Instructional Approach intervention because this approach is somewhat a vast concept. The second limitation is based on the nature of sample size. The participants of this study were taken from only one high school which could not lead the study to represent all schools in the town. Thus, large sample of participants should have been considered for the study in order to obtain more factual data. The other limitation of the study was conducted on EFL leaners' vocabulary competence so that it could not inform the readers about the impact of the Lexical Approach on other language skills.

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HOW

English Teaching Methodologies of Modern Languages Graduates from a University in Colombia

Metodologías en la enseñanza del inglés de egresados de lenguas modernas de una universidad en Colombia

Carmelina Encarnación Mosquera[1]

Abstract

Self-assessment for accreditation purposes requires follow-up of graduates and feedback with academic programs. As part of the improvement actions, this study was done to characterize graduates' methodologies in English language teaching. The data, gathered through questionnaires, showed that graduates privilege the communicative and eclectic methods; the criteria for selecting methodologies are based on their relevance in the teaching context and students' learning needs; furthermore, there is a need and expectation to be updated in methodologies according to the guidelines of the National Bilingual Program. It would be relevant that these results were considered in the curricular development of modern languages and in graduates' professional development activities.

Keywords: approach, method, methodology, teaching strategies

Resumen

La autoevaluación con fines de acreditación requiere del seguimiento a egresados y la retroalimentación con programas académicos. Como parte de las acciones de mejoramiento, se emprendió este estudio con el fin de caracterizar las metodologías de egresados en la enseñanza del inglés. Los datos recolectados por medio del uso de cuestionarios mostraron que los egresados privilegian el método comunicativo y el ecléctico; los criterios para seleccionar las metodologías se basan en su pertinencia en el contexto de enseñanza y las necesidades de aprendizaje de los estudiantes; existe la necesidad y

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la expectativa de actualizarse en metodologías acordes con los lineamientos del Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo. Sería relevante que se consideraran estos resultados en las actividades de desarrollo curricular del programa de lenguas modernas y del desarrollo profesional de sus egresados.

Palabras clave: Enfoque, estrategias de enseñanza, método, metodología

Introduction

In 2017, the University of Cauca established, through an academic agreement, a mechanism to undertake follow-up processes, lead professional development programs, and facilitate the participation of graduates in academic and research projects, among other actions. In line with the provisions of this agreement (Acuerdo Superior 054, 2017), the Modern Languages Program of the University of Cauca found it relevant to carry out a research study that involved graduates. The project aimed at answering the following research question: What are the aspects that characterize foreign languages teaching of the Modern Languages Program Graduates from the University of Cauca? The research objectives were:

- To identify the methods and approaches that define graduates' teaching practices.
- To characterize the type of class strategies used by graduates in their practices.
- To analyze the needs and expectations of graduates with respect to methodologies in English language teaching.

The Modern Languages Program has contributed to the educational development of the region via preparing English and French language teachers for almost 48 years; nevertheless, one of the weaknesses found in self-evaluation processes has been the lack of follow-up concerning graduates' work, which has not allowed the identification of the methodologies applied and needs that they might encounter when teaching either of these foreign languages and thus respond to current bilingual guidelines in Colombia, regarding mostly to the achievement of the standards of competences, which apply mainly to teaching English. Also, the lack of follow-up of graduates has not allowed carrying out permanent feedback processes with the Program in order to strengthen actions in the pre-service training that help to meet the objectives stated within graduates' profile (Proyecto Educativo del Programa, 2017).

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From the first contact with the graduates, they expressed they were currently working as teachers of English, and the research study focused only on methodologies in English language teaching. In order to characterize the methodologies applied by graduates in their teaching practices, questionnaires were used to yield information about teaching contexts, methods used, methodological strategies, criteria in the choice of methods and strategies, and needs and expectations in the implementation of methodologies.

According to the results, the most used methods are the communicative and eclectic methods, which are also the most used in the integration of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) because of their characteristics. Among the strategies, the most used are discourse analysis, activities with authentic material, building-up stories, language games, conversation practices, and dramatizations.

Regarding the criteria in selecting methodological strategies, it was found that teachers consider important their role and that of the students', the development of research and problem-solving capacity, and the teaching context, primarily.

In relation to the expectations and needs in the implementation of methodologies, they focus on updating the design, and selecting and adapting teaching and learning materials; on methodological strategies, they focus on diagnosing and responding to students' learning needs, which are related also to their performance on the *Saber 11 test".[2]*

Finally, carrying out this research study allowed characterizing graduates' teaching methodologies and undertaking actions that contribute both to their professional development and to strengthening the educational work of the Modern Languages program of the university.

Literature Review

In order to achieve a better understanding of some concepts addressed in the research study, theories from different authors were considered.

Methodology and Approach

Nunan (1999) states that methodology deals with pedagogical practices that include teaching techniques, classroom activities, and tasks that teachers design to enable students' learning. It should also be linked to methods in teaching which deal with specific perceptions as to how a language should be taught in order to strengthen the relationship between teaching practices and the methods and approaches grounding them. However, although some techniques proposed in different methods have been proven to be weak regarding the development of communication competences, many teachers continue basing their teaching on these methods and approaches, without getting life-long learning on the students' part. For instance, the traditional approaches provide a good deal of knowledge about the language but do not develop in students the ability to use this knowledge to communicate appropriately, thus limiting the possibility of being exposed to the target language in the classroom, which is one of the few environments students have to use it.

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2   The Saber 11 state test of secondary education must be taken by students who are finishing the eleventh grade, in order to obtain official results that allow them to pursue higher education.

Regarding approach, Brown (2007, p. 17) points out that it refers to the "theoretical well-informed positions and beliefs about the nature of language, learning, and the applicability of both to pedagogical settings", while methodology is referred to as "pedagogical practices in general (including theoretical underpinnings and related research)." Brown (2007) also states that they are the specific methods of addressing a task or a problem, as ways of acting to achieve a goal, or designs that are planned to control or manipulate information, which define teaching strategies.

Language Teaching and Teaching Practices and Strategies

Language teaching is considered to be dynamic and in continuous evolution. In regard to this, Bastidas (1993) states that language teachers are required to be updated and in search for innovative methodologies, strategies, and useful materials to make their teaching more effective for learners. However, in the teaching practice, different factors determine teachers' ways of working such as context and setting. Moreover, Richards and Lockhart (1994) point out that these factors influence teachers' decision-making about materials, methodologies, lesson planning, course goals, teaching methods, and assessment procedures, which may somehow make up teachers' teaching style. He also states that teaching can be described in terms of the actions, behaviors, and beliefs that teachers carry out in the classroom, and the effects of these on learners.

Teaching practices, then, depend on how much teachers are guided by routine or by self-inquiry and critical thinking. This is the reason why language teaching has gone through different and in some cases opposite perspectives along history, attempting to find an appropriate way of teaching; thus, leading to new methodological ideas and proposals for English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching.

Harmer (2007) provides a description of strategies that are implemented in the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; as well as linguistic components such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Richards and Rodgers (1986, as cited in Bastidas, 1993) have contributed with extensive theory in the field of methodologies in language teaching, providing a detailed description of the trajectory in the implementation of different methods and approaches and the strategies proposed in each. Some of the most known teaching methods are Grammar-Translation, Direct, Audio-Lingual, Eclectic, and Communicative Language Teaching. Some approaches are Natural and Communicative.

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Learning Strategies and Styles

These are considered important processes that facilitate and improve learning, and the teacher role is that of a guide for learners. The language taught for communicative purposes includes active use; that is, contextualized grammar and vocabulary to develop communication skills effectively. In addition, in the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching

(CLT), students are exposed to interaction activities through authentic situations in the classroom, with student-centered activities included. Due to the characteristics of the CLT, the teacher is faced with major challenges in its implementation such as focusing on all of the components of communicative competence, engaging students in the use of the target language for meaningful purposes, focusing on fluency rather than accuracy (including having students rehearse situations they might encounter outside the classroom), guiding students in the development of strategies and learning styles, allowing learner-centeredness rather than teacher-centeredness, and creating classroom atmospheres that favor students' interaction and involvement (Brown, 2007).

Common Methods and Approaches

The following methods and approaches were considered in the current research study since in-service English teachers' teaching practices, in the department of Cauca, have mainly been grounded on the Grammar Translation Method (Encarnación & Parra, 2010). Thus, exploring if this method still remains as one of the most used would be relevant. The other methods and approaches mentioned above (Direct, Audio-Lingual, Eclectic, Natural Approach, and CLT) were included because their characteristics emphasize the use of the target language in communicative situations, which is one of the aims in the pre-service training of the modern languages program.

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was used to teach foreign languages focusing "on grammar rules as the basis for translating from the second language to the native language" (Brown, 2007, p. 18). Some of the characteristics of this method are the use of L1 to teach, not allowing much use to L2, grammar instruction focused on form, disconnected sentences from L2 into L1, content of texts overlooked, and little attention given to pronunciation. However, the GTM's strong emphasis on grammar analogies and rote exercises disregards the development of communicative skills in learners. In using this method, the teacher is expected to teach and the learner is expected to master; thereby, classes become teacher-centered as it is the teacher who mainly conducts all the activities, not allowing real communication among students. In regard to this, for Celce-Murcia (2001), this method usually results in an inability to use the language effectively for communication.

Another method that emerged was the Direct Method. Bastidas (1993) states that this method is part of the so-called natural methods, which support that instead of focusing on grammatical rules, teaching should be geared towards using the L2 in the classroom. Also, Richards and Rodgers (1986, as cited in Brown, 2007) describe that in the Direct Method, instruction is given in the target language, the teaching of vocabulary and sentences is given

in relation to everyday life, grammar is taught inductively, and pronunciation and listening comprehension are also considered in teaching.

Regarding the Audiolingual Method, Brown (2007) mentions that this method gives relevance to linguistic and psychological theory. Teachers are expected mainly to use the L2. Phonology and grammar should be given high priority rather than vocabulary. Among the methodological aspects that this method raises are the memorization of dialogues to avoid errors, and the comprehension and production of automatic utterances.

As for the Natural Approach, exposure to the target language is favored over the practice and production of this language. "Language is a vehicle for communicating meanings and messages" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 130), "hence acquisition can take place only when people understand messages in the target language" (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 130). According to these authors, the learner goes through three stages when immersed in the natural approach: the preproduction stage, early production, and speech, which are seen as a hierarchical process that is mastered through language exposure.

According to Bastidas (1993) eclecticism applied to the teaching of languages refers to choosing the best methodological proposals of the different methods in order to achieve the learning objectives. It is important to emphasize that those who choose to use this method know that it is not a random choice; this suggests that it is necessary to have previous knowledge of what each method proposes in order to opt for the best that can meet learning needs. In addition, according to the author, implementing the eclectic method implies the development of strategies and skills to reconcile methodological and procedural aspects, understanding the theories of language and learning nature, and if these can be evaluated and validated through practice.

The Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) focuses on the development of communicative competence, leading learners to explore real-life communication situations in the classroom and emphasizing not on linguistic accuracy as a priority, but on linguistic fluency. This method includes the implementation of tools that enable performance in the language not tested and leads to lifelong learning through authentic tasks.

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In light of Bastidas (1993) the communicative approach contributed to the concepts of communicative competence and the study of language from the social aspect. In this sense, it focuses on the study of language in interaction, which implies considering sociolinguistic rules in which culture and meaning are framed in a relevant way.

Cárdenas (2007, as cited in Cárdenas *et al*, 2015) classifies the methods and approaches that have emerged chronologically for language teaching, as follows:

Categories	Author	Method/Approach
Centered on language	Richards, 1984	-Grammar-Translation Method; Aural-Oral method, Audio-Visual Method; Lexical-Structural programs.
	Kumaravadivelu, 2003-2006	Audio-Oral Method Cognitive Code
Centered on the learner	Richards, 1984	-Humanistic approaches (Silent Way, Total Physical Response, Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia); Natural Approach.
	Kumaravadivelu, 2003-2006	-Communicative Approach
Based on science and research	Richards, 2002 based on Zahorik 1986	Suggestopedia
Based on theories and philosophies		Silent Way, humanistic approaches, Communicative Approach
Based on teachers' ability and personality		Eclecticism
Centered on learning	Kumaravadivelu, 2003-2006	Natural Approach
Non-Methods	Kumaravadivelu, 2006	Silent Way, Respuesta Física Total, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning

According to Nunan (1999, as cited in Cárdenas *et al*, 2015), traditional methods and approaches have been re-evaluated and re-considered according to the contemporary epoch. As a result, communicative approaches emerged giving way to learner-centered education, negotiation of curriculum, task-based teaching, relevance of learning strategies and styles, diverse trends in evaluation strategies, extracurricular activities, and classroom management.

Likewise, Kumaravadivelu (1994, as cited in Cárdenas *et al,* 2015) points out that new ideas were introduced regarding language teaching in the 90s, according to the demands of the new era such as going beyond the concept of method to look for effective teaching strategies and teacher training. That reconceptualization of methods suggests the search for teaching methods that allow teacher autonomy based on a permanent reflection upon theory and practice. In this sense, "through autonomy, continuous learning, research and responsibility, teachers are empowered to theorize their practice, make innovations in their

particular teaching contexts, and propose new teaching strategies" (Cárdenas *et al*, 2015, p. 100).

All the methods and approaches briefly described above give account of the purposes in language teaching regarding language focus, strategies, techniques, learning context, and learning objectives. In the Colombian context, it can be mentioned that in a questionnaire applied by the Ministry of Education to explore in-service teachers' methodologies, it was found that teachers use the Communicative Approach, as well as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Besides, the results showed a focus on the development of competences, strategies, and strategy instruction. Among the strategies are "scaffolding, role play, fill-in the blanks, project-based development, listening activities, games, reading, videos, Total Physical Response (TPR)" (MEN, 2016, p. 27).

Methodologies and the National Bilingual Program

In addition, the National Bilingual Program (NBP) (2018-2022) has taken actions aimed to improve students' English level and thus ensure complete educational paths, strengthen English teachers' teaching practices, create spaces that allow the use and exposure to the target language, promote the design of appropriate teaching resources, and promote pedagogical actions to meet the expected goals. However, because of the real conditions in which foreign languages are taught in Colombia, such as the limited number of hours, the lack of resources, the low exposure to the target language in real communicative situations, and the low number of qualified teachers, whether this country is ready to face the challenging policy of Colombia bilingual is questionable (Cardenas, 2006, as cited in Cárdenas *et al*, 2011). These educational policies in language teaching are commonly not in accordance with real learning needs but are underpinned by political and economic agendas rather than by pedagogical factors (Usma, 2009, as cited in Peláez & Usma, 2017). In addition, De Mejía (2007, as cited in García & García, 2012) sustains that the goals of the NBP are to be achieved mostly by private schools because they are sponsored by different organizations and supported by their own resources; factors that seem not to be considered in the educational policies. Another aspect is that although the NBP 2018-2022 affirms that it is their interest to foster the learning of other languages such as French and Portuguese, referred to as third languages grounded on a functional multilingual focus, and that Colombia is a multicultural and multilingual country because of the native and creole languages, the actions taken in terms of materials, resources, guidelines, immersion programs, and strengthening projects in different regions are addressed only to the English language. Guerrero (2010, as cited in García & García, 2012) pointed out that English, in Colombia, is the language that has been given all the attention for investment.

In order to support the policy of standardization in secondary school, the Suggested Curriculum designed by the Colombian Ministry of Education (2016) aims to provide the educational community and the different actors of society with a flexible and open curriculum that acts as input for planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation of the English curriculum in schools nationwide. This document expresses that English is the foreign language which the national government is committed to in order to have a bilingual country competitive at an international level (MEN, 2016, p. 15). The methodology proposed in the suggested curriculum for sixth to eleventh grades aims to develop language skills, to promote a problem-solving approach, and to implement task-based and project-based activities" (MEN, 2016, pp. 33-35). The *Proyecto Tipo*, of the National Plan of Development 2018-2022, issued by the National Department of Planning (2018), expresses that elementary and high school students' communicative competences are not developed, which hinders their opportunity to interact in the globalized world, to identify cultural and linguistic differences, and to apply for international educational experiences. Therefore, three objectives have been stated to face this problem; namely, enhance English teaching and learning by strengthening pedagogical actions, foster the development of teachers' language skills and competences, and strengthen teachers' and students' exposure to the target language in real communication contexts.

The Suggested Curriculum for English focuses on the development of communicatively competent citizens aware of sociocultural aspects of the country, and it expresses that "the vision of this curricular proposal regarding learning languages focuses on the sociocultural theory. Learning originates within social activities developed in a plane that is external to the individual and that promotes cooperative environments" (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in MEN, 2016, p. 22). In contrast, teaching methodologies in Colombia, shaped by the guidelines suggested by MEN, do not allow teachers to be autonomous enough to propose what they think should work better in their teaching contexts since institutional goals are mainly addressed to improving the *Saber 11* Test results. González (as cited in Cárdenas *et al.*, 2011) states that in Colombia a focus should be placed on professional development rather than on teacher training because the latter suggests an implementation of similar methodologies no matter how different teaching and learning contexts are.

102 According to Kostina and Hernández (as cited in Cárdenas *et al,* 2015), foreign language teachers' professional development involves professional competence which deals with pedagogical, communicative, methodological, intercultural, and investigative competence. These five competences deal with being able to organize and conduct the pedagogical process, to know what to teach, to manage teaching techniques and strategies, to use the target language effectively, to conduct teaching and learning appropriately, to apply techniques, methods, and approaches, to know students' learning styles and strategies, to adapt their teaching to the learning conditions, to recognize and identify their own beliefs and those of their students, to listen to students' opinions, and to consider students' cultural traits.

In this sense, foreign language teachers are called upon to evidence both a communicative competence and lastly, a teaching competence in their teaching.

Type of Research

This research followed a mixed approach type since it comprises both a qualitative and a quantitative approach. According to Wallace (1998), the quantitative approach is mainly used to describe what can be counted or measured objectively, whereas the qualitative approach is used to describe data that cannot be counted or measured objectively. In the mixed approach, there are characteristics of the two approaches so that they complement each other to give reliability to the data emerging from the research that aimed to characterize the teaching methodologies of graduates from the modern languages program of the University of Cauca.

Participants

After some calls by email and a personal invitation during an event held by the Modern Languages Program, thirty-two graduates, who work either in the public or private sector at different schools in Cauca and other departments in Colombia, showed interest in taking part in the research study. This was helpful because teachers responded to the questionnaires when asked, which permitted the data collection within the time planned.

Data Collection

In order to collect the data, four questionnaires were designed and applied at different moments of the research; that is, taking into account the teachers' availability to answer them. These instruments contained questions that could help get information regarding graduates' teaching methodologies. A broader explanation of the purpose using each of the questionnaires is presented in the section Results in this article.

Questionnaire One

This questionnaire aimed to explore graduates' teaching contexts, professional experience, and qualifications. It served to gather information on teachers' actions to grow professionally, characterize teaching and learning conditions, and identify possible difficulties in their teaching practices.

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Questionnaire Two

As well as with the first questionnaire, one of the sections of this data collection instrument was devoted to finding out information about teachers' teaching experience and professional development activities, anticipating that some teachers might not want to take

part in the research from the beginning to the end for the lack of interest or time. The other section explored teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward teaching, the frequency of taking part in school activities, characteristics of a regular class, and frequency in the use of approaches. This section aimed to analyze teaching practices, activities, beliefs, and attitudes, and how these vary according to the characteristics of teacher training. Through this questionnaire it was possible to better understand teachers' criteria for the use of teaching strategies (OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), n.d.).

Questionnaire Three

This questionnaire was used to identify the methods and approaches grounding teaching methodologies and strategies used during the implementation of the methods. Some questions were taken from Abbasi's (2011) Survey of Teaching Strategies in [the] ESL Classroom.

Questionnaire Four

By means of this data collection instrument, it was possible to go deeper into the criteria teachers have to select methods and teaching strategies, to know about their teaching needs and expectations when they implement teaching methodologies, and to plan on strategies that the modern languages program—together with the local boards of Education—could implement in order to meet those needs and expectations of the teachers.

Data Analysis

The research question inquired about the aspects that characterize English teaching methodologies of graduates from Cauca University and was approached from the contextualization of teaching practices, the identification of methods and approaches that define those practices, the criteria taken into account in curriculum design, a description of classroom activities, the criteria for selecting methods and strategies, and graduates' needs and expectations regarding teaching methodologies. The qualitative data that emerged from open questions were grouped and categorized according to commonalities, and analyzed in light of the research question. As for the quantitative data, these were analyzed according to the percentages obtained, which could tell about teachers' trends in teaching methodologies.

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Results

Questionnaire 1

This questionnaire aimed to get information about the teachers' teaching contexts, either elementary, high school or university, their professional experience, and qualifications.

This information helped to know how updated the teachers were regarding teaching methodologies, the area of influence of their practices, and work stability.

Table 1. Teachers' Teaching experience and Qualifications

N°	Descriptor	Percentage %	N° of Teachers
1	Teachers without any master's degree	65	20
2	Teaching experience longer than six years	43	13
3	Master's degree in Language teaching or related	18	5
4	Teachers working at either elementary or high school	78	24
5	Teachers working in Cauca Department	91	29
6	Full-time teachers	82	26

Table 1 shows only the results with the highest percentages obtained, because each question contained more than one option to answer it. It can be observed that most of the participating teachers (91%) work in the department of Cauca, which means graduates are helping to respond to learning demands in the region, which is one of the main objectives of the University of Cauca. In addition, the highest percentage of teachers work in either elementary or high schools, so they are required to follow the suggested national policies of the curriculum no matter what their teaching and learning environments are like. Therefore, teachers are called upon to adapt and implement the suggested curriculum introduced by the Ministry of Education. It is important to mention that most of the graduates (26) work as full-time teachers which guarantees permanence to undertake follow-up and evaluation processes of their teaching practices in the same teaching contexts.

Questionnaire 2

This questionnaire focused on the most used methods and approaches of the participating teachers in the integration of the four language skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) and methods of preference. Results show that regarding all of three aspects, the methods with the highest incidence are the Communicative Language Teaching Method (34%), and the Eclectic Method (33%). It was also found that graduates use the Natural Approach (6%). The methods with the lowest incidence are the Grammar-Translation Method (9%), the Total Physical Response Method (6%), the Audio- Lingual Method (3%), and the Direct Method (3%). Despite these results, the teachers use mostly the methods that they prefer. The teachers' knowledge of the definitions and implications of English methods can be guaranteed because during the pre-service training in the modern languages program,

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they were allowed the opportunity to get familiarized with different theories that approach the subject matter. Figure 1 presents the methods and the approach used by the participating graduates, Figure 2 shows the methods and the approach they use to integrate the language skills, and Figure 3 presents the methods graduates prefer in the English language teaching practices.
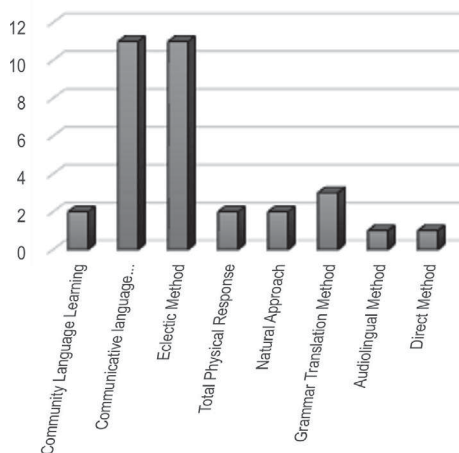

Figure 1. Methods used
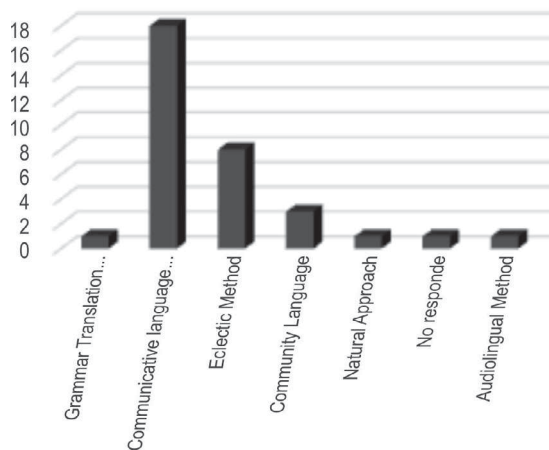
Figure 2. Methods and approach used in skills integration

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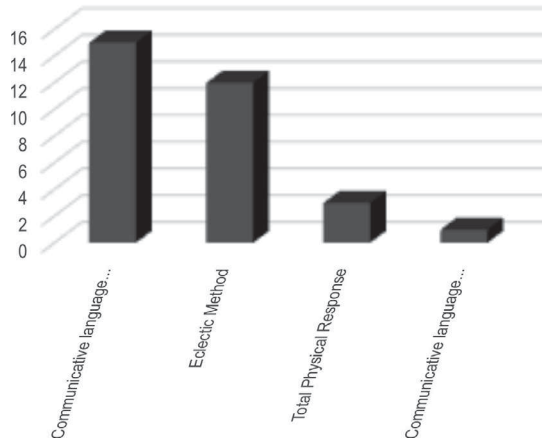
Figure 3. Methods of preference

Through the second questionnaire, data on the strategies used in the implementation of methods were also gathered. Taking into account that, on the one hand, reviewing methods and approaches is part of the pre-service training; and on the other hand, that in 2007 and 2015, teachers from the Cauca region were offered a series of workshops on the implementation of standards and the suggested curriculum by the Ministry of Education, a list of different strategies was included in the survey for each method according to its characteristics. Table 2 below shows only the strategies with the highest percentage in each of the most used methods and approaches by the participating teachers.

As for the Communicative Language Teaching Method, students should be allowed the opportunity to interact, to negotiate meaning and to develop fluency rather than accuracy. Results in Table 2 show that the strategy most used by the teachers when they ground their teaching in this approach is language games, which in fact is the strategy with the highest percentage among all the strategies in the list of the methods described. Regarding the strategies that the teachers use with the eclectic method, appear games, reading comprehension, questions and answers, songs or dialogs completion, description of experiences, storytelling, running dictation, fill in the blanks, reading-translation exercises, picture trip story, presentations, role-plays, writing exercises, and matching. However, the use of strategies depends on the topic, teaching context, learner needs, and previous knowledge. The following are some comments made by the teachers in the second questionnaire, with respect to the strategies they use:

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Table 2. Strategies developed with the most used methods/approaches

N°	Method/Approach	Strategy developed	Percentage %	N° of Teachers
1	Communicative Language Teaching	Language games	71.9	23
2	Audio-lingual	Completing a dialogue	36.7	11
3	Direct Method	Question and answer exercises	36.7	11
4	Grammar Translation	Reading comprehension questions	23.3	7
5	Silent Method	Spelling Dictation	46.4	14
6	Total Physical Response	Singing a song and acting out	53.3	17
7	Natural Approach	Problem solving activities	50	16
8	Community Language Learning	Focusing on vocabulary	34	10

T1: "Utilizo diferentes estrategias que dependen del contexto de los estudiantes. Por lo general me gusta combinar varios métodos de enseñanza en la clase. Los métodos que más me han ayudado a cumplir con los objetivos propuestos han sido communicative language teaching y TPR"[3].

T2: "Según la temática me permito realizar actividades específicas de otros métodos, teniendo en cuenta los conocimientos previos de los estudiantes y el progreso en cada una de sus habilidades"[4].

In some cases, students' needs are limited to learning only about what they will be faced with in the Saber Pro Test, as one teacher expressed:

T3: "Trato de enfocarme en las necesidades de mis estudiantes. […] comprensión de lectura para la presentación de pruebas Saber. […] diálogos dependiendo a tiempo verbal dado, hacer tests de gramática en laboratorio y llevar su cuaderno de control de vocabulario nuevo. Y se espera seguir trabajando comprensión de lectura en gran medida"[5].

Questionnaire 3

The implementation of this data collection technique aimed to inquire about the criteria in the curriculum design, professional development activities, and the impact of

[3] I use different strategies that depend on the students' context. I generally like to combine various teaching methods in class. The methods that have helped me the most to meet the proposed objectives have been communicative language teaching and TPR.

[4] Depending on the subject, I allow myself to carry out specific activities from other methods, considering the students' previous knowledge and their progress in each of their skills.

[5] I try to focus on my students' needs. […] reading comprehension to take the Saber test. […] dialogues depending on the given verb tense, taking grammar tests in the language laboratory, and keeping a control notebook with new vocabulary. I expect to continue working on reading comprehension to a great extent.

these activities on the participating teachers' professional practice. This questionnaire also inquired about the beliefs that influence their actions, as well as their curricular activities and description of a class.

Regarding professional development activities, when the teachers were asked about their participation in seminars, conferences, courses, and the impact it had had on their teaching practices, results show that for only 44.8% of the teachers, the impact had been good. This suggests that there is a lack of professional development courses pertinent to learning and teaching needs in the Cauca region, where most of the participating teachers work. Unfortunately, although different training courses had been offered by the University of Cauca for seven years in a row, through agreements signed with the local boards of Education, the effort made by the university to continue offering these courses has been rather fruitless since 2013, when a training course was offered to both elementary and high school teachers. However, in 2019 the Modern Languages Program led a series of workshops in order to contribute to in-service teachers' professional development as an initiative based on the findings of the present research study.

Some beliefs that the teachers mentioned, which lead their teaching (Annex 1) are the importance of exposing students to problem solving tasks, promoting their research capacity, implementing student-centered teaching, defining standards of competences to measure students' language levels, promoting students' participation, and having a command of the concepts on foreign language teaching.

The sources of the teachers' beliefs are teachers' experience as language learners, experience from teaching, teachers' personality, education-based, or research-based principles. The four aspects considered by the teachers among their beliefs are approached in the languages program as they are relevant in students' integral development and the educational process in general (Kindsvatter *et al*, 1988; Abdi & Asadi, 2011, as cited in Pourhosein & Banou, 2017).

Another important aspect included in Questionnaire Three was teachers' curricular activities among which were found participation in curriculum design, materials selection, and exchange of materials with peers, as well as monitoring students, implementation of evaluation strategies, professional learning activities, and participation in school projects. Eighteen out of thirty-two teachers never carry out peer observation. This finding gives evidence of a need for adopting self-evaluation processes based on external views, in this case from peers, either from the same school or another, which could help make relevant changes in the curriculum through teamwork, and this way improve the teachers' teaching practices. Both novice and experienced teachers can benefit from peer observation as they can learn from each other about how to deal with students' learning, how to resort to effective

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teaching strategies, make reflections upon teaching, share ideas on teaching methodologies, and discuss problems (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

In order to go deeper into curricular design activities, some questions that would describe the teachers' specific classroom activities were asked in Questionnaire 3 (Annex 2). This section contained 24 questions grouped according to their commonalities, among which were: presentation of topics, learning objectives, monitoring and feedback of students, interaction patterns, student level, follow-up of students' learning, and use of instructional strategies. Regarding the presentation of topics, it was found that the tendency is to present a new topic frequently, to promote students' participation, and to follow topic sequence. Regarding learning objectives, findings revealed that these are set up in accordance with students' performances; that is, what students are capable of doing with their learning. Feedback and monitoring spaces are given by reviewing assigned tasks. Also, classroom interaction occurs mainly when activities are done through cooperative work. To approach students' level, varied activities are performed but not frequently, being exams and tests the main assessment instruments used, besides self-assessment and reflection. Regarding instructions given to students, these are reviewed often and activities are developed trying to integrate the language skills.

To complete the data collection process, a fourth questionnaire was implemented, in which only sixteen graduates participated, which means that the sample was not stable. This instrument was meant to explore the teachers' criteria for selecting teaching methods and methodological strategies, teachers' needs when implementing methodologies, especially those suggested by the NBP in the Suggested Curriculum guidelines addressed to sixth to eleventh grades, and their expectations to improve those methodologies.

As for the criteria for selecting methods, the teachers find it important to consider students' learning needs, the relevance of the methods used in the teaching context, teachers' own learning experiences, and how familiar they are with the methods so as to use them appropriately, according to the syllabus. With respect to the criteria for selecting methodological strategies, it was found that relevance in the context takes on importance as well as the teachers' learning experiences and available resources and materials, as shown in Figure 4 below.

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In addition, findings showed that the teachers have some needs when they implement methodologies proposed in the Suggested Curriculum for English. Most of them are related to not knowing how to articulate teaching practices for the performance expectations in the *Saber 11* Test; that is, there is no correspondence between what is taught and what is evaluated on this test. Similarly, some of the teachers believe that they need to get familiar with methodological strategies in line with students' learning needs which, unfortunately, are seen by the teachers only from the perspective of helping students to get good results on
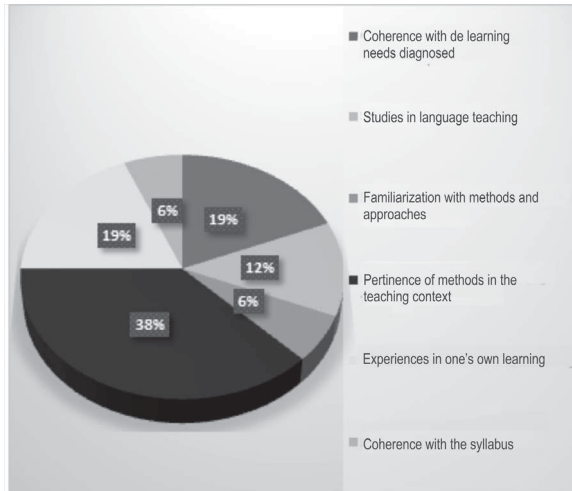
Figure 4. Criteria in methods selection.

the *Saber 11* Test. Regarding actions to improve methodologies, the teachers expect to be updated in order to respond to the guidelines stated in the NBP, to help students to perform better on the *Saber 11* Test, to get familiar with teaching strategies that meet learning needs, and to be trained in materials design, selection and adaptation. Figures 5 and 6 show the results.
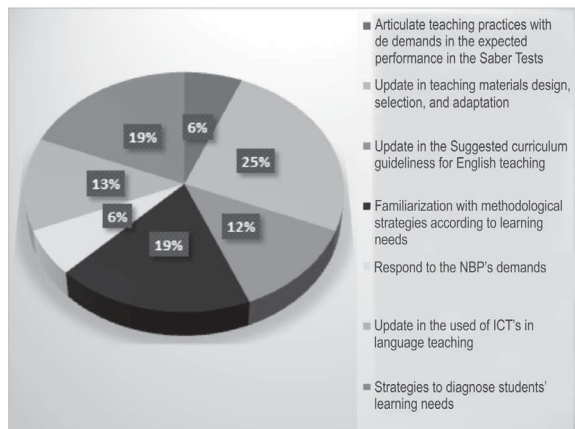
Figure 5. Needs implementing methodologies according to the NBP guidelines

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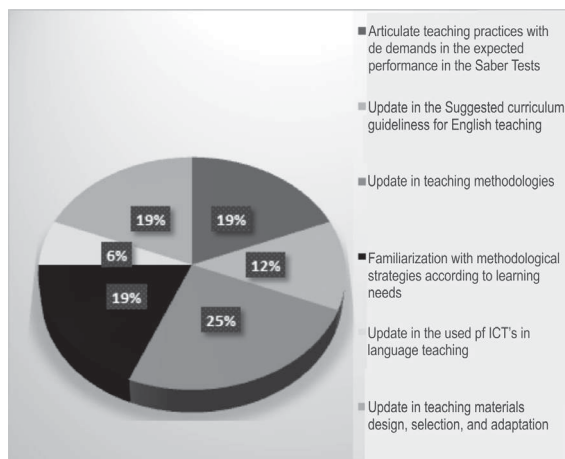
Figure 6. Expectations to improve the implementation of teaching methodologies

Conclusions

The present research study focuses on characterizing the methodologies that foreign language graduates of the University of Cauca apply in their teaching practices. The research question was based on the contextualization of their teaching contexts, the identification of methods and approaches that define their teaching practices; the criteria that they consider in curriculum design; classroom activities; the criteria they follow for selecting methods and strategies; the teachers' needs regarding the methodologies to respond to bilingualism, and the expectations about teaching methodologies. The following are some conclusions drawn upon the results obtained.

Most graduates have completed only undergraduate studies and have been teaching for more than six years. Less than 50% of the teachers have a master's degree in teaching languages or related subjects. These results show the need to offer graduate programs in order to promote research and through which teachers can update their knowledge about language teaching and grow professionally.

The most used methods and approaches that graduates prefer are the Communicative Language Approach and the Eclectic Method. The former defends that language is the expression of meaning and that the primary function of language is interaction and communication. The latter is framed in taking what is most appropriate of other methods to the learning needs and characteristics of the learning context, from which teaching strategies are also chosen. In this sense, the teachers are challenged to carry out diagnoses

on students' English language proficiency level for making further decisions on contents, strategies, materials, activities, and so on. There is, then, a relationship between training and teaching in relation to pedagogical and didactic aspects. In addition, the teachers' conception of language, and how it is learned, is based on students' learning needs, which are identified through diagnoses.

The methods that the teachers choose to integrate language skills are consistent with the previous point. Most graduates opt for the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching Method and the Eclectic Method as they expose students to L2 situations like those they might find in real life, and in which the four language skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) are not fragmented but integrated. Here, teachers' roles become relevant regarding pedagogical practices that include teaching techniques, classroom activities, and tasks so that students take advantage of their own learning (Nunan, 1999, as cited in Encarnacion & Parra 2010, p. 30).

In relation to the use of methods and the strategies used with these methods, the following was found:

- Grammar-Translation Method: Reading comprehension questions, translation of a literary passage and deductive application of grammar rules are mainly carried out. Direct Method: question and answer exercises and conversation practices.

- Audio-Lingual Method: Activities to complete and memorize dialogues.

- Eclectic Method: The teachers resort to strategies used in other methods according to the topic and the learning context, as well as students' needs, communicative competences, and previous knowledge.

- Regarding the Natural Approach: Games and role plays.

- Communicative Language Teaching: Speech analysis, activities with authentic material, creation of stories from a sequence of images, and language games.

Among the criteria taken into account in curriculum design, which were approached from the beliefs that define the teachers' teaching practices, the results show that the teacher and student roles go in line with the student-centered learning environment. Curricular design is also defined by the teachers' interest in promoting students' research capacity and problem-solving strategies. Based on this criterion, the actions in curricular design determine what is taught (the contents), where (the context), to whom (the learners), when (the sequences), how (the methodological strategies), why (the purpose), and how it is evaluated (the evaluation), as stated by De Zubiría (2013). As the language program puts it, it is important to create spaces for the development of critical and investigative thinking that allows graduates to face educational challenges in the best possible way; thus, contributing to the development and transformation of society.

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The last criterion in curricular development that is also based on teachers' beliefs is that, in language learning development, communicative competence becomes one of the most important aims, so the learning environment cannot be silent. Therefore, teachers have privileged the communicative language teaching method and strategies that prioritize interaction.

Regarding curricular design two aspects were found, which would need a greater emphasis on the teachers' part when it comes to monitoring students' learning: personalizing teaching and assigning extra class work, since these allow the opportunity to diagnose learning needs, level of individual performance, rethinking of methodologies, and contact with the target language outside of class.

With respect to the description of a particular class, it can be concluded that participation is promoted among students, previous knowledge is part of input activities, learning objectives are related to their performance, topics are sequenced, there is feedback and monitoring, activities are varied in order to respond to different learning styles and paces, and lastly, self-evaluation and reflection upon the learning process is enhanced.

According to the findings, the graduates find it important to implement methodologies according to the teaching and learning context, to their own learning experiences, and to the resources available when referring to the criteria for selecting methodological strategies. These criteria correspond to the importance of teacher training and the fundamental role of materials and resources in learning.

As for criteria for selecting methods to be implemented, a great relevance is given to the teaching context, followed by coherence with the learning needs diagnosed and the learning experiences. These results demonstrate that, for the graduates, teaching takes on weight when it focuses on the learning environment and the learner. However, most teachers expressed they needed to update on strategies to diagnose learning needs, along with carrying out action research projects.

In order to articulate methodologies with the current demands on bilingualism, it was found that teachers' greatest need has to do with updating on design, selection, and adaptation of materials, followed by familiarizing themselves with methodological strategies in line with learning needs and strategies to diagnose those needs. It should be mentioned that the material provided by the MEN contains a large number of methodological strategies, activities to address the four language skills, and techniques for the use of materials; however, it is teachers' responsibility to adapt these resources to the learning context and, consequently, to students' needs in order to enable better results in both teachers' and students' performances.

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Finally, updating on topics related to teaching methodologies is described as the main expectation of most teachers, followed by articulating teaching practices for the requirements established in the *Saber 11* tests, using teaching strategies according to students' learning needs, and familiarizing themselves with materials design and information and communication technologies.

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Annex 1. Teacher beliefs

	Creencias que definen las acciones	Totalmente de acuerdo %	De acuerdo %	En desacuerdo %	Totalmente en desacuerdo %	No responde %
1	Un docente eficaz demuestra la forma correcta para solucionar un problema	13	59	19	3	3
2	Cuando se trata de bajo desempeño, me refiero a un desempeño que no alcanza el nivel de logro esperado	13	75	6	-	6
3	Es mejor cuando es el docente y no el estudiante quien dice qué actividad se va a hacer	-	25	69	6	-
4	Mi principal rol como docente es posibilitar el desarrollo de la capacidad investigativa en el estudiante	22	75	3	-	-
5	El profesir sabe más que el estudiante y no debería permitir que el estudiante intente proporcionar una respuesta a un interrogante, cuando él puede explicarlo directamente	-	-	31	69	-
6	Los estudiantes aprenden mejor cuando ellos encuentran la solución a un problema por sí mismos	41	53	-	6	
7	Qué tanto los estudiantes aprenden, depende de qué tanto conocimiento previo ellos tienen del tema	3	41	55	-	-
8	Debería permitírsele a los estudiantes hallar la solución a los problemas por sí mismos, antes que el profesor les indique cómo hacerlo	19	78	3	-	-

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	Creencias que definen las acciones	Totalmente de acuerdo %	De acuerdo %	En desacuerdo %	Totalmente en desacuerdo %	No responde %
9	Cuando se trata de alto desempeño, me refiero a un desempeño que supera el nivel de logro esperado	9	75	10	-	6
10	Un salón en silencio es necesio para un aprendizaje efectivo	-	16	72	12	-
11	Pensar y razonar es más importante que un contenido curricular específico	19	75	6	-	-
12	Qué y cómo se enseña este determinado por lo que para el docente significa enseñar	16	34	47	-	3
13	Cómo y qué se enseña debe estar determinado por quién es el estudiante y cómo aprende	22	59	16	-	3

Annex 2. Description of classroom activities

Nº	Describiendo una clase en particular	Siempre %	Casi siempre %	A veces %	Nunca %	No responde %
1	Presento nuevos temas a la clase	6	72	19		3
2	Explico claramente los objetivos de aprendizaje	25	59	13		3
3	Reviso con los estudiantes las tareas asignadas	34	50	13		3
4	Promuevo el trabajo cooperativo	34	47	16		3
5	Diseño actividades variadas para responder a los diferentes niveles de los estudiantes	20	47	33		
6	Propicio la participación de los estudiantes en la propuesta de temas y actividades	16	34	47		3
7	Al comienzo de la clase hago un breve repaso del tema de la clase anterior	16	53	28		3
8	Monitoreo el trabajo que los estudiantes realizan durante la clase	69	28			3
9	Realizo trabajo personalizado con los estudiantes	3	25	69		3
10	Los estudiantes evalúan y reflexionan su proceso de aprendizaje	12	41	41	3	3
11	Uso estrategias para revisar la comprensión de las instrucciones	9	63	25		3
12	Uso estrategias para revisar la comprensión del tema	31	53	13		3
13	Realizo actividades que integren todas las habilidades lingüísticas	19	47	31		3
14	Los estudiantes realizan actividades por fuera de la clase para reforzar su aprendizaje	16	29	52		3
15	Administro exámenes para evaluar el aprendizaje de los estudiantes	25	50	22		3
16	Implemento diferentes patrones de interacción	6	47	41		6
17	Doy feedback a los estudiantes a partir de su desempeño	2	56	16		3
18	Promuevo actividades que varíen la agrupación de los estudiantes	9	44	41	3	3
19	El objetivo de aprendizaje se centra en lo que el estudiante es capaz de hacer con el tema aprendido	3	72	22		3

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Nº	Describiendo una clase en particular	Siempre %	Casi siempre %	A veces %	Nunca %	No responde %
20	El enfoque de mi clase es basado en tareas		38	56	3	3
21	Mi clase se basa en presentación, práctica y producción	13	28	56		3
22	Mi clase se basa en el enfoque por proyectos	3	16	56	22	3
23	Mi clase se basa en matemáticas		31	60	6	3
24	Mi clase se basa en contenido y lengua	6	28	57	6	3

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HOW

Colombian Language Teachers Abroad: An Overview of Their Professional Experience

Docentes colombianos de lenguas en el exterior: Una mirada a su experiencia profesional

Liana Mercedes Torres-Casierra[1]

Abstract

This article presents the preliminary results of an enquiry on the work experience of Colombian language teachers who have entered the workforce in foreign countries. The study aims at unveiling aspects of the personal and professional experience of those graduates that might be relevant for pre-service teachers in local degree programs ahead of their potential move abroad in a growing international mobility context. The study includes data from surveys and personal interviews carried out with a group of 26 participants whose narratives of experience invite one to consider the variables that may either facilitate or hinder one's teaching practice in a foreign workplace and the intercultural communication issues that language teachers may need to deal with. A reflection is brought forward on the needs that teacher training programs at university level in Colombia should address to broaden the scope of their graduates' likely move abroad.

Keywords: Colombian language teachers, international mobility, intercultural communication, migration, pre-service teachers, teacher education, teacher identity

Resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados iniciales de una investigación sobre la experiencia laboral de profesores de idiomas colombianos que han incursionado en el mercado laboral

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en el exterior. El estudio busca develar los aspectos de la experiencia personal y profesional de este grupo de licenciados que pueden ser relevantes para futuros egresados de programas locales de pregrado, teniendo en cuenta las altas probabilidades de que busquen salir del país en el creciente contexto de movilidad internacional. El estudio incluye información de encuestas y entrevistas realizadas con 26 participantes cuyas narrativas de experiencia invitan a considerar las variables propias de sus lugares de trabajo que facilitan o dificultan la práctica docente en el exterior, así como las cuestiones de comunicación intercultural que los profesores de idiomas deben enfrentar. Finalmente se propone una reflexión sobre las necesidades que los programas de licenciatura deben abordar para facilitar la experiencia de sus egresados en el exterior.

Palabras clave: comunicación intercultural, docentes en formación, identidad docente, licenciaturas, migración, movilidad internacional, profesores de lengua colombianos

Introduction

The relaxation of some of the visa requirements for Colombian passport holders in the last decade has certainly seen an increase of Colombians travelling to a variety of countries around the globe. The 2015 visa exemption for Colombians visiting the Schengen countries is the latest example of this, (Semana, 2016; El Espectador, 2019) facilitating international mobility and adding to the historical dynamics of Colombian emigration flows. Scholarly works (Mejía, 2012; Guarnizo & Díaz, 1999; Guarnizo, 2008; Bedoya et al., 2015; Roa, 2016) show that the main driver of Colombian migration has been economic, especially from the 1970s onwards, followed by the need to escape from violence, and the armed conflict between the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, reasons have widened including to further career building.

The profile of Colombian migrants is varied and includes low-skilled workers and qualified professionals, voluntary and forced migrants. Their outbound move in the last twenty years has been aided by many factors including lower air fares, social networks that pull out family members or friends to a new country, and a range of work and study opportunities available abroad for those holding professional degrees. Language teachers are naturally attracted by the latter and the process of decision-making to leave for a new country can mostly be seen as the obvious course of action in their career progression. Many enroll in postgraduate studies whereas work options can include short summer immersion courses, fixed-term contracts as au pairs and as language teaching fellows. While this proves to be an enriching personal and professional experience, language teachers may encounter challenging work settings and socio-cultural environments that permeate their teaching practice.

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Therefore, the understanding of the work culture and the intercultural communication at play, in and outside the language classroom, is central to better respond to the jobs available in this growing market.

This paper explores the work experience of 26 language teaching graduates who have lived abroad for at least three months. From their stories a number of issues related to their teaching training are underscored along with instances of intercultural communication misunderstandings, and common variables in the foreign workplace that have permeated their teaching experience. The analysis of the participants' stories here permits an initial reflection on how language teacher education programs in Colombia can better embrace the future and ever-growing international mobility of their *licenciados*[2]. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What aspects of the training offered by foreign language programs (i.e., *licenciaturas*[3]), could be enhanced bearing in mind the work and life experience of graduate language teachers abroad?

2. To what extent does intercultural communication in the foreign country permeate the teaching practices of Colombian language teachers there?

3. What specific variables in the foreign workplace can be seen to either facilitate or challenge the teaching experience of Colombian language teachers abroad?

Literature Review

This research study advances a qualitative approach intending to contextualize the most salient features of the group of migrant teachers investigated and serving to describe their job mobility in their new country. The project combines elements of identity theory, narrative enquiry, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to present a preliminary analysis of the teaching practice of language teachers graduated in Colombia and working abroad.

Ingrid Piller's (2016) work is indicative of the burden carried by foreign workers who, despite their mastering of the local language, have to go through a process of job deskilling broadening the gap of job prospects between traditionally immigrant communities and their receiving counterparts. As Piller explains, the assumptions around one's native language and one's name quite often seem to provide sufficient evidence of one's linguistic proficiency through linguistic stereotyping (2016, p. 66). Therefore, these migrants are faced with the challenge of adapting to the new social milieu and framing themselves into new identities that help them deal with their foreign reality.

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[2]   Title given to undergraduate teaching degree holders in Colombia.

[3]   Undergraduate teaching degree programme with a duration of 10 semesters in Colombian universities.

The range of studies on learner identities and migrants, however, has not examined to a great extent the foreign or second language teacher identities. Only a few works have focused on professional identities emerging in institutional or other formal education contexts (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008; Liu & Xu, 2011; Motha, 2006) and early career experiences (Hahl & Mikulec, 2018; Illieva, 2010; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Urzúa & Vasquez, 2008). Those studies have looked at identity construction upon an observed subject, the teacher. However, there is not sufficient understanding on how the subject-teacher makes sense of their own teaching practice (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Matto 2009), and therefore, of their own personal identities forming and negotiating. More information is needed in terms of the conflicting positions to which in-service foreign language teachers have had to adapt in order to succeed in their migration move. Those positions come into play in an interaction with a varied number of stakeholders starting with the gatekeepers, students, teaching colleagues, supervisors, parents, and the local migration policy itself.

Works such as Piller's (2016) illustrate the barriers that migrants are faced with and from this one could anticipate like findings amongst foreign language teachers. Notwithstanding, when those barriers are successfully overcome—by getting a job that matches one's professional background and experience, and with one's personal expectations or desires—the goings-on afterwards remain uncertain.

In a rather ideal setting, linguistic stereotyping, for example, should dwindle after the non-native speaker is able to get into a determined job position. Yet, another set of conflicts or challenges is likely to emerge upon relating to a new working culture and a broad type of social and professional relations in the new job post. How can foreign in-service teachers respond to those complexities? What can student teachers learn from those who have already experienced working abroad holding migrant and non-native speaker identities? These questions relate intrinsically to the identities that language teachers take on to respond to their new work demands. To be sure, those identities may not be the result of a conscious reflection but may become visible through the undertaking of day-to-day activities, teaching practice, and communication.

Since the graduates' lived experience is studied here through the analysis of narratives, and those narratives are discourses socially and professionally produced, the bottom line of analysis lies on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Fairclough (2012) formulates CDA as a methodology developed through focusing upon a 'social wrong', identifying the obstacles to addressing it, considering if the social order needs the 'social wrong,' and identifying possibilities to overcome the obstacles (p. 13). In the case of Colombian language teachers abroad, their ability to go through the gate-keeping process and obtain a job in a foreign country does not ultimately mean that social and interactional conflicts disappear. On the contrary, their new position as second or foreign language teachers may call for new

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challenges and, in many cases, discrimination and isolation which can be labelled here as social wrongs. Participants' narratives of experience provide insights on the strategies they have used to overcome those obstacles. This serves to analyze what needs to be revisited in *licenciatura* programs regarding teacher training and pedagogical and socio-cultural awareness skills.

Literature on intercultural communication and pragmatics is also central to addressing the research questions proposed especially in view of the cross-cultural setting where this research study takes place. In this area of study, the works by Holliday *et al.* (2010), Bloomaert and Verschueren (1991), and Mercer (2004) forestall the elements that may impinge the narratives of experience of the participant teachers. The tools of micro-analysis of discourse are taken from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis literature with a special focus on Garfinkel (1967), Drew and Heritage (1992), Cicourel (2003), Candlin and Crichton (2011), and Goffman (1969, 1981). From this body of literature, issues of intercultural communication, such as misunderstandings or miscommunication, cultural presuppositions and the like, are cross-checked within the participants' narratives of lived experience.

Methodology

This study took place between February 2019 and February 2020. Colombians with a degree in languages teaching and who have travelled abroad to work or study for at least three months were invited to participate. The sample is limited to those criteria only and without further restrictions on age, year of graduation, university, year of departure, type of work and study abroad or current migration status. In this way, the study would attract a larger number of graduates who could then be grouped according to the relevant traits.

Potential participants were reached through a social media campaign and by request to twelve Colombian universities which offer any degree related to languages teaching. Twenty-six participants gave their consent and filled out the online survey, and from these, eight people accepted an interview in person and through video calls.

The survey questions look for indications on the background and demographic profile of the participants. They also served to identify their main stimuli for leaving the country of origin, their career path and whether they stayed abroad or returned to Colombia. The interview was designed to open up a space where participants could share their experience, anecdotes, and perspectives on living and working in a foreign country. All interviews were transcribed thoroughly for a detailed analysis on the emerging themes. This involved looking at each participant's discourse and reflecting on their professional and migrant condition and

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the intercultural relations portrayed in their narratives. Then, segments appearing to inform of common experiences amongst participants were grouped and further checked to identify the recurrent discursive patterns they used to describe their training in Colombia and their working life in a foreign country. The interviewees are labelled from P1 to P8 to ensure their anonymity.

Data Analysis and Results

Survey Takers' Profile

Twenty-six language teachers, graduates of four Colombian universities, took part of the study with most of the participants, 16, from Universidad del Valle, Cali, and seven from Universidad Industrial de Santander, Bucaramanga. The informants' degree titles include teaching of foreign languages (9), modern languages (9), English (4), Spanish (2), and languages (2). Although only two participants hold a degree in Spanish language teaching, this has not impeded other graduates to find work as Spanish language teachers abroad as will be discussed later.

The main countries of arrival that the participants reported were the United States (11), the UK (5), and France (5) with at least five participants having lived in a second and third country. Twenty-one participants reported having found a job abroad; 12 of them were hired for the first time between one and three months upon their arrival, while four of them did well after 12 months of stay. Three travelled through the Visiting International Faculty program (VIF, now Participate); after a training period in situ, they started working at public schools in the US. Regarding those who travelled to France, three worked as Spanish language assistants at public schools with a fixed-term contract the first year then renewable for short periods of time.

Nineteen informants reported teaching experience in a foreign country at primary (2), secondary (2), high school (5), undergraduate (4), postgraduate (2) levels, and continued education (4). Of thirteen of those have taught Spanish as a foreign language, five have taught English as a second or foreign language, and only one has taught French abroad. Some have taught both English and Spanish, and there is also a minor mention of other subjects different from languages. The remaining participants' work experience has been in menial jobs such as babysitting and cleaning.

The level of studies attained by the majority of informants is at the master's level with 18 holding this degree. Two participants were studying a master at the time of the enquiry. Three reported a doctoral degree and the remaining three had completed only their teacher education program in Colombia (undergraduate degree). Amongst the group

of 21 informants holding a postgraduate degree, 16 obtained it abroad with masters' titles commonly related to teaching, didactics, applied linguistics, communications, and translation studies.

As can be noted, living abroad has provided major study opportunities for these language teachers which at the same time has translated into job mobility. Half of the sample are currently employed by universities either abroad or in Colombia, while eight people work at primary (2) and secondary (6) schools. The remaining five participants are independent workers, translators, or private tutors.

Eleven informants have permanently returned to Colombia and from the 15 remaining abroad, nine hold permanent residency status, two are on student visas, and four have temporary work permits. Amongst the reasons found to stay abroad, these graduates mentioned the lack of good and stable jobs in Colombia, the violence, and the current state of government affairs. Only two of those who live abroad have plans to return to Colombia. Four of those who returned claimed that they did so because their visa expired while the others did so for family or professional reasons. In total, six of the returnees have plans to go back abroad. Table 1 provides an overview of the survey takers' profile.

Interviewees' Profile

All survey takers were invited for an interview to discuss more deeply their life and work experience abroad; however, only eight accepted within the time frame requested. A summary of the interviewees' migrant trajectories and their job mobility is presented in Table 2 below. Amongst this group, there are five women and three men with lengths of stay varying from 3 to 16 years to the date of the study. Three have permanently returned to Colombia while the remaining five gained citizenship in their host countries: Canada, Australia, and France. Some of these graduates' migrant trajectories have been multidirectional with three participants having lived in two different countries, one of them in three and another in five countries. Reasons for those trajectories are mostly visa related; those who arrived first in the USA, as language assistants in most cases, migrated to a second country where work or visa conditions were more flexible.

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The type of work undertaken by the participants upon arrival concentrates mostly in language teaching assistantships; three of the interviewees travelled to the US to work as Spanish or ESL teachers in American schools (i.e., VIF) and another two did likewise through either a university program or the French government bursaries program. Three participants travelled by their own means to study abroad (P1 and P5) or on a spouse visa (P8).

Table 1. Participants' Profile - Colombian Language Teachers Abroad **(N=26)**

		(N)	%			(N)	%
		(N)	%	University of graduation	U. del Valle	16	61,5
Gender	Female	17	65,4		U. Industrial de Santander	7	26,9
	Male	9	34,6		U. Santo Tomás	2	7,7
					U.Santiago de Cali	1	3,8
		(N)	%				
	20-25 yo	1	3,8			(N)	%
	26-30 yo	7	26,9		1994-1998	2	7,7
	31-35 yo	5	19,2		2001-2003	5	19,2
Age group	36-40 yo	6	23,1	Year of departure	2005-2008	4	15,4
	41-45 yo	3	11,5		2009-2013	4	15,4
	46-50 yo	3	11,5		2014-2017	7	26,9
	over 50 yo	1	3,8		2018-2019	4	15,4
		(N)	%			(N)	%
	Undergraduate	3	11,5		Permanent resident abroad	9	34,6
Highest degree	Masters	18	69,2		Working visa	2	7,7
	Ongoing masters	2	7,7	Migration status	Student visa	2	7,7
	PhD	3	11,5		Temporary visa	2	7,7
					Returnee	11	42,3
		(N)	%				
	1-2 yrs	2	7,7			(N)	%
	3-5 yrs	3	11,5	Experience teaching abroad	Yes	19	73,1
Overall teaching experience	5-7 yrs	5	19,2		No	7	26,9
	8-10 yrs	6	23,1				
	12-15 yrs	1	3,8			(N)	%
	over 15 yrs	9	34,6		Primary	2	7,7
		(N)	%		Secondary	2	7,7
	United States	11	42,3	Levels of instruction taught abroad	High school	5	19,2
	United Kingdom	5	19,2		University	6	23,1
	France	5	19,2		Vocational/continued ed.	4	15,4
First country of arrival	Canada	1	3,8			(N)	%
	Spain	1	3,8		Spanish, SFL	13	76,4
	Argentina	1	3,8	Subjects taught	English, ESL, EFL	6	35,3
	Sweden	1	3,8		French, FFL	1	5,8
	Australia	1	3,8				

Table 2. Interviewees Migrant Trajectories

Participant	Number of years abroad (year of departure)	Migrant status	Countries of stay/migration	First job abroad	Current job
P1 (Female)	10 years (1994)	Returnee	Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, Spain, Ecuador	Cleaning services & some private Spanish tutoring	Independent Spanish teacher
P2 (Male)	5 years (2013)	Returnee	US, Spain	VIF Program	University and high school EFL teacher
P3 (Male)	16 years (2004)	Canadian citizen	US, Canada	Spanish language assistant	Full-time ESL professor
P4 (Female)	14 years (2006)	French citizen	France	Spanish language assistant	Freelance, start-ups tele-worker
P5 (Female)	12 years (2008)	Australian citizen	Australia	Cleaning services	High school French teacher
P6 (Female)	15.5 years (2004)	Canadian citizen	US, Tunisia, Canada	VIF Program	High school Spanish teacher
P7 (Male)	3 years (2003)	Returnee	US	VIF Program	University and high school EFL teacher
P8 (Female)	4 years (2016)	Australian citizen	US, Australia	Marketing assistant	Private tutor and Spanish teacher

In the analysis to follow, it is evident that living and working abroad provided informants **129** with an upward job mobility. This is partly due to the postgraduate studies and professional development courses they had pursued. At the time of the study, all informants were engaged in paid work at high school, university, or were working independently. Three of them currently work teaching ESL or EFL; one teaches French, and three are Spanish language teachers or private tutors. Only P6's job is not related to the teaching of languages.

Language Teachers' Lived Experience Abroad

What aspects of the training offered by foreign language programs could be enhanced bearing in mind the work and life experience of graduate language teachers abroad?

Table 3 below summarizes the items mostly mentioned by the group of graduates regarding both the strengths of their teacher education program and the themes that ought to be improved in view of the mobility that future graduates may have. Participant 1 (P1) states that language teaching graduates' main weakness lies in poor cultural knowledge, involving recognition of their own history, and basic geography of their country. From her experience in managing a Spanish training program at a private university in Cali, P1 believes that graduates "don't read enough, they may be creative, but when it comes to talking about other stuff, such as literature, for example, they are quite weak." She illustrates her point further by explaining that foreigners who come to Cali looking for Spanish courses do have a prior knowledge and have certain qualifications that make them seek a deeper understanding of the local culture, history, geography, etc., and recent graduates miss opportunities in SFL precisely for their lack of knowledge in those fields.

Participants 3, 5, and 6 tell of the issues they faced to get their teaching degrees recognized in the US, Australia, and Canada, respectively. P3 and P5 were unable to fully credit their degrees as language teachers as the units for teaching practicum and pedagogy were insufficient compared with the minimum hours required in the US and Australia. P3 had to do a three-month ESL teaching course to fulfill the requirement while P5 completed a two-year master degree in education to gain registration as a secondary school teacher in Australia. P5 claims that the master program had a major component on pedagogy which her undergraduate degree lacked.

P3 complains that explaining what he studied in Colombia has been quite difficult and thinks it may have to do with the specific contents and subject names in the official transcripts:

> There are things that could be improved, such as the subject titles, their translation and their description in the transcripts so that people can really understand. I was rejected in a job, they said 'we have checked with a Spanish speaker and we reached the conclusion that you did not study anything related to the teaching of English in those five years'...

P6's experience in Canada was not different as she had to study five different pedagogy subjects to get a teaching license there, despite holding a master degree. She says that no matter the number of masters one person has, everybody who wants to teach in Canada will need to credit five pedagogy units: "Education in Quebec, primary education, and secondary school pedagogy, special needs education, and diversity." She claims that it will be helpful if Colombian graduates could have at least one of these units in their degree.

Table 3. *Graduates Perspectives on their Teacher Education Training*

Strengths of their teacher education program	Aspects that need to be improved to facilitate international mobility
• French and English courses with native speakers • Materials design • Linguistics and applied linguistics • Use of authentic materials in English courses • Didactics • American English literature • Monograph work, particular case of research on distance training and computer-assisted language learning • Linguistics theory • Colombian language policy & school curriculum • Teaching practicum • Teaching seminars • Materials design • Linguistics, Sociolinguistics and Psycholinguistics • Phonetics course • Rigorousness of the undergraduate program • Written composition courses • Use of Spanish for academic purposes	• Knowledge of culture, history, geography • Reading skills • Reading literature • Spanish grammar • Spanish teaching training • Special education training • Information provided in transcripts for international accreditation • Comparative research on teacher education programs • Collaborative work with scholars in other countries to enrich local programs • Translation studies • Knowledge of Spanish history • Number of pedagogy credits • Study of a variety of accents in English and French (e.g., Boston, New York, and rural accents in the US; Quebec French, France's regional accents) • More pedagogy units, pedagogical differences abroad • International pedagogy exams preparation • Cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries • Intercultural communication course

P4's experience goes in tandem with P1's comments on the graduates' lack of familiarity with other areas of knowledge. She illustrates this by describing the exams for teaching registration in France:

> They ask too many things about history and their training is based on translation, and we go more towards communication… I sat the test once and the first part was about translating texts, and there was another section where you had to read a piece of Spanish literature of certain century and you had to give answers citing history events, and I don't know about Spanish history, the Spaniards may, but I don't.

P4 could have succeeded in the registration exams if she had had that background on Spanish literature and history, but as she admits, not even Colombians have knowledge of

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their own country's history and this is not addressed in the languages' degree programs. P4 had then a clear idea that she would not be able to teach French or English in France, as she was a non-native speaker of those languages. Interestingly, this contrasts with P5's case in Australia; she has worked as a French language teacher being a non-native speaker and has also been awarded government bursaries to travel to France for professional development short courses in French as a Second language.

P8 is the only one who refers to the training that she received in Spanish language through composition courses. In her work at a marketing agency where she had to edit advertisements from Mexican Spanish to Colombian Spanish, her background in linguistics and knowledge of the Spanish language gave her an advantage to become the editor of other Spanish language varieties. This acknowledgement, however, contrasts with the experiences related by P1 and P2. For P1, graduates from the foreign language teaching program at Universidad del Valle do not have the knowledge of Spanish grammar they need and do not have the skills to teach their own language. Indeed, this *licenciatura*'s purpose is to train students in the teaching of English and French only. Yet, as can be seen from the sample, all seven interviewed graduates from Universidad del Valle have taught Spanish as a foreign language abroad and most of them have stayed in this area of teaching.

To what extent does intercultural communication in the foreign country permeate the teaching practices of Colombian language teachers there?

The participants provide plenty of examples in which intercultural communication has played a key role in their working lives abroad. In general terms, most of the interviewees refer to this in the adaptation stage to the new country or a new job. For those who travelled through the VIF program, a common observation is made on the initial 'cultural shock' and difficulty to adapt to certain behavior from their students and colleagues. They relate that being sent to rural areas of North Carolina placed them with children from African American communities that were quite rude and did not appreciate their position as foreign teachers. In addition, beyond the normal difficulties of comprehending certain ways of speaking and the distinctive accent of southern rural dwellers, these participants had to deal with very conservative views of their colleagues which they were not in a position to challenge. That is the case of P2 who narrates how, in the staff room at his secondary school, several teachers showed their strong support to the then presidential candidate Donald Trump. P2 was certainly against those views, but he could not voice his stance as he was neither a local nor a permanent teacher.

A rather serious issue of intercultural communication is presented by P6 in her account of being a victim of sexual harassment:

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The director of the school kept asking me out for dinner, I rejected him and then he started to send memos, he got very intense, he complained about me to the head of the school… they decided to send me to another school, admin staff were very supportive, my colleagues, my director, the head of the ESL department… I didn't know about the process and I didn't know that was actually sexual harassment… I was 24 or 25 and I didn't have experience about that, the gentleman was 10 years older, he was very kind and sweet, but then he started with all of that….

As P6 explains, the matter probably would have been prevented if she had known that her own behavior, which was open, friendly, and affective towards her colleagues, could be misunderstood. She advises new teachers to set clearly, from the beginning, that the certain ways Colombians customarily treat people are a sample of kindness and empathy and do not have anything to do with personal interests.

In other accounts, more positive examples are given related to vocabulary and language misunderstandings that are part of the participants' intercultural communication experience. P8's job in a marketing agency was charged with word use and meanings that would make her Latin American and Spanish colleagues laugh for the sexual connotations implied. The use of words such as *coger*, *pitillo,* and *chaqueta* are just a few she recalls. Yet, in one of the tasks assigned to her team, for creating publicity for a 'motel', P8's boss was shocked to see what she and her team had produced. Based on the Colombian use of the word "motel[4]" the team created an ad with sexual content that greatly differed from the meaning of the word in English. The team had to start their work over although they managed to keep some ambiguous words for the Latin public.

P7 tells how he would always offer to help his female co-workers to carry heavy loads, boxes and packages, and to open the car door for them. They would initially reject his offerings, but later they had the chance to meet casually and he explained why he liked helping them out; he said it was something a gentleman would do and it was common in his country. Afterwards, his colleagues started demanding other male colleagues do what he was doing and it started to create a certain disdain against him from others.

Regarding specific anecdotes on the working culture abroad, some participants mention that working at the school level, as a foreigner, is not an easy task or is not for everyone. P5 had done some previous teaching practicum at the school in which she was later hired as a part-time teacher. She was in charge of one course and had many responsibilities as the group director, not only related to teaching but administrative stuff such as following up students' absences, calling out parents to seek further information, and requesting personal meetings. At that time, understanding parents over the phone was difficult because they spoke quite fast and she was just becoming familiar with the general Australian accent over

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4   Different to its meaning in English, for Colombians, a motel is a place where couples pay for short hourly stays to sustain sexual encounters.

the phone. She had to ask for help from her colleagues and reconfirm information through emails to avoid mistakes in the due process.

P5 found a friendly work environment in Australia and was able to overcome the initial challenges posed by her new position. A different case is related by P2 who illustrates the differences he felt between his workmates in Colombia and those in the United States in secondary schools:

> That school was quite conservative, the teachers didn't share, I was used to share with colleagues at schools in Cali, to have coffee together and talk, but over there everyone was quiet, they didn't talk about personal stuff, there was no room to start getting to know each other. [Sic]

What specific variables in the foreign workplace can be seen to either facilitate or challenge the teaching experiences of Colombian language teachers abroad?

It is timely to remind one that 25 out of 26 of those surveyed reported to have engaged in teaching roles in foreign countries. That is to say, there is a strong probability that recent graduates who travel abroad can find a teaching job. Typical workplaces are primary and secondary public schools in the US through renowned teaching exchange programs such as Educational Partners International (EPI). Yet, there is a strict selection process that applicants must go through in their countries of origin. Likewise, the French government bursaries for Spanish language assistants require applicants to be rigorously tested in their language skills and other criteria. Participants in this study have also followed other paths to enter the workforce abroad: some travelled to undertake postgraduate studies and their host university allowed them to teach courses or tutorials; others have found professional jobs upon graduating abroad and have pursued permanent residence along the way.

Among the workplace factors that appear to have facilitated these graduates' teaching job experiences are: (1) Foreign schools' needs for degree holders in the teaching of community languages, (2) Availability of fixed-term contracts for new teachers, (3) Availability of support sections (i.e. to assist students' special needs and teachers), (4) Access to professional development programs and continued education, and (5) Friendly and supportive work environments abroad.

First, it is certainly acknowledged that due to the constant flows of migration to countries with strong economies, the need for teachers who speak the language of the migrant communities is also steadily growing. Spanish is the first community language in the US with about 37.5 million users. This not only means that Spanish is a language of increasing use in the country, but that school children whose families speak Spanish only need greater support in catching up with English in their mainstream schooling. It can be observed that foreign language graduates have had opportunities to teach both Spanish and English as a second or foreign language in the US, Canada, and Australia, for example. The

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case is somewhat different for those who travelled to France where Spanish native speakers seem to have little opportunities to teach French or English, as the French education system appears to privilege the teaching of community languages by native speakers only.

In that sense, the second factor comes into play as the chances for recent graduates to obtain fixed-term contracts abroad are feasible after a successful application process in the country of origin. One of the main selection criteria is that their date of graduation does not exceed two or three years, depending on the program to which they are applying. Foreign teaching contracts may vary from one to two years if going to the US. Although contract renewals are possible, applicants must comply with the return conditions of their visas, unless they are able to find a visa sponsor.

For the participants interviewed, having a fixed-term contract to start with gave them a huge advantage as they travelled with a stable salary and only had to worry about performing well at their new schools. None of those travelling with VIF or going with a university scholarship to the US engaged in menial jobs as their salary was enough to cover their expenses in the US or they could find extra part-time work within the same school or college.

A third factor facilitating a positive teaching experience abroad amongst the sample was the availability of specific support sections at schools. For some of the interviewees here, learning how to manage cases of students with special needs was a complex task. They had no prior training on detecting this type of needs, as P2, P6, and P7 narrate. Thus, when they encountered groups with children or teens that had learning difficulties or negative behavioral and psychological conditions, such as depression, they were not quite sure how to handle it. Fortunately, these are foreseen issues and schools abroad have dedicated staff who work individually with those students. For the teachers, support goes more on a hierarchical level where school directors, district directors, ESL unit heads, and the like, align to help new teachers with administrative and legal issues.

Another element praised by the participants was the possibility they had to enter professional development and continued education abroad. In some cases, such as P4, P5, P6, and P7, the participants were able to attend courses, seminars, and workshops offered in their workplace as part of their teaching training. In other cases, P2 and P3 for example, it was precisely their first teaching job which allowed them to either save money to undertake postgraduate studies or gain the work experience needed for a successful application for a master's degree scholarship or grant. It is a common reflection amongst this group of participants that only until being abroad did they realize the huge number of opportunities that they had to gain upwards job mobility. For instance, P5's initial plan was to undertake a master's degree in Australia, but once there she learnt about the chances she could have for a permanent job position after completing her practicum credits. This, eventually, meant that she could apply for permanent residency and later citizenship over there.

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Conversely, there are a few variables within the new workplace that hindered the participants' teaching experiences: (1) Demand of greater practicum credits to obtain teaching licenses abroad, (2) Demand of demonstrable training and pedagogy credits in specific levels of education (i.e. primary, secondary, ESL), (3) Local teaching practices unknown to recent arrivals, and (4) Unfamiliar accents and varieties of the local language.

As illustrated in the previous section, one of the common difficulties that the participants living in the US, Canada, and Australia refer to is the lack of evidence to demonstrate that they had undergone sufficient teaching practicum hours and had studied sufficient pedagogy credits in their undergraduate degree programs. Their teaching degrees thus could be easily disregarded by employers. This was the case for P3 in the US who was constantly questioned on his capacity to teach English although being a non-native speaker, and on his ability to teach at secondary and university levels holding a single undergraduate degree. P3's master thesis was a project integrating humor in the ESL classroom. His supervisor's initial comments were: "you are a non-native speaker, how do you dare to say you can teach humor in English, American humor?" In a similar vein, P4, who migrated to France, realized from the very beginning that as a Spanish native speaker, she would only be able to teach Spanish over there: "one cannot pretend to be neither an English teacher, nor a French teacher…we are 'hispanophones'…but we don't have a training to teach Spanish as a foreign language, as they have it here on FLE." [Sic]

Especially for those intending to work permanently in the US, there is a constraint in the unescapable requirement of sitting pedagogy tests to be given full registration there. For those travelling with VIF sponsorship, their contract renewal after the initial two-year period depended on finding a school which would hire them for a third year. However, their local experience for two or three years would not be enough to obtain a longer contract; eventually, they would have to apply for a state-issued teaching license. Only one of the three interviewees related to this issue: P6 completed the whole process and succeeded in obtaining sponsorship and visa renewal in the US. However, she eventually left the US and became a Canadian citizen. The other two, P2 and P7 returned to Colombia.

A third element drawn from the new workplace posing difficulties to informants was the lack of knowledge concerning teaching practices abroad. P2 and P6, for example, share similar experiences about their students not having a notebook to write notes in, but instead, being given handouts at all times. Writing and note-taking in a notebook was not required at their new schools and they both had to learn how to deliver their lessons without this tool which they say is a central part of the teaching practices in Colombia. P6 illustrates the situation in the following extract:

> We are used to the notebook, I don't know if they still use it in Colombia, I think so, here children are given handouts, they don't write anything in notebooks, they don't know how to use one, they

don't have that culture … 'Wow! What happened here? There's no notebook!' I had to learn, to observe well what the teachers did… but if I had taken a subject on pedagogical differences abroad … maybe that would have helped me heaps to adapt here more quickly…

Besides the need to adapt to new ways of teaching encountered in the US, P2 had an early experience of a clash with his students and some parents as they disliked his idea of using white paper on both sides. P2 was told that students were able to have as much blank paper as they needed and there was no need to save on it. He had to adjust to this practice and forget about the idea to continue promoting environmentally-friendly practices at his school.

Finally, the participants pointed out to have faced an initial unfamiliarity with the local variety of the language they had studied in Colombia. They all agree that their language skills were quite strong at the time and praise their teachers and university courses for that, but they also agree that their lack of knowledge on the specific varieties of the local language made it a bit troublesome to comprehend people especially in the southern part of North Carolina, US; in Adelaide, Australia; and Montpellier, France. P2, P4, P6, and P7 suggest that undergraduate students should be in contact with those varieties to better adapt to their jobs abroad.

Conclusions

In broad terms, the participants in this study portray their work and life experience abroad as positive and rewarding. Holding a teaching degree in foreign languages has provided them with a work advantage over fellow migrants in the places where they have travelled. As P8 illustrates, in both the US and Australia, this degree has allowed them to take on jobs where being a Spanish speaker is well regarded, and being a teaching degree holder is seen as a valued proof of their professional skills.

Participants have told of the various pathways they followed for temporary and permanent migration to different countries. Thus, they tell of quite unique experiences while adapting to their new workplace and to the official and administrative requirements in order to pursue their careers further. Eleven out of 26 of those surveyed returned to their home country and have not made plans to go back in the near future. From this, we can claim that the work and life experience of Colombian language teachers abroad is usually profitable and that there are clear possibilities, for those who wish it, to stay there and obtain permanent or at least stable teaching positions. Yet, chances may be limited following local migration policies and requirements. Participants P2, P4, P5, P6, and P8 illustrate how their permanent migration was possible amid the demanding application process they went through.

In view of the research questions, a central issue that graduates may face is the lack of the required number of teaching practicum hours, and pedagogy credits in their degree

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program. This is one of the requirements that poses major delays in their application for a teaching license abroad. Hence, it is essential that Colombian graduates' transcripts thoroughly demonstrate that they have undertaken these subjects as well as state the level of education that they are prepared to teach.

Another important element for students with travel plans to work or study abroad is the undeniable thesis that they will be more likely to teach Spanish courses than any other foreign language. Although this is not always the case and there are experiences of ESL teaching in the sample, graduates are certainly seen as Spanish native speakers with a teaching degree rather than a title in foreign languages teaching. In that sense, university programs should consider the advantages of including more Spanish language teaching related courses. Notwithstanding, further research should reveal whether the recurrent positions that Colombians are able to obtain as Spanish language teachers have more to do with ways of alignment foreign employers seem to uphold systematically.

Only one participant, P8, asserts that her experience of 15 years teaching English in Colombia has opened up opportunities for her to tutor Spanish private lessons abroad, and that her knowledge of academically-bound Spanish posed an advantage to her. However, this claim will have to be further assessed to check if the skills she claims to have are regarded as such in her new role as a Spanish language teacher at a university in Australia. Private tutoring for communicative purposes might differ from delivering full content Spanish courses at school or university levels.

In regard to the question on intercultural communication issues, the interviewees provide some anecdotal examples of words and phrases they misused, but it is not a persistent situation in most of the cases. This is telling about the language proficiency that students are able to reach in their *licenciatura*. However, specific information on cultural awareness should be included across programs so that graduates are better equipped to recognize behavior and attitudes that can entail ambiguities from their own and their foreign fellows.

As for the third research question, a specific variable challenging the teaching experience of graduates has to do with adapting to unfamiliar accents or varieties of the languages they learnt. Therefore, *licenciaturas* should offer an extensive approach to regional varieties. This need is also evident from the trends of global migration that privilege movement to rural areas, rather than big cities, where quite different forms of the standard language are spoken.

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Finally, the participants coincide in a few recommendations for those willing to travel abroad. They highlight that having clear information on the type of contract they are getting is important, especially in the case of language assistants to the US and Canada. They say that being *"open-minded,"* is also important, as well as being *"ready to adapt"* to different situations that may be new or that may contrast with their previous teaching experience in Colombia. An example of this is the number of responsibilities that graduates may have as group

directors to follow up their students' overall performance in all subjects or simply checking on their absences, learning difficulties, and family issues.

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HOW

Possible Impossibilities of Peace Construction in ELT: Profiling the Field

Las imposibilidades posibles de la construcción de paz en la enseñanza del inglés: Perfiles del campo

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Abstract

When referring to peace, peacebuilding, and peace education, among others, some similarities and differences among them appear. Although some consider ELT as a peripheral field regarding peace construction, diverse enunciation modalities profile this interest. Inquiring into *what, where, when and who*, I analyzed 55 articles and 36 presentation abstracts for this qualitative study to unveil what is understood as peace construction in ELT. This revision presents six tendencies. Gaps and opportunities of research action for teachers are synthesized. Time/space coordinates of enunciation modalities in peace construction are displayed. I describe who the teachers behind some studies might be, regarding their locus of enunciation. Conclusion remarks around the diverse nature of peace construction are discussed, as representing those links between imagined separated fields.

Keywords: ELT, English teachers, peace construction, profiling research

Resumen

Cuando hablamos de paz, su construcción o educación, algunas similitudes y diferencias aparecen. Aunque algunos académicos ubican la enseñanza del inglés en la periferia frente a la construcción de paz, este manuscrito explora los enunciados referentes a la paz que reflejan sus perfiles en la enseñanza del inglés. Específicamente, se indaga sobre *qué, dónde, cuándo* y *quién* construye paz en 55 artículos y

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36 resúmenes de ponencias dentro de un estudio cualitativo sobre el estado del tema. Reporto seis tendencias, vacíos u oportunidades de acción investigativa. Las coordenadas espaciotemporales de los enunciados sobre construcción de paz en la enseñanza del inglés se especifican, así como los roles de los profesores allí. Finalizo con algunas conclusiones respecto a la naturaleza diversa de la construcción de paz, que representa aquellos vínculos entre campos imaginados como separados.

Palabras clave: construcción de paz, enseñanza del inglés, profesores de inglés, perfiles de investigación

Introduction

Educating humans entails diverse manners to signify and refer to that complex process. This article of revision reports profiling research on peace construction in language teaching, particularly from English language classes. This dialogue of peace construction with English language teaching and learning corresponds to an interdisciplinary interest that is manifested in studies visibilized in academic formats, such as events and journals. As an English language teacher educator, understanding peace construction in ELT becomes my research interest, not only because of individual and personal life experiences, but also for other English language teachers' proposals on this phenomenon. Indeed, they constitute local alternatives to educate subjects in particular settings and life conditions. This paper attempts to explore what has been inquired into peace construction in ELT as an educational possibility. Thus, I acknowledge what the English language teacher community is doing about it, and especially, I expect to understand how these works are shaping the Applied Linguistics field.

Along these lines, peace construction and Applied Linguistics seem related one another. This is because language constitutes a mediator of both peace-driven and conflict-oriented relationships. Both fields mentioned may complement each other, as long as Applied Linguistics to ELT appears as an interdisciplinary field, which is concerned with not just the linguistic form. In fact, humans' realities seem to be linguistically and discursively constituted; therefore, peace construction, as part of daily life, can become a consistent phenomenon with language use as a resource.

Before continuing, I would like to discuss key *experiences* from my locus of enunciation as an English language teacher educator that relate to this study topic: peace construction in English language teaching. Although people's *experiences* seem disregarded by positivist ways of approaching reality (Reagan, 2004), they constitute a key component in this study. It is because experiences could also influence our world understandings and interpersonal relationships as sociocultural constructivists support this (Sharma & Gupta, 2016). Personally, armed conflict-related situations such as forced displacement and disappearance were present in my family background. This is actually one of the factors that urged me to wonder about peace construction and ELT in a Colombian context where violence and conflict have

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remained for more than 50 years. Conflict and violence have permeated humans' daily lives to the extent that we have normalized and naturalized them (Padilla & Bermúdez, 2016).

Throughout 2017-2018, I developed a study with pre-service English language teachers about peace construction in ELT. My already-existing interest started gaining some concreteness and relevance for my students and me when interacting with victims of the Colombian armed conflict in a repair setting. This encounter between victims and us shed light on the idea of studying peace construction from ELT scenarios. This was further important for me when the ASOCOPI 52nd Congress (2017) gathered diverse English Language teachers to share their proposals on peace construction. These life experiences and my PhD studies led me to pose the following questions to guide this review article:

- What has been approached or studied as regards/concerning peace construction in ELT?
- Where does research on peace construction in ELT take place?
- When has research on peace construction in ELT been developed?
- Who has researched peace construction in ELT?

These questions aim at displaying tendencies and gaps within peace construction in ELT. This article is developed in four parts. Firstly, I present theoretical foundations as key concepts informing this profiling. Secondly, I discuss methodological strategies that guided the research. Next, findings of the profiling are discussed in four subsections. Lastly, I reflect upon conclusions.

Theoretical Remarks: Peace Construction in ELT

Generally, peace standing alone in ELT literature is etymologically defined from the Latin word *pax* (Miller, 2005, as cited in Gebregeorgis, 2017), which means "a subtle panoramic concept that connotes ideal social, cultural, economic and ecological relationships among all life forms in nature" (p. 57). From a critical perspective, Ortega (2019), as an English language teacher, connects *peace* with "a powerful means of critically questioning [of] the status quo" (p. 65). Calle (2017) overlaps Ortega when asserting that peace is key to challenging the status quo. Kruger (2012) approaches the definition of peace founded on violence concepts. In this manner, peace can be negative or positive as violence can be direct (physical) or structural (symbolic), according to Kruger (2012). However, other authors suggest that peace (re)construction in ELT is attained through positive peace rooted in "a culture of love and respect" (Wang, 2014, p. 92) together with "equality and social justice" (Ortega, 2019, p. 85).

Wang (2014) and Ortega (2019) refer to peace construction in ELT, an acronym that I consider important to specify in terms of its implications. The English Language Teaching

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field is dynamic and interdisciplinary, insofar as it has experienced instrumental, critical emancipationist and transformative processes in its interests (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In other terms, English language has played the role of the linguistic structure and the chief end, but also of the means or resource (Baker, 2011) to achieve something else in the class, such as peace construction. At this point, we are talking about an alternative manner to conceptualize both English language and its teaching. Indeed, ELT seems to go beyond transmitionist communication processes and practices. Constructivism and the sociocultural turn (Johnson, 2006) suggest teaching as more bidirectional and heterarchical, rather than unidirectional and hierarchical.

Methodological Strategies for Exploration and Analysis

As research methodology, this study mixed both qualitative and quantitative strategies (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Search results were registered within a Microsoft Excel table, including labels to classify article features such as title, author, abstract, problem, question, objective, and findings. After collecting these data from 55 articles, I applied open coding, axial coding, and a finding-relationships process in which selective coding was conducted. In order to obtain emerging categories, color coding was also a supporting strategy, along with lexicometry. Wodak (2013) expresses that this strategy analyzes word occurrence (*frequency*) throughout texts that reflect ideological interests behind them. This author suggests that lexicon meaning varies when used in diverse discursive formations. Here, I applied this strategy to both abstracts and initial pattern labels. Generally, Microsoft Excel tools facilitated data systematization and quantification in the different grounded analysis stages.

The abovementioned methodology was applied to 55 articles selected out of 615 in the first results list and from a filtered group of 79 contributions coming from Ebscohost (All databases: 238), Scopus (125), Dialnet (15), Redalyc (32), Jstor (8), Proquest (197), and two Colombian academic events where presenters shared experiences around peace construction in ELT: ASOCOPI 52nd Congress in 2017 and the III International and IX National Foreign Languages Research Congress in 2018. Databases and universities' academic journals (issued by Universidad de Antioquia, Universidad del Norte, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, and Universidad Nacional) were explored. To get search results, a dynamic algorithm was created with Boolean and key terms. Filters in each database were selected to reduce initial broad results as much as possible. These filters included: periods of time, resource type, thesaurus term, knowledge area, and language. Both the algorithm and filters were constantly readjusted to retrieve relevant results. Subsequently, 55 articles were chosen by considering their relation to the topic of the present research: peace construction in ELT.

The quantity of results in each database is presented in Figure 1 below. The number of results in each database was achieved once resources were filtered and narrowed down, according to criteria available. Furthermore, various articles appeared in more than one database and they were counted only once. For example, publications by Martínez (2016, 2017) appeared in Redalyc and Dialnet.
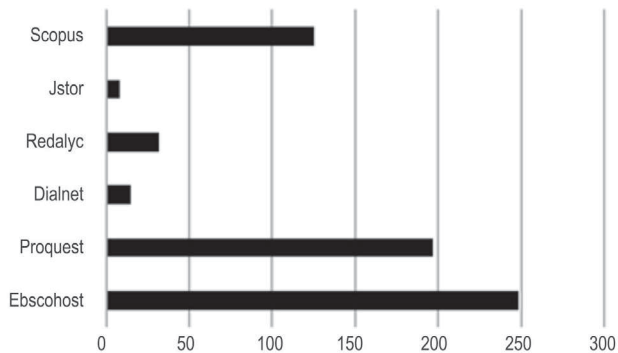

Figure 1. Databases and Filtered Results

Within *Scopus*, the first article retrieved was published in 1982; however, it was in 2009 when I found an increase from 9 articles to 19 in 2017, as the highest number of published articles reported. Since then, there has been a decrease of articles to merely 4 publications in 2019. From 2009 to 2019, 125 articles were produced. In contrast, Jstor, Redalyc, and Dialnet results were fewer with 8, 15, and 32 manuscripts, correspondingly.

Similar to Scopus, Proquest provided 197 results, but Ebscohost exceeded all previous databases, since 238 articles were retrieved after filters. Overall, I gathered 615 results whose titles and abstracts were pasted on a Microsoft Word file to apply a secondhand discrimination filter from relevance to my research topic: peace construction in ELT. Subsequently, 253 articles resulted in this search within the Microsoft Word file.

Another strategy to reduce that textual sample was to read the abstracts to select the most relevant studies, in terms of their closeness to South and critical epistemologies[2], together with geographical contexts, such as Colombian ones. Once this filter was applied,

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2   Critical epistemologies refer to an approach to the world in which power (use and abuse) is the core of analysis. In the case of South epistemologies, the purpose is to re-locate and re-invent ways of knowing the world from an emancipatory attitude. In this one, perspectives of those who have experienced domination, oppression, or injustice are welcome.

55 papers resulted. Thereby, perspectives and overall research processes of this specific document sample were explored.

Additionally, two academic events were included after tracing 2017 and 2018 Colombian events around languages education -including English-, teaching and learning processes, pedagogical innovations, and Applied Linguistics (AL) research. The *ASOCOPI 52nd Congress* in 2017 concentrated on *ELT Classroom Practices and the Construction of Peace and Social Justice*. Once exploring its contributors and their proposals, I concluded 31 abstracts were connected to this profiling topic. Similarly, the *III International and IX National Foreign Languages Research Congress* in 2018 covered diverse themes including this research interest. I revised this event's abstracts and plenaries published in the proceedings that synthesized all presentations from which I identified 5 proposals relevant to this profiling. Based on the information extracted from both of these academic events (see Figure 2 below), a possible interpretation points to the interest *English language teachers* displayed towards peace construction. In effect, the ASCOCOPI proposals selected for this study represent the highest percentage, in relation to the III International and IX National Foreign Languages Research Congress.
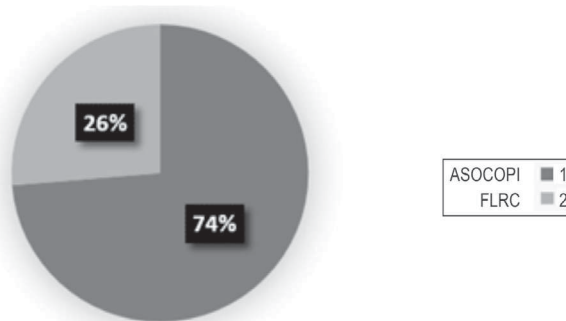
Figure 2. Events Sample

Findings

In this section, I present profiling results, considering questions posed at the beginning to guide the discussion.

What Has Been Approached or Researched concerning Peace Construction in ELT?

Using the papers collected in a Microsoft Excel file, I read the abstracts and took research problems out to another Microsoft Word file. Initially, I applied open coding (Cohen et al., 2007) or *naming* (Freeman, 1998) as the first stage of grounded theory. The second

stage consisted of grouping labels per year and identifying first tendencies; therefore, axial and color coding facilitated finding relationships among these groups. Simultaneously, the lexicometry strategy visibilized occurrence not only in singular lexical items (e.g. peace), but also in two-word (e.g. peace construction or peace education), and three-word lexical units (e.g. English language teachers). Thus, I found multiple enunciation modalities (Foucault, 1972) and ways of practicing peace construction in ELT, being *peace education* only one of them. Even when these enunciations appear seemingly disperse, they may articulate one another around a shared initial interest: *what about peace in ELT?* Interestingly, all these enunciations and alternatives for peace construction in ELT seem *possible*.

Another tendency discussed peace dimensions as inner and outer, yet privileging the latter in most works. Here, the involvement of, especially, students in conflict settings through teachers' actions (high focus on external phenomena) was key. Most research involved learners as target participants. Teachers appeared in these studies mainly as doers and appliers of externally assigned processes. An important pattern throughout these research papers was the emphasis on teachers' but mainly students' cognitive dimensions in the goals of peace construction, while setting aside affective and emotional dimensions only present in a few articles, such as Westwood's (2014).

Enunciation Modalities about Peace Construction: A Pluriverse?

De Sousa Santos (2018) defines the concept of pluriverse as involving and acknowledging diversity in other types of world experience beyond a European universality. In the case of peace construction (PC henceforth) in ELT, there seem to be different understandings around it, which are coded through alternative enunciation modalities, such as critical peace education, critical social justice, PC as environmental awareness, conflict resolution… Indeed, this multiplicity of experiences and possibilities for referring to PC may show a pluriverse in contrast to a universalizing peace construction formalized through the modalities of peace education or English for peace (Hurie, 2018).

When exploring 55 articles and 36 event abstracts published in 2017 and 2018, I found that diverse enunciation modalities suggested the presence of that pluriverse (De Sousa Santos, 2018; Mignolo, 2018) of peace construction possibilities. This means that diverse enunciation modalities of peace construction struggle to coexist in a context where universals tend to normalize comprehensions and practices in both peace construction and ELT, which are simultaneously imagined as disarticulated or separated areas. Interestingly, English language teachers have broken through those imagined disciplinary barriers through their research and pedagogical work reported in articles that have two or three enunciation modalities articulated (e.g., human rights together with social justice or peace education with critical peace education), or even alternative ones (e.g., indigenous literacy practices or the construction of sustainable alternative futures). Additionally, enunciation modalities as

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possibilities of ELT action have been permanently and differently shaped. Indeed, the increase of papers in 2017 may suggest that English teachers' alternatives for peace construction may re-signify it distinctively. They allow us to understand how peace construction transforms in ELT with contextual interests and tendencies. This transformation occurs while resisting the *good practices* discourse and neoliberal targets behind prescriptive tool boxes towards peace construction in general, and from ELT in particular, as in the case of the English for peace initiative (Hurie, 2018). For this profiling, naming and grouping (open and axial coding) were conducted to approach this transformation produced by the link between peace construction and ELT, along with selective coding supported by the Wordcount strategy, which shed light on four interrelated sets of imagined impossibilities from a disciplinary view, which emerge as *possible* tendencies and areas of action for English language teachers and researchers (Figure 3 below).
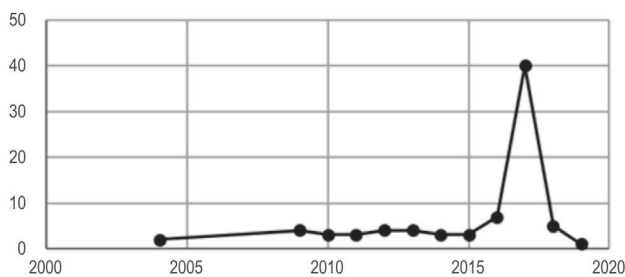

Figure 3. Contributions per Year

Social Justice and Global Citizenship

Scholars' various contributions address social justice and global citizenship in both research articles and presentation abstracts. Sun (2017) argues that English language classes need to foster students' critical thinking and reading abilities for peace education as *social justice*. According to her, traditional literacy basic skills are insufficient for peace education, and particularly for social justice; therefore, she suggests that academic skills such as critical thinking and reading could be supported by graphic novels about sociopolitical issues. Gómez and Gutiérrez (2019) support that connection between social justice with critical thinking, insofar as it challenges students to view their realities differently. These authors understand social justice as an alternative for making teaching a subversive act linked to social change. In both cases, *social justice* seems a path towards peace education in ELT; nevertheless, there are still instrumental purposes attached to it namely, reading as a communicative skill that plays the principal role.

Furthermore, *social justice* and *global citizenship* appear together through English teaching as a facilitating scenario. In a study about Christian English language teachers and their

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spiritual identities, Westwood (2014) refers to reconciliation as a resource to transform conflict settings that involve Christian teachers and those who are not adherent to their faith. Reconciliation appears as a means leading English language teachers to social justice and global citizenship in conflict settings. The most important benefit of reconciliation among professionals is the creation of safe and supportive learning environments as critical spaces for educators to work cooperatively (Westwood, 2014). In fact, Cumming-Potvin (2010) supports the construction of social and critically just communities of teachers who "advocate for social justice and engage successfully with local and global communities" (p. 95). Social justice constitutes a possibility of peace construction that could transform the *back-to-basics* and technical orientation in educational settings, such as Australian teacher education which trains basic literacy skills (teaching reading from phonics and literature).

Articulating local and global communities constitutes a path towards *citizenship education* in EFL settings, according to Calle (2017). This author argues that becoming a citizen of the world constitutes an important target of English classes, because the latter allows for breaking geographical and cultural boundaries, while creating spaces for local identities development. In sum, global citizenship emerges as a coherent aim in EFL, so that achieving global citizens' education is possible/expected from Calle's point of view (2017).

Additionally, *social justice* relates to ELT curriculum design, even for English teacher education. In her thesis, Bourneuf (2013) examined the role of bilingual education in promoting social justice and peace education for minority groups in diverse world areas of conflict and post-conflict. Precisely, this author analyzed how programs for English teacher education were planned to prepare both teachers and students for becoming future social justice agents. Correspondingly, Castañeda-Peña (2017) argues that Language Teacher Education (LTE) has undergone traditional applied linguistics models and needs transgressive/anti-disciplinary options towards dialogical alternatives as opportunities for re-planning English language teacher education. In his proposal, Castañeda-Peña (2017) remarks on the role of social justice to challenge monolithic perspectives in LTE or a back-to-basics approach, as coined by Cumming-Potvin (2010) when studying Australian teacher education.

Within the same research line, Kasun and Saavedra (2016) describe LTE curriculum as Westernized and colonized. Indeed, they claim that this curriculum may shape language teacher candidates' identities as *efficient* classroom managers who might encapsulate their identities in white frameworks where indigenous communities do not appear. These authors suggest that adjusting LTE curricula through activities, such as the pre-service teachers' exposure to indigenous communities, facilitates the organization of learning processes in terms of social justice language to challenge white exclusionary teachers' identities. Social justice LTE becomes a "contribution to peace construction in Colombia", as argued by Sierra (2016).

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Ortega (2019) also discusses peace construction from the social justice possibility as linked to human rights. This author examines how one EFL teacher, his students and another colleague connected ELT with social justice, inasmuch as he realizes "(EFL) curriculum largely ignores issues surrounding peace and social justice that Colombian society must address in the post-peace accord era" (2019, p. 64). For him, English language teachers have neglected debates on social justice-related phenomena, such as bullying or racism. Thus, Ortega (2019) argues that social justice, peace, and violence are interconnected through *praxis*. Within this interrelationship, Ortega (2019, p. 66) defines social justice as a "philosophical approach that seeks to treat all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity".

Nevertheless, social justice does not comprise only abstract discussions. By citing Miller, Ortega (2019) adds that social justice deserves comprehension from practical and real levels. Bolaños, Flórez, Gómez, Ramírez, and Tello (2018) agree with it when expressing that pedagogy for social justice needs returning to the *real* communities and approaching authentic learning needs of EFL classrooms. In unison, Herrera's (2012) ideas are similar when studying citizenship, social justice, and children's human rights in ELT textbooks. This English language teacher explores dominant discourses reproduced in textbooks as didactic materials, and she found that social injustice in these resources represented children "as passive subjects and non-right holders" (p. 45).

(Critical)Peace Education

Various works retrieved in this profiling dealt with (critical) peace education. This occurrence was one of the most common ones together with social justice throughout the 55 manuscripts. When standing as the two-word occurrence: *peace education*, some authors such as Butt et al. (2011) assert it has not received enough attention either by curriculum planners or in ELT research. For that reason, these scholars suggest its connection with curriculum design as a possibility to achieve so. This peripheral role of English language teachers in peace education has been explored by Kruger (2012), who calls for education to include "dimensions of social consciousness in curriculum to equip learners with the necessary skills to contribute to both the local and global society" (p. 17).

150 At this point, peace education acquires a different concrete local end. We are talking about peace education as going beyond an abstract phenomenon that belongs to specific disciplines or another subject matter at schools, but also as being a relational and close practice in students' and prospective teachers' everyday lives (Yousuf, Sarwar, Dart & Naseer-ud-Din, 2010). To achieve so, Kruger (2012) considers that TESOL teachers need to become "models of peaceful and non-violent behavior for language learners" (p. 27). In his study, peace education meant the teaching of necessary skills to solve problems and critically evaluate them. Along these lines, English learning appears as an important scenario for restoring peace (Kruger, 2012).

Additionally, contributions including the *peace education* occurrence comprised diverse purposes and scenarios. I highlight the creativity, resourcefulness, and eclecticism of these proposals behind articles and presentation abstracts that did not only involve instrumental tackling of peace education as a set of good-practices for a technical purpose (Yousuf et al., 2010), but also critical ones. Those perspectives suggest broader social interests beyond in-class procedures and demands that shape students, according to the canon of an ideal citizen who is deemed as violence-free (UNESCO, 2013), even when conflict is part of reality.

To exemplify, Spiri (2013) holds a hybrid interest. This author integrates two approaches for peace education namely, moral education and global issues, as Rothman and Sanderson (2018) do. While connecting critical thinking with peace education, Spiri (2013) seems chiefly concerned about teachers' methodology --the *how* issue-- to "make children act the way we want them to" (p. 430). Albeit this hierarchical and top-down use of peace education with children appears, Spiri states that English constitutes a means of communication, rather than the ultimate goal. This belief challenges traditional pedagogies in ELT where the linguistic dimension plays the principal role. Similarly, Sun (2017) may assign more importance to reading skills development than peace education in a context where she promotes critical thinking among students through graphic novels. Is it the peripheral role Kruger (2012) mentions in his article? A tangential tension in teachers' involvement? Is it caused by fears, discipline barriers…?

As the social justice tendency, *teacher education* constitutes another scenario for peace education proposals. Some works identified the necessity to transform curriculum for educating prospective teachers to face conflict scenarios in marginalized conditions where peace education could support change introduction (Vasilopoulos et al., 2018). One study about Australian teacher education by Cumming-Potvin (2010) presented peace education as an alternative to back-to-basics teacher education curriculum. Analogously, Yousuf et al. (2010) searched for practical knowledge to profile activities by and for *prospective teachers* towards peace promotion in primary school. Furthermore, Haddix and Price-Dennis (2013), as teacher educators of color, worked on peace education through urban fiction and multicultural literature for transforming beginner English language teachers' practices. In one way or another, peace education constitutes a possibility to bridge gaps in English language teacher education perceived as traditional and positivist.

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Peace education in teaching and learning processes for both learners and teachers is not an isolated or monolithic concept. In fact, most articles presented peace education as keeping bidirectional and consistent relationships with social justice in ELT. When I read abstracts in ASOCOPI 2017, I noticed 15 included the occurrence of *peace education* and 14 encompassed *social justice*; yet the majority of these studies were interferential, i.e. they articulated both as complementary alternatives from peace construction in ELT.

In this scholarship, another manner for referring to peace education appeared in the works of some authors, such as Bajaj (2015), Butt et al. (2011), Zembylas (2018), and Kruger (2012), among others. This enunciation modality is: *critical peace education*. It is about *researching* and *comprehending* local meanings and experiences of peace education to appropriately understand them and *evaluate* "peace education programs" (Kruger, 2012, p. 22). More than teaching static contents around peace in the English class, it deals with constructing sustainable peaceful communities where teachers and students interact towards this cooperative agency (Kruger, 2012). Bajaj (2015) understands *critical peace education* from the political effect that "engaged educational praxis" entails, regarding both teachers' resistance to larger projects and local understandings of peace (p. 154). For her, critical peace education affords room for devising *pedagogies of resistance*. To achieve so, Kruger (2012) prompts English Language teachers and educators to understand local realities and contextual situations.

Nonetheless, critical peace education is not as recurrent as *peace education* alone, according to the profiling results. In Figure 4 below, I display different percentages, contrasting these two enunciation modalities in terms of their recurrence and appearance across papers. Furthermore, critical peace education reminds me, --for its differences--, of the so-called *English for peace* (Hurie, 2018). This author employs this concept to explain the coloniality of power behind English for peace and supports his analysis through multiple perspectives in a contemporary discursive mechanism that perpetuates colonial domination over teachers and students.

Peacebuilding, Peacemaking, and Peacekeeping

Another tendency comprises these three possibilities. As enunciation modalities, they share the lexical item: *peace* and their commonalities in form and low occurrence: 21.8%
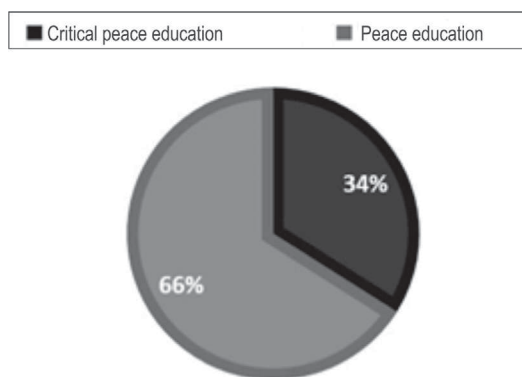
Figure 4. Critical Peace Education

within 55 articles. *Peacebuilding* was tackled in 7 articles and they overlap when emphasizing its practical dimension. For example, Yousuf et al. (2010) focus on creating and grouping activities directed to "the promotion of knowledge of peace and peacebuilding" (p. 53). Ortega (2019) also concerns himself with peacebuilding as processes through which Colombian students are sensitized around social issues. Furthermore, peacebuilding appeared in studies where counter-discourses between host and visiting teachers emerged and contestation to actions of expertise and discourses occurred (Vasilopoulos et al., 2018).

In this context, how do English language teachers appear? Roa (2018) developed a study with pre-service teachers in which she analyzed social representations about their roles. She concluded that they were reinventing themselves as peacebuilders. In another study, I found the occurrence of *sustainable peacebuilding* as encompassing "opportunities to examine and democratically handle social conflicts" (Nieto & Bickmore, 2016, p. 109). In that research, peacebuilding was connected to conflict resolution in marginalized areas and the incorporation of students' experiences in the language class. In another study, Bickmore (2004) connects peacebuilding and democratic citizenship towards inclusive and critical dialogue in English language classes.

Oxford, Gregersen, and Olivero (in press), Bourneuf (2013), Ayşegül (2017), and Polat et al. (2018) refer to peacemaking as similar to peace education and complementary to conflict resolution. Oxford et al. (in press) practically and theoretically examined the language of the peace approach by relating it to peacemaking. It was considered as "the application of conflict resolution tools after a major conflict has already arisen" (p. 17). Simultaneously, Bourneuf (2013) connected peacemaking with peace education as supporting social justice in the ELT curriculum. This thesis demonstrates how different enunciation modalities connect all together. Aysegül (2017) tackled peacemaking as more deeply occurring phenomena than external situations. This author defines it as "the application of soul force to human violence at its greatest scale" (p. 73), so that the transforming of individuals takes place inside. Based on Johnson and Murphey (2018), peacemaking with one's self is about thinking differently of ourselves, identifying aspirations and accepting that "we are not totally at the mercy of the world" (p. 38).

Finally, peacekeeping is one of the least frequent enunciations throughout articles and presentation abstracts, compared with the previous two. The chief difference between peacekeeping and the above two tendencies encompasses contextual conditions. Peacekeeping is employed in post-conflict zones while peacemaking and peacebuilding are enunciations for conflict zones (Nelson & Appleby, 2014). These authors consider that "TESOL's involvements in the militarization of conflict zones, the peacekeeping efforts in post-conflict zones and English language learners' and teachers' experiences while living in conflict zones and afterward is [are] scarce" (p. 311).

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Conflict Resolution and Violence

Interestingly, conflict and violence appear within the majority of articles in this profiling. English language teachers and students seem inspired to devise proposals towards peace construction, and not only for an instrumental purpose with the pretext to increase a given communicative skill in ELT. Indeed, some researchers such as Gómez and Gutiérrez (2019) support the idea that language communication or linguistic performance is just one of the objectives in their proposals towards peace construction in ELT, rather than the main one. Further purposes, including conflict resolution or violence reduction, appear in the research revised.

This tendency understands conflict resolution as a target, context type, and means. The first two uses occur in most works, such as those by Gómez and Gutiérrez (2019), Martínez (2016, 2017), Okanlawon et al. (2017), or Westwood (2014). They propose that in conflict environments where aggression and violence happen, albeit differently, a relevant contribution comprises the diminishing of conflict-related situations from English language classes (Sun, 2017; Yousuf et al., 2010) or people's mindsets transformation in post-conflict settings (Rubagiza, Umutoni & Kaleeba, 2016). Morgan and Vandrick (2009) suggest conflict can be part of class reflections, becoming a learning resource (Kruger, 2012; Nelson & Appleby, 2014; Yousuf et al., 2010). Overall, this tendency in peace construction develops over the idea that conflict and violence are varied.

Environmental Awareness

In these profiling contributions, 11 abstracts dealt with environmental awareness as a possibility of peace construction. Lara and Carvajal (2018) discuss the need for environmental awareness in EFL to avoid ecological damages. These critical educators and researchers led environmental awareness towards social justice and tackled leaners' low ecological sensibility. Because of this, Arikan (2009) remarks the promotion of environmental peace education in ELT and Muluh (2011) seems to agree with him when referring to the lack of Cameroonian English language teachers' interest in environmental education.

Peace Linguistics

154 According to Gomes de Matos (2014), Peace Linguistics (PL) emerges from the question: "How can language users and methods-materials for language education be further humanized linguistically?" (p. 416). In an introduction with that question, this author introduced the concept of PL and presented methodological and theoretical considerations for teachers, founded on his own teaching experiences. For him, "[l]anguage teachers apply PL when they treat their students with respect and in every interaction with students, a teacher creates a constructive effect" (p. 423). Although PL is not a new concept, "most applied linguists do not appear to have ever heard of PL, much less studied, researched or

taught it (Curtis & Tarawhiti, 2018, p. 77). These authors explored what happened when an elective course on PL was offered to some undergraduates. Curtis and Tarawhiti (2018) consider peace linguistics as an area inside Applied Linguistics that focuses on the language of peace. They explored how a PL course developed, including tasks, homework, didactic sequences, and evaluation.

Previous tendencies represent a picture on *what* is being done about peace construction in ELT. Not only are contributions to research present, but gaps appear from this revision. The following scheme synthesizes them as areas of action for *peace construction in ELT*. This one in turn might constitute an embracing domain with multiple enunciation modalities in applied linguistics, and another gap in the Colombian ELT literature. Even when various authors concentrated on peace education, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, global citizenship, and other stemming concepts for referring to peace-related phenomena, those enunciation modalities are constantly re-signified, but unexplored from teachers' experiences behind the study and construction of those modalities. As an illustration, Yousuf et al. (2010) tackle peacebuilding in their research as a "way of constructing just and sustainable alternative futures" (p. 53); however, what they lived during the construction and comprehension of peace in such a way seems neglected.

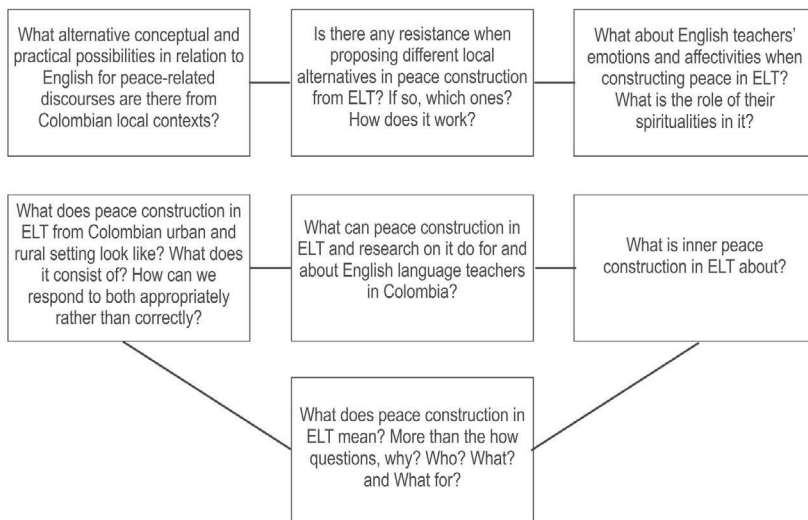Now, I discuss time/space coordinates of peace construction in ELT, based on this profiling.

Figure 5. Possible Impossibilities

Where and When Does Research on Peace Construction in ELT Take Place?

The first search in EbscoHost produced certain results (see Figure 6 below) that caused the impression about the influence of whiteness on peace construction from ELT. Countries such as the USA, the UK, Canada, and Australia constitute examples of the white inner nations (Lund & Carr, 2015). Contrastively, countries such as Israel, Turkey, and South Africa may suggest historical conflict and warlike situations that are historically known as that; hence, one could associate those contextual conditions to their interest in peace construction in ELT. However, it does not mean the inner countries are conflict and war-free. Besides, a third impression I had about this figure's results refers to the invisible, yet existent role of Colombia in peace construction from ELT: Why do Colombian teachers disappear in the contributors list?
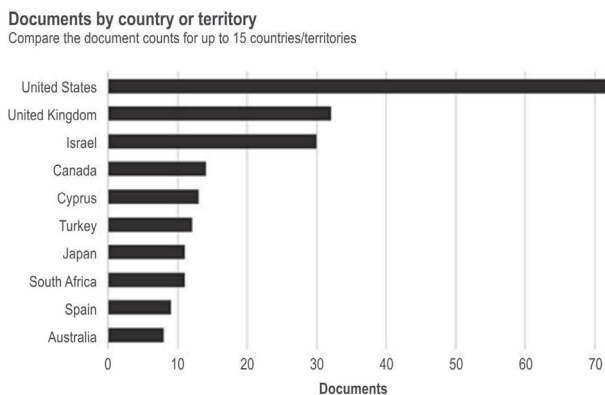

Figure 6. Contributors/Countries

Among the 55 contributions, various geographical areas constitute settings from which English language teachers produce knowledge on peace construction in ELT. I display countries identified in this profiling through Table 1 below. Based on the information retrieved in that table, we could perceive how South thinking is not literally geographical (De Sousa Santos, 2018), but it can be weaved into the geographical North, too. This is because the proposals seem to challenge the modern peace construction in ELT (Aldana, in press). For instance, Kruger (2012) restates the responsibility of TESOL teachers in the constitution of sustainable peaceful communities, going beyond the instrumental side of ELT. In contrast some authors such as Ortega (2019) and Camelo (2017) come from the geographical South, but they produce knowledge in the geographical North about South issues. Among these

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Colombian English language teachers, we should add that they produce knowledge in South locations; however, many contributions appear in academic events, rather than research articles. Geographical and academic spaces for South epistemologies are thus diverse and multiple around different scenarios towards peace construction in ELT.

Table 1. Profiling Samples by Countries

Country	Number of Contributions
Colombia	16
United States	11
Canada	6
Middle East	5
Spain	4
South Africa	4
Brazil	2
Japan	2
UK	2
Australia	2

Besides spatial coordinates, time of proposals creation deserves attention (see Figure 3 above). One interpretation on it is that enunciation modalities around peace construction in ELT are not necessarily new. Even when I filtered results through the period 2009-2019, there were works which dated from 2004 and the 90s. For this profiling, I decided to include one of 2004, due to its relevance. I noticed that contributions were constant within that time period. Nevertheless, there is an important increase in 2017. This may be due to the contextual situation related to peace agreements and "authorized" acceptance to openly talk about these interests. In any case, I could refer to peace construction in ELT temporality in terms of permanency and simultaneity, as it has been constant throughout multiple scenarios, including South America.

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Who Has Researched Peace Construction in ELT?

For this profiling, I explored authors' curricula and institutional affiliations to understand their proposals from the authors' sides. This strategy becomes a challenging alternative for usual explorations of the literature within research. Also, for this profiling, approaching the "who" is behind the research done around PC in ELT, and it allowed me to trace the emergence and location of tendencies and gaps. Understanding that these authors were not

only instructors, but educators and teachers in a broad spectrum of educational settings, let me comprehend more their particular proposals and interpret them here. When teachers diversified the universal comprehension of PC, they seemed to be also challenging a canonical and taken-for-granted manner of comprehending what an English language teacher is and does in both the academic field and the sociocultural environments.

Thus, I found information on just *who* those English teachers as human beings were. Abstracts and articles were informative on this aspect, inasmuch as authors expressed sometimes directly their locus of enunciation which provided ideas around them. Specifically, all these authors were English language teachers, and their postgraduate studies embraced different master's degrees, including applied linguistics to ELT, cultural studies, second language acquisition, and didactics. Several authors were professors at universities and some worked at schools. They specified their locus of enunciation in most cases based on their ethnic background, as Haddix and Price (2013) did when introducing themselves as *teacher educators of color*. In the present profiling, English language teachers' locus suggests a role that goes beyond the instrumental one in peace construction. Precisely, language educators, applied linguists, teacher-researchers, and language teacher educators were common ways of authors' personal self-introduction.

Furthermore, exploring who these English teachers were seemed relevant in this profiling in order to observe a possible emergent network of teachers with overlapping concerns, but different possibilities to respond to it. It was inspiring, on the one hand, for this study and enriching on the other. I could contact some English language teachers from this profiling to have a talk about the topic explored, and I involved two of them within the first problematization stage of this project. I point out that interacting directly with some authors of the proposals explored in this profiling facilitated my discussion of them in the present manuscript. When possible, I suggest thus our community of teacher researchers to develop these synchronous or asynchronous interactions with authors' texts to complement our understandings in both profiling and literature review stages in research. These inquiry and academic contacts can gradually become social liaisons to strengthen the professional field through a cooperative study of topics that link us, such as peace construction in ELT.

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Concluding Remarks

This profiling around *peace construction in ELT* allows for understanding particular interests behind enunciation modalities which participate in the constitution of alternative research possibilities. What used to be impossible according to modern perspectives around peace construction in ELT, and knowledge construction overall, seems today not only possible, but socially just. This *imagined* impossibility in an objectifying modern peace construction

and an ELT field has turned into a feasible site for teachers and students to link their English language learning to their everyday life.

What is key about possible impossibilities discussed in this profiling (see Figure 5 above) is that they represent and display the permanent transformation of ELT that challenges a monolithic and instrumental understanding of this area. Teachers and students seem to be the main characters of that transformation. That may be why re-humanizing the ELT field in both teaching and researching emerges as an important collective project. Multifaceted realizations and understandings of applied linguistics to ELT from peace construction proposals may provoke equally important and possible interests that respond differently to local settings. Therefore, *impossibilities* as a concept here appears as the result of integrating what modernity with its modes of objectification tried to separate to control humans' knowledges and bodies. Making those impossibilities explicit in this text suggests both the still-existent colonial wounds in English language teachers' knowledge construction, together with options to heal them.

Along these lines, English language teachers are welcome to explore, reflect, and elaborate proposals intended to find diverse relationships between peace and ELT. This could be achieved through other types of enunciations including, but not limited to, peace education or its critical treatment, social justice, environmental awareness, peacebuilding, peace linguistics, and others described in this profiling. It seems that even on the periphery, English language teachers' enunciations have diversified and tensioned the canonical Center for constructing peace. Thus, a struggling question appears: what other resignifications around peace construction in ELT remain invisible?

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HOW

Write On, Women! Discovering Personal Skills through Feminist Pedagogy and Narratives

¡Sigan escribiendo, Mujeres! Las habilidades personales por medio de la pedagogía feminista y las narrativas

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Abstract

In this pedagogical proposal, we utilized Feminist Pedagogy and narratives to reveal women's skills that they had silenced in their cover letters for employment. Five females' narratives were analyzed using aspects of the grounded theory method to answer the question: *What do women's narratives reveal about their personal skills otherwise silenced in their cover letters?* The results showed that women find strength in their spirituality, as well as demonstrating loyalty, flexibility, respectfulness, and resilience. All of the women wrote about their decision-making abilities, which included organization, responsibility, and problem-solving. Finally, the stories revealed that women's ability to make choices defined their freedom and their future.

Keywords: academic writing, feminist pedagogy, narratives, silence, skills, voice, workforce

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Resumen

En esta propuesta pedagógica, implementamos la pedagogía feminista y las narrativas como opción para revelar las habilidades silenciadas por las participantes en sus cartas de presentación. Analizamos las narrativas de cinco mujeres utilizando aspectos de la teoría fundamentada para responder a la pregunta: *¿Qué revela las narrativas de las mujeres acerca de sus habilidades personales silenciadas en las cartas de presentación?* Los resultados muestran que las mujeres encuentran fortaleza en su espiritualidad, además de su lealtad, flexibilidad, respeto y resiliencia. Todas las participantes narraron su habilidad de tomar decisiones y ser organizadas, responsables y resolver problemas. Las historias revelaron que la habilidad de tomar decisiones se conecta con la libertad y el futuro de las mujeres.

Palabras claves: escritura académica, fuerza laboral, habilidades, narrativas, pedagogía feminista, silencio, voz

Introduction

Gender inequality is a reality that exists everywhere, and it has been widely documented in all aspects of education, family life, and the workplace (Badura, Grijalva, Newman, Yan, & Jeon, 2018; Castañeda-Peña, 2010; de Beauvoir, 1949; de Pádua Carrieri, Diniz, de Souza, & Menezes, 2013; Eagly & Karau, 1991; Fine & Shen, 2018; and the World Health Organization, 2018). In Colombia, the gender gap is alive in academia, government, and the employment sector with examples from lower wages to fewer high-ranking positions occupied by women (Miniciencias, 2018; El Tiempo, 2018; Franco-Orozco & Franco-Orozco, 2018; UNESCO, 2016). Despite the push to include more women in higher positions, we continue to see fewer female researchers, governmental representatives, and CEOs.

Two major factors accounting for the inability to close the gap are prescribed social gender roles and gender stereotypes. Social gender roles encompass the behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, etc., of being a woman or a man, which have been determined by society. These roles are socialized at a young age through toys, color of clothing, and activities enforced by parents, peers, and teachers. As children become adolescents, they continue to perpetuate these behaviors (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015). In college, being a man or a woman will also affect the way a person positions him or herself as leaders, risk-takers, supporters, and emotional beings (Peñaloza, 2019). Therefore, the university becomes a crucial arena to combat the negative effects of social gender roles and gender stereotypes in the workplace. Since gender is socially co-constructed with others in interaction (Butler, 1990; Coates, 1998), reevaluating the way everyday college spaces can be used to promote gender equity before college students enter the workforce is a necessity.

At the Colombian public university where we teach, the administration has taken measures to ensure a more inclusive university. In January 2019, the university created its first gender and human rights committee. Additionally, the administration passed a mandate

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last year that all undergraduate diplomas need to include the male and female version of the noun in Spanish. Given that Spanish is the native language, both the male and female titles exist for any major, e.g., *biólogo* (male biologist) and *bióloga* (female biologist). Up until now, only the male gendered noun had been used for all diplomas regardless of sex. The new mandate assured that men and women would receive their undergraduate diploma with their respective male or female noun, such as *Licenciado* or *Licenciada*[3]. In addition, several student-run groups, as ACEU (*Asociación Colombiana de Estudiantes Colombianos*), are avid promoters of gender inclusive activities, rallies, and talk circles. Nevertheless, one space remains untouched by the administration and is largely reliant on teacher autonomy: the classroom.

The English academic writing classroom can fall victim to traditional, colonized teaching practices. In the traditional classroom, the teacher is the focus and provider of all knowledge. Meanwhile, the student receives this knowledge and reproduces it by memory, usually during an exam (Anzoátegui, 2016). Because of the hierarchies within the traditional classroom, we argue that traditional teaching methods continue to cycle notions of hegemony and patriarchy that perpetuate social gender roles and stereotypes. Additionally, academic writing in English is a system of language structures and rules that favor Standard English and native speakerism (Mauranen, Pérez-Llantada, & Swales, 2010). From experience, there is little room to question these structures or negotiate the language itself. Language learners can feel frustrated and alienated from the act of writing in English. Nevertheless, the academic writing classroom is a pivotal space for both men and women in terms of professional development. Upon graduation, students will be asked to write cover letters, elaborate résumés, report on research studies, develop personal statements, take international English proficiency exams, and prepare for interviews in a foreign language for studies abroad and even national job opportunities. Therefore, the academic writing classroom becomes a transformative place to help men and women gain confidence in their writing and themselves.

For this pedagogical proposal, we worked with five female participants in an academic writing class focused on developing professional documents like cover letters, résumés, articles, and personal statements. At the beginning of the cover letter unit, we noticed that the female participants had difficulty writing about their professional skills. Cover letters are particularly essential because they highlight the candidate's educational background, work experience, and personal skills. In addition, cover letters accompany résumés and job applications for future employment and scholarship opportunities. According to the Purdue Online Writing Lab (n.d.), the cover letter "is the first document an employer sees, so it is often the first impression you will make" (para. 1).

Although the female participants wrote about their educational backgrounds, they failed to expand on their personal skills. Personal skills, such as leadership, flexibility, persistence,

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[3]   Title given to individuals holding an undergraduate teaching degree in Colombia.

and successful teamwork, are all factors that can influence being hired and promoted. In interviews with the women, the main reason for leaving out their personal skills was that they did not feel they had them, or they preferred to repress them over more preferable social gender roles like being supportive. In an interview with Cami, one of the participants, she mentioned that writing about one's self was difficult:

> *Al momento de responder las habilidades, si fue un poco difícil porque es difícil responder al yo, sobre uno mismo, es difícil lo que uno es y lo que uno hace y saber en qué uno es bueno es difícil reconocerlo a veces[4].*

Given that our intervention[5] had failed to make an impact on the participants' writing choices about their personal skills, we decided to look for an alternative solution.

Narratives are often used in the language classroom to promote storytelling, sharing, and connection to ourselves and others. In addition to using narratives, we also considered turning to Feminist Pedagogy, which is a way to look at education and the classroom "as a liberatory environment in which we, teacher-student and student-teacher, act as subjects, not objects" (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 6). In the feminist classroom, narratives can emphasize knowledge from the narrator's experience and point of view (Webb, Allen, & Walker, 2002). All in all, feminist pedagogy and narratives could engage the participants in their own writing experiences and help them recognize their own skills without the limiting structures of the cover letter.

Therefore, we focused our pedagogical proposal on implementing narrative writing coupled with the pillars of Feminist Pedagogy. We asked the women to write a story based on the prompt: "Tell us about a moment that impacted your life". For this article, we analyzed the five participants' stories guided by the research question: *What do women's narratives reveal about their personal skills otherwise silenced in their cover letters?* The narratives revealed skills like strength in spirituality and decision-making, which the women failed to mention in their cover letters.

Our Experiences as the First Source of Knowledge

Feminist theory "privileges personal lived experiences as the basis for analysis, theory generation, activism, and research" (Foss & Foss, 1994, as cited in Web, Allen, & Walker,

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[4]   When writing about skills, talking about ourselves was difficult. Stating what one is and what one can do is difficult, as well as knowing what one is good at. What we are good at can sometimes be difficult to recognize.

[5]   This intervention consisted of four sequential lessons (2 hours each) about cover letters. Activities such as brainstorming personal skills, writing strengths and weaknesses, and reading other cover letters were part of the intervention. Additionally, we sat down with each participant for a private tutoring session in order to discuss the rough drafts and final cover letter. The intervention took place before implementing the narratives.

2002). Therefore, we begin the discussion by introducing our experiences and positions in regard to writing, teaching, and being women.

We are a mother and daughter researching, writing, teaching, and living together. As the mother, I moved to the United States in the 1980s. Though I had studied in a prestigious language institute in Colombia, I was overwhelmed when I moved to the USA. I wanted to escape because I did not understand anything. My only form of communication was through writing, but I could only write simple sentences. Later, I enrolled in the university. I took ESL courses along with my major core classes. I struggled with writing every college essay, but I felt so blessed that one of my advisors, Dr. Johnson, reviewed my papers. He encouraged me to keep fighting and never give up. Things got easier for me, which helped me have access to a better quality of life.

As the daughter, I grew up in the United States. I studied a career in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). Growing up, I was usually the best writer in class, and I loved to write essays and poems alike. College was a difficult place for me because it was the first time, I was not good at writing. I would try to express myself with elaborate, thought-provoking introductions to my science papers. I remember that a teacher once wrote on my essay "This is Science, not science-fiction". Due to the previous and the fact that I did not see myself represented in my field, I internalized the belief that I could never be a researcher. To this day, I struggle with writing and the evaluation process. Nevertheless, I fight for what I believe could be a change in academic writing.

From our experiences, we position ourselves as women who both have struggled with academic writing in different ways. We believe that other women have undergone feelings of stress, insecurity, and alienation from writing in their native or second language. We also recognize that who we are has shaped us as educators. Therefore, we value the role that positive and constructive feedback has on students' writing. Moreover, we were in favor of searching for alternative methods to empower our students as writers. We turned to feminist pedagogy to find a solution in our classroom.

Feminist Pedagogy: A Brief History

Feminist pedagogy is linked to feminist theory, which seeks to question traditional ways of being and thinking that continue to perpetuate patriarchal ideologies (Tong, 2001). Feminist pedagogy strives to break down positions of power and oppression that affect women and men in all aspects of life. According to Shrewsbury (1987), feminist pedagogy "is a theory about the teaching/learning process that guides our choice of classroom practices by providing criteria to evaluate specific educational strategies and techniques in terms of desired course goals and outcomes" (p. 6). Feminist pedagogy started in the field of women's studies, but it has expanded to other disciplines as a way to counteract traditional

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methodologies (Shackelford, 1992), such as bell hooks' application of Freire's work on critical pedagogy and her own experiences in education to give birth to a new methodology of teaching and learning (Bauer, 2000). Because of its origins, feminist pedagogy is often linked with critical thinking and literacy to question, analyze, evaluate, reflect, and transform society.

On the origins of feminist pedagogy, bell hooks[6] contributed greatly to the inclusion of poor and marginalized groups. In fact, much of the work done to raise feminist awareness was printed, and bell hooks argued that many poor, black men and women could not read or write (Bauer, 2000, p. 266). Consequently, much of her work is based on reaching out to the community and creating small-scale programs to teach reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. All in all, bell hooks claims that feminism should go hand in hand with practicality in order to make a difference.

bell hooks has also provided significant input in terms of feminist pedagogy. Based on her educational experiences, she established that the classroom needed to be a space to question traditional and oppressive behaviors. According to her, the feminist classroom is "where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university" (hooks, 1989, p. 51). Additionally, hooks highlighted that the learning process needs to be real and human.

Another major milestone in feminist pedagogy was the idea that the teacher was not the source of all knowledge and power. Rather, the teacher could use his or her power to "enrich and it is this choice that should distinguish feminist pedagogy from ways of teaching that reinforce domination" (hooks, 1989, p. 52). Furthermore, knowledge was to be co-constructed in the classroom with special attention to personal experience. Since hooks' first contributions to the field, many other scholars have added to the experience, thereby, defining the pillars that make it different from other types of pedagogy.

Privileging the Individual Voice as a Way of Knowing

Webb, Allen, and Walker (2002) identified six pillars of feminist pedagogy, which are: (1) Reformation of the relationship between teacher and student, (2) empowerment, (3) building community, (4) privileging the individual voice as a way of knowing, (5) respect for diversity of personal experience, and (6) challenging traditional views. These six pillars highlight the need to promote symmetrical power relationships between teacher and students,

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[6]   bell hooks is the pseudonym of the author, activist, and professor Gloria Watkins. Watkins published her first book, Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism, under her pseudonym (bell hooks), which was her great-grandmother's name. The reason for writing her pseudonym in lowercase letters was a decision made by Watkins as a way to allocate the focus on her work and message rather than herself (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020).

understand hegemonic structures in society, foster collaborative and transformative work, listen to students' opinions and interests, decolonize ways of being, and question dominant structures. We considered all of the six pillars in making a transformation in the classroom. For this study, we focused on the fourth pillar, as it led us to consider narratives as the means to listen to our students' voices and challenge the cover letter structure.

The concept of 'voice' is often talked about in transformative educational practices. The student's voice refers to his or her opinions, interests, and feedback. Unfortunately, this voice can be silent and/or silenced depending on the context and power relationships in place. The idea of 'privileging the individual voice' comes from acknowledging our students' voices and our own as sources of valid knowledge.

One recommendation is to make the students' voice an integral part of every class. As Webb, Allen, and Walker (2002) stated, "Voice need not be reserved for oral performance courses; rather, the unique voice of each student in any classroom affords a path to knowledge and a methodology for each student in any classroom" (p. 70). bell hooks (1989) mentioned that she would have her students read paragraphs out loud in class just so that she could hear their voices. In that sense, she could also get a feel for how they interacted with the material in order to provide them with individual help.

Narratives

One way to amplify voice is through the personal narrative. The feminist classroom is "an important place to connect to our roots, our past, and to envision our future" (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 6). Narratives and oral story telling can be used as means of expressing our past, present, and future according to the way the narrator interprets his or her experiences. According to Langellier (2001), "people make sense of experience, claim identities, and 'get a life' by telling and writing their stories" (p. 700). In addition, narratives allow all of the previous to be created from a personal standpoint. According to Rappaport (1995), "For many people, particularly those who lack social, political, or economic power, the community, neighborhood, or cultural narratives that are available are either negative, narrow, 'written' by others for them, or all of the above" (p. 796). Because of this, narratives are essential in feminist research since they allow the female narrator to claim her story without the constraints of hegemonic structures.

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Voice and Silence. Given that the narrative is told from the author's perspective, it is a door to understanding voice and silence. Voice is a concept that refers to students' opinions, beliefs, perceptions, and more. Voice has been a topic reviewed extensively in Colombia and in English as a Foreign Language, such as in materials development (Ramos & Aguirre, 2014), in exploring pre-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence (Olaya & Gómez, 2013), and journal writing (Castellanos, 2008), to name a few. In all of these studies,

the main concern is in making sure that students' voices are represented and heard in the classroom. In our experiences as educators, we believe that the problem is not about giving students a voice, as they already have one, but rather learning to listen to those voices. Learning to listen to students' voices counteracts a history of silenced voices in the traditional classroom.

Silence can have both positive and negative connotations in terms of writing. Teleky (2001) pointed out that:

> In its more positive associations, silence is linked to ecstasy, bliss, communion, rest, sympathy, identification, reflection, meditation—n both Eastern and Western religions—as well as secrets. The more negative associations of silence include denial, concealment, evasion, punishment, rejection, depression, burden, threat, doubt, conspiracy, and, again, secrets. (p. 207)

We wanted to bring up the positive aspects of silence because silence is not a 'bad' thing. In fact, students should be able to remain silent if that is their choice. The issue comes from a person silencing his or her voice or being silenced by others, thereby, causing the negative aspects of silence. In regard to this study, we noticed that the female participants had issues writing their skills. In an informal conversation, the students expressed that they did not have anything to contribute to an employer. In other cases, they fell back on female social gender roles like caring for others and being a good team worker despite being leaders in the classroom (Peñaloza, 2019). By integrating narratives, coupled with an overall transformation of the classroom, our goal was to reveal personal skills that the women themselves had silenced in their cover letters because of their insecurities.

Pedagogical Proposal

The Course

We created the *Academic Writing in English* course in 2017 as a way to help medical students develop cover letters, *résumés*, and articles for publication in English. In the second semester of 2018, the course was launched by the university language institute for all other undergraduate students in the community. To this day, the course lasts one semester and includes subjects related to the social, psychological, and cultural aspects of writing. The units covered in the course are: *Persuasive Writing, Cover Letters, Résumés, and Job Employment*, as well as *Technical Writing*. An additional unit on narratives was included as a result of this study.

The Participants

The course was initially piloted with 12 female participants, of which 10 were undergraduate students and two were English language teachers. In order to look at the

narratives in detail, we analyzed five of the participants' stories[7]. All of the participants signed a consent form before starting the study.

Pseudonym	Major/Occupation
Mik	English language teacher
CM Barbosa	English language teacher
Cami	Modern Languages
Johanna	Modern Languages
Srta. Conni	Biology

Background

The need to find an alternative to our academic writing classroom came from the unit *Cover Letters, Résumés, and Job Employment*. The students had to fill out a cover letter rough draft worksheet. After receiving teacher and peer feedback, they would write the final draft. Initially, the students had issues expanding on their skills, for which we wrote over 50 different skills on the board. Even so, they wrote less about their skills and achievements in comparison to other sections like educational background and work experience. The following excerpts come from the students' cover letters:

I am the best candidate because I have the English level and education to be a translator. I have the communicative skills and I consider myself as a multitasker, so I learn quickly. [sic] (Johana, Cover letter)

I am punctual, I have a positive attitude and I am a social person. [sic] (Cami, Cover letter)

In an interview, Johana mentioned that writing the cover letter was difficult for her. She stated that, "*Sí me parece complicado, es como de que yo que se hacer*"[8] [sic] (Johanna, Interview).

Based on the students' comments, we noticed that writing about their accomplishments and skills was difficult for the female students. This did not happen because of their lack of vocabulary or language proficiency level in English, but rather they felt they had little to contribute to a potential employer. Furthermore, the cover letter format was awkward and unfamiliar to them.

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[7]   We selected these five narratives based on language level, consent, and availability. All five participants signed the consent form, had at least a B1 level of English, and were willing to engage in follow-up interviews in relation to the study.

[8]   Yes, I think it (writing the cover letter) is complicated. It's like, what do I know how to do?

Objective of the Pedagogical Proposal

The main objective of this proposal was to introduce narrative writing to complement students' cover letters. The final product of the unit was a true account narrative based on the prompt: *Tell us about an event that impacted you as a person.* We analyzed the students' final narratives for this proposal guided by the question: *What do women's narratives reveal about their personal skills otherwise silenced in their cover letters?*

Implementation of the Proposal

The proposal took five weeks to be implemented. Given that feminist pedagogy encompasses everything from the classroom to the roles of the teacher and student, we enforced or added aspects of the six pillars of feminist pedagogy (Webb, Allen, & Walker, 2002) for the remainder of the course. The organization of the classroom and the roles of the teacher and students are explained below.

I. **Reformation of the relationship between teacher and student:** We arranged the desks in a circle during each meeting, which helped with equal sharing opportunities. We no longer occupied the front of the room, as we were integrated with the group.

II. **Empowerment:** The students could choose to share what they wanted with the group. They had a democratic space to voice their opinions and give feedback without judgement.

III. **Building community:** When tasks were assigned, we always encouraged collaborative work. Since the participants came from different backgrounds, they got to know and understand each other.

IV. **Privileging the individual voice as a way of knowing:** Each student's experience, knowledge, and voice was valued and respected. Before starting the lesson, the students wrote about the topic in journals and discussed their entries out loud.

V. **Respect for diversity of personal experience:** We encouraged the idea that there was no perfect way of being or seeing the world.

VI. **Challenging traditional views:** By asking the students to write a narrative and share their experiences, we challenged the notion of what academic writing was. Additionally, the narrative was an alternative way to display one's skills, strengths, struggles, weaknesses, etc. that deviated from the structured cover letter.

The above pillars demonstrate the positions that we took and the ways we changed the classroom to encompass feminist pedagogy as a whole. We point out that there are many

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ways to pursue feminist pedagogy (McClusker, 2017), and this is just one interpretation of it. As Ropers-Huilman (1999) pointed out, "Still, feminist teaching is not a 'pure' practice. It is affected not only by participants, but also by the institutions in place" (p. 119). By changing aspects of our classroom and understanding our positions, we believe that the students were able to feel more at ease. Therefore, the students' honesty and trust in their narratives comprised the result of an overall change in the classroom.

Findings

In the section that follows, we show the analysis of the narratives by adopting elements of the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Feminist research and the grounded theory method (GTM) have gone hand in hand since the 1990s due to GTM's compatibility with qualitative inquiry and other fields (Plummer & Young, 2010). According to Plummer and Young (2010), "when combined, it loosens the androcentric mooring of the empirical processes underpinning grounded theory, enabling the researchers to design inquiry with greater potential to reveal issues particular to the lives and experience of marginalized women" (p. 305). In other words, GTM and feminist inquiry can be used together to find information from the data themselves, as opposed to the theory first.

We followed the steps of open, selective, and theoretical coding of GTM (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We began by color coding each line in the narratives and giving it a name (code). Then, we looked at the data to look for patterns among the narratives. Finally, we developed the categories based on the data and research question. Four categories emerged from the data, but for purposes of this paper, we will have space to explore only two. In addition to presenting the categories, we included other additional personal skills that appeared in relation to the main categories.

Research Question	Categories	Additional Personal Skills
What do women's narratives reveal about their personal skills otherwise silenced in their cover letters?	Spirituality as a Strength	Loyalty, Flexibility, Respectfulness, and Resilience
	Decision-making	Organization, Problem-solving, and Responsibility

Spirituality as a Strength

This category gets its name from a common theme in the English language teachers' narratives. CM Barbosa and Mik both wrote about a spiritual experience that had impacted their lives. From their stories, we noticed characteristics like loyalty to their faith, flexibility and openness to new ideas, the ability to question their own beliefs and others', and even

resilience to stay alive despite internal pain. Because spirituality is an uncommon topic to write about in cover letters or *résumés*, it can be considered as a silenced voice due to the textual genre. Spirituality and faith are often omitted from cover letters in order to avoid discrimination or religious oppression. However, we would like to point out that through these narratives we see aspects of the human being that are silenced in academic settings, the workplace, and certain textual genres. As Osborn (2007) mentioned, "the most significant damage done by positivism to the language teaching and learning enterprise may lie in its failure to understand the complexity of humanness" (p. 4). Furthermore, the author stated that spirituality or faith are seen as taboos in the language learning classroom, and "we, as critical scholars, have failed collectively to provide ample opportunity for the voices of those who see spirit and language as interrelated to be heard" (p. 5). If we are to listen to our students' voices, it seems pertinent to provide a space for them to express *all* of who they are. In doing so, our participants chose to write about their spirituality, which ended up highlighting their other strengths like resilience, loyalty, respectfulness, and more. Although these personal skills never appeared in their cover letters, their spirituality and faith certainly made these women strong, as was evident in their narratives. In the excerpt below, CM Barbosa began her narrative by introducing the mental state she was in,

> I woke up that day feeling very sick. A type of feeling that made my whole body hurt, even my heart. My sickness was psychological; I was suffering from depression. [sic] (CM Barbosa)

From her introduction, we noticed how her depression took hold of every part of her body, mind, and soul. Often, these life-altering aspects are silenced in job interviews because they are considered subjective and emotional. Later on, in her narrative, CM Barbosa retold her attempt to commit suicide. However, she stated that,

> Unexpectedly, I heard a voice inside of me say, "Don't do it, think of your girls." I was in shock. [sic] (CM Barbosa)

In her narrative, the voice she heard was later explained as that of God's. Because of her spirituality, CM Barbosa looked to her faith and God as a solution to her problem. She mentioned that,

> All I wanted to do was cry. I cried all the way to the secret place, and I remember that I kept reciting a prayer that a very good friend taught me. This special prayer was like a balm to my desolated soul. [sic] (CM Barbosa)

From this excerpt, we could see a woman who had suffered tremendously. From her narrative, we got to see how much of this pain was lived in solitude and embarrassment. Because she could not speak of her condition to her family or students, she turned to God and prayer as the solution. As her story progressed, she mentioned how God had spoken to her and "filled the desert of my heart with sweet consoling words" (CM Barbosa). In God,

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she found comfort, assurance, peace, safety, and friendship. She concluded her narrative stating that:

> Today, I am a determined woman, with joy in my heart, full of desire to live and please God, my daughters, and my family. The depression couldn't take me away from this world without experiencing the opportunity to get to know God and discover the real meaning of our existence on Earth. [sic] (CM Barbosa)

Due to her spirituality and loyalty to God, CM Barbosa was able to fight the battle of depression. God became her friend in her time of need. We also see how she positioned herself as a "determined" and happy woman, which is much different from the way she described herself at the beginning of the narrative. Additionally, we see in the narrator a sense of resilience against death itself. Her determination, resilience, and courage are aspects of herself that she failed to mention in her cover letter as personal skills. Through her story, we witness a strong woman who had survived death itself through her faith.

Mik, an English language teacher, also chose to write about her spirituality and God in her life. It is important to note that Mik and CM Barbosa are recent friends in real life. They took the course together and were role models for the other students in the class. The friend that Mik talked about in her story refers to CM Barbosa. Mik began her narrative by stating her previous beliefs about her faith. She mentioned,

> I can say that before this experience, I was aware that He used to listen to my prayers. However, the possibility that He could talk to me directly, give me advice and / or good news was completely out of my human judgement. [sic] (Mik)

Mik began her narrative by stating where she stood as a believer while setting the stage as to how she would change her initial beliefs. In the next paragraph of her story, she stated how her friend introduced her to a new church. She mentioned that,

> Although I am a Catholic practitioner, I accepted to go since I felt curiosity to go see how Christians (Protestants) [sic] worshipped God. Anyway, it was the same God and they followed the same doctrine [sic] (Mik).

From this excerpt, we can see a characteristic about Mik related to being flexible and respectful as regards others. She is flexible in the sense that she was willing to accept her friend's invitation despite her original beliefs. Additionally, we noticed that she is respectful of her friend's beliefs. In the last sentence, Mik showed her ability to find commonalities between her and her friend's faith, rather than judging her. After accepting her friend's invitation, she discovered that God could speak to her. Mik opened up about her fears and expressed them to her friend. She wrote, "I confessed my fear to her." Despite being afraid, Mik chose to hear God's word. Her reaction was as follows,

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> Consequently, this has been the strangest but most wonderful, beautiful, and amazing religious experience I had ever had. [sic] (Mik)

Similar to CM Barbosa, Mik found comfort in God. She discovered her newfound spiritual experience to be a source of amazement and shock. She concluded her story by reflecting on how God could change the world. Her final sentence stated, "Wow! Nobody could imagine how I felt!" Based on Mik's experience, we were able to see her sense of enthusiasm, curiosity, reflection, flexibility, and even ability to try new things. The narrative contrasted her cover letter, in which she primarily supported her accomplishments through her educational background and experience. Furthermore, she specifically failed to mention any personal skills. As she stated in her final cover letter:

> Consequently, given my fifteen-year teaching experience, permanent training, education in English, and appropriate skills, I consider that I am the English teacher you are looking for. My professional data is as follows. [sic] (Mik, Cover letter)

In this category, we saw a number of personal skills that were not mentioned in the women's cover letters. In part, this is because the cover letter format favors a structured, organized display of certain accomplishments. Nevertheless, we can argue that no room is left for the exploration of emotionality or spirituality as a strength, as well as the strengths they highlight in a person's life. From the narratives, we realized a much different story. We got to see a side of CM Barbosa that had battled through depression and a suicide attempt, and she turned to her faith to find a solution. Even sharing the story, itself, is an act of courage and honesty, which are honorable personal skills to have in any employee. Meanwhile, Mik demonstrated her ability to respect and cooperate with others. She was able to find commonalities between her beliefs and that of her friend; this could be compared to aspects of interculturality. The narratives showed a more complete picture of the women that was invisible in reading their cover letters.

We conclude this category by mentioning that although spirituality and faith are seen as taboos in academic settings or in certain textual genres like the cover letter, these experiences help define a person, help him or her make decisions, and can even save someone from depression or death. We selected this category because it can show a person's tremendous resilience and strength outside of the cover letter structure. Helping our students analyze and evaluate their own stories could encourage them to transfer these strengths to personal skills that can be added to a cover letter. Moreover, we would like to highlight that the feminist classroom invites us to reflect on and question traditional points of view. We can rethink our hiring processes to open up spaces for people to share their experiences in other ways without judgement or discrimination, thereby, comprehending a greater picture of who they are and what they have accomplished.

Decision-making

None of the students identified themselves as decision makers in their cover letters. However, their narratives revealed that they were quick to take risks and make decisions that led to successful outcomes. In the previous category, we saw how Mik took a risk by going to a new church, and CM Barbosa made the decision to turn to her faith. In the next excerpt, Cami, a modern languages student, had the opportunity of a lifetime to see her favorite rock band. Yet, she wrote that all of the tickets were being sold like 'hot bread'[9]. She made the following decision:

> Immediately, I contacted with two friends who also wanted to buy the ticket. We all did the process together, and we bought them. It was a dose of medicine for my anxiety. [sic] (Cami)

Here, we can see how Cami sprang into action and called two of her friends. Together, they were able to find tickets to the concert. In addition to Cami's quick decision-making skills, she also expressed how she planned for the concert day. She wrote:

> I ascertained the way I had to arrive up there, all the costs that I would have, and the date of that longed day. Even, I thought about clothing that I would wear. What should my hairstyle be like? What things should I carry with me? [sic] (Cami)

In the excerpt above, Cami thought of every detail from the price of going to the concert to what she would wear that day. Similarly, Srta. Conni, a biology undergraduate, described a field trip as a moment that impacted her. In explaining her itinerary during the trip, Srta. Conni mentioned the following:

> When we arrived, the first thing was to locate and install the tents and go to dinner at a neighbor's house near the farm where we were. At dusk, we returned to our camp. There was a meeting with the committees to coordinate the instructions for the next day…We always got up very early to finish everything planned. The distances to travel were always long, and we returned in the afternoon, almost night fall. We were all tired and exhausted from work. [sic] (Srta. Conni)

From Srta. Conni's narrative, we interpreted her actions as belonging to a responsible person. For example, she helped with setting up the tents. She was respectful of the instructions given by the committees. Also, she talked about how she got up early every day and completed all the necessary work. Even though Srta. Conni's decisions were not as spontaneous as Cami's, we see that they were necessary to ensure that her field trip would go smoothly.

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9   Cami directly translated a common Spanish phrase, vendido como pan caliente [sold like hot bread], which is equivalent to the American English expression "sold like hotcakes". In other words, the participant wants to highlight that the tickets were gone quickly, which is why they were sold out when she went to buy them.

The following excerpt came from Johana's narrative. Johanna, a modern languages student, wrote about the moment she got into college. She began by stating the following:

It was time to choose what I am going to be in the future. How I can help society, also Colombia, be a better place. Where people do not follow just characters which are imposed on tv. [sic] (Johana)

Johanna's story began right before she made the decision of what career path to choose. One thing we noticed from her excerpt was that she wanted to make a difference in the world. For her, a better country was equivalent to having people who did not follow established norms. Based on her narrative, we could interpret that Johana is in favor of critical thinking. As she continued her story, Johana recalled her mother's experience in college. Johanna wrote that:

There, she matured, she got new experiences, she met new friends, also her husband. I remember how she told me that story with great cheer. That was awesome, she could feel freedom after living with my grandparents which were a little traditional with their costumes. But she chooses her freedom instead of traditions. She chooses her future. [sic] (Johana)

We chose to close this category with the excerpt above. Johana told us about her mother's experience in college, which ultimately influenced her decision to apply to the same university. Johana pointed out that her mother made many choices as a student. She was able to pick her friends and partner. Johana made an association between choice and freedom. Later on, we understood that this freedom came from her mother's decision to break away from her family's tradition.

In the category of decision making, we found other skills as organization, problem solving, and responsibility. However, Johana's final excerpt resonates a truth among all of the narratives presented. We understood that women's choice to decide and act are part of their freedom from traditional roles. Whether it is questioning her previous beliefs about God, choosing a career, or preparing for a concert, a woman lives her most extraordinary experiences in the choices she makes.

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

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As a second part to this study, we chose to share the results with the participants and ask them how they felt writing their narratives. Johana shared that:

I felt more comfortable. I felt like I could express my feelings or write more. It's not as complex, but I can lay out all of me and write many things[10]. (Johana, Interview)

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[10]   Authors' translation.

In addition, we noticed that the female participants were more open to sharing their voice during the rest of the course. This included making us part of their lives and achievements.

Since the course ended, Mik told us she got a raise. CM Barbosa published her narrative in an EFL journal and now she is writing a book. Cami published an article with us and presented her findings at a national conference. Johana is ready to start working on her master's and looking forward to studying gender and power relationships in the classroom. Finally, Srta. Conni is soon to graduate. Her friend, Maratus, who also took the course, became the first person in Colombia to identify the presence of a new spider species in the country.

For this pedagogical proposal, we set out to answer the question: *What do women's narratives reveal about their personal skills otherwise silenced in their cover letters?* Our study began by implementing narratives as an alternative to uncover the participants' personal skills since they failed to expound upon this section in their original cover letters. In the narratives, we found many skills that could be transferred to a cover letter, while other skills surprised us due to the openness the narrative provided.

One of the skills was spirituality as a source of strength. Spirituality and faith are rarely discussed in cover letters, *résumés*, or job interviews so that discrimination and religious oppression are avoided. However, spirituality and faith are aspects that define a person's well-being, decisions, and life experiences. Furthermore, a spiritual experience can uncover strengths as resilience, courage, loyalty, and open-mindedness, which could be transferred as personal skills in a cover letter. In this study, the two English language teachers chose to write about their spirituality. CM Barbosa's account described her battle with depression and how she turned to her faith for solutions. From her story, we saw a woman who was loyal, determined, and resilient. Though much of her struggle with depression was lived alone, she found comfort in God and, ultimately, challenged death. Mik's story revealed skills like flexibility, respectfulness, and ability to find commonalities. None of these skills were mentioned in Mik's cover letter. Nevertheless, her experience showed how she was open to trying new things and comprehending others.

We also identified decision-making as a skill shared by all of the narrators. In all of the stories, the women had to make crucial choices at one point. Decision-making was also accompanied by other skills, such as organization, problem solving, and responsibility. Finally, we saw that a woman's choice to make decisions in her life were part of her voice, freedom, and power.

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We highlight that the goal of feminist pedagogy is to empower, build community, and open spaces for other voices. We stress that the results obtained would not have been possible without the presence of feminist pedagogy and a complete transformation of the classroom.

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Throughout the process and in the narratives, we noticed a push against traditional structures seen in academic writing. The women opened up about their spirituality and mental health, which would otherwise be omitted in a cover letter. They also talked about themselves through enriching experiences, which helped us get to know our participants better. By pairing academic writing with narratives, we also see an opportunity to motivate students to take risks in their writing and find their authorial voice. For example, narratives encourage the use of first-person pronouns, which place the author as a subject in her own story. In academic writing, the use of the first-person is still debated since "a student who is not yet positioned as a contributor to the disciplinary discourse cannot refer to himself or herself in the same way that a publishing scholar can" (Nelson & Castelló, 2012, p. 13). By engaging in storytelling in the feminist classroom, our students are using their voice to question, rethink, and innovate the preexisting structures in place. Therefore, we encourage educators and researchers to find ways to empower their students, amplify women's voices, and challenge colonized academic practices. By doing so, we might be able to contribute to closing the gender gap.

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The purpose of this declaration is to clarify the expected duties and ethical behavior for all the parties involved in the process of submission, evaluation, and selection of manuscripts sent to the HOW journal.

Duties Expected of the Editor

- The Editor is responsible for maintaining the quality of the contents of the journal and, as such, has the final say on whether to accept or reject a manuscript.

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- The Editor guarantees that all authors are treated fairly and their manuscripts evaluated without regard to the authors' race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, political philosophy, ethnic origin, institutional affiliation, or citizenship.

- The Editor is expected to be in constant communication with authors and reviewers about the status of a manuscript or about any other issue that may arise along the process of submission, evaluation, and selection of manuscripts and which requires the attention of some or all of the parties involved.

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field by presenting data that are easily replicated and relevant to interested readers. Falsification and manipulation of data are unethical and unacceptable behaviors.

- The Author should consult and comply with the guidelines for authors and the editorial policies of the journal prior to the submission of a manuscript.

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HOW Journal is a biannual publication by and for teachers of English who wish to share outcomes of educational and research experiences intended to add understanding to English language teaching practices (ELT). Therefore, the journal falls within the field of education and, specifically, the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language (ESL, EFL).

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Our journal's main objective is to maintain communication among English teachers both in Colombia and abroad by offering opportunities for the dissemination of knowledge resulting from educational and research practices that concern English language teaching issues.

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