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Editorial 2024-2

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In Colombia, English language teaching (ELT) presents various classroom alternatives. Studying how ELT happens brings opportunities and challenges, especially in regional and institutional contexts where various socio-political and cultural issues influence educational methods and approaches. The articles presented in this current issue offer useful information about how new ideas might transform conventional teaching practices about professional development and critical pedagogies. Besides, the articles suggest alternatives to incorporate students' activism, abilities, creativity, and language into the ELT process.

The emphasis on appreciating students' creativity and inner speech in the language learning process is a recurring theme in research. The research by Angie Marroquin and Anna Carolina Peñaloza on kids' spiritual activism in an EFL classroom emphasizes the necessity of avoiding hegemonic and conventional teaching approaches. By integrating feminist pedagogy and asset-based approaches in ELT during the pandemic, they demonstrate how students' spiritual activism may function as a powerful instrument for managing difficulties and cultivating a feeling of fairness and optimism. The authors encourage ELT teachers to establish more inclusive and supportive classroom environments that acknowledge and nurture students' spiritual and emotional elements.

Similarly, Francy Lorena García and Edgar Willian Jurado Soto's research on inner speech and speed reading provides important insights into the cognitive mechanisms underpinning language development. Their research emphasizes the significance of comprehending how students internalize written information through inner voice series indicating that this process can greatly improve reading abilities. This result is consistent with the larger trend in ELT toward developing more efficient and cognitively aware teaching strategies that meet students' various demands.

Using technological tools to improve reading comprehension is another example of innovation in ELT, as Flora Isabel Mandiola Villalobos, Maria Angelica Inostroza Macaya,

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and Danisa Salinas Carvajal show with the StoryboardThat platform initiative. This educational experience with pre-service teachers in Chile exemplifies how reading activities using similar platforms can encourage more positive attitudes toward reading. Incorporating technology and creativity gives ELT educators useful resources for their careers. In addition, this digital tool trains educators to apply comparable strategies in the classroom, fostering a more vibrant and stimulating learning environment.

Hernán Gabriel Pérez Buelvas highlights the significance of scaffolding and organized instructional design in reading skill improvement. Through an eighth-grade public school A1-level course's systematic use of graphic organizers and visualization, this study demonstrates how focused interventions can result in quantifiable gains in reading comprehension. The participating students improved in the literal and evaluative level questions but slightly declined in inferential level questions. The study emphasizes the necessity of considering outside variables, such as time restraints and resource availability, that may affect how effective the organizers can be.

Collocations and prepositions play an important part in developing writing skills, as demonstrated by Leonardo Alba-López's study on applying a corpus-based strategy in essay writing. Using a corpus, high-school students could self-correct and improve their writing, demonstrating the potential of data-driven learning tools to promote autonomy and improve language awareness. However, the author emphasizes how important having a well-organized instructional design is, mostly to help students navigate English language learning challenges with a corpus.

The last study in this issue is Vahid Rahmani Doqaruni's work. His research is on the effect of teachers' age on their beliefs about action research. The discovery that younger educators are more open to professional development, pre-service teacher programs, and augmented reality than their more senior colleagues raises the possibility that generational disparities in viewpoints on professional growth and instructional strategies may impact the uptake of cutting-edge teaching strategies. The study emphasizes how age gaps must be more unified, and thoughtful teaching communities must be fostered through cooperative projects and institutional support for designing collaborative action research projects.

Contributing to reflection on ELT, Angela Patricia Velásquez-Hoyos and Luis Herney Villegas López talk about how ELT communities must keep considering and implementing critical viewpoints into their teaching practices during the post-pandemic age. By integrating students' cultural aspects, identities, and more dynamic bilingual practices, ELT settings can be more inclusive, socially just, and transformative while promoting inclusive and multilingual language learning environments. Teachers, educators, and researchers must collaborate and pursue ongoing professional development to integrate these strategies successfully

and guarantee that ELT continues to be responsive to students' changing requirements in Colombia and abroad.

The evolving panorama of ELT in Colombia, as presented in the articles in this issue, emphasizes the necessity to include cutting-edge, student-centered methods to improve teaching practices. The articles presented demonstrate the ongoing need to embrace innovation, technology, and inclusive pedagogies to meet actual students' complex needs. These ideas demonstrate how modern ELT practices can improve engagement and efficacy, students' skills, digital tools, and data-driven approaches. Furthermore, there is a constant need to create collaborative and flexible teaching communities, especially to bridge generational divides and support further professional development. HOW journal, and ASOCOPI, still work hard to make this possible.

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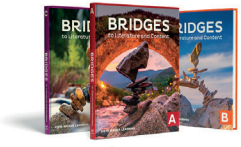

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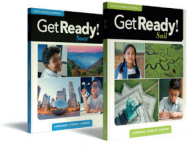

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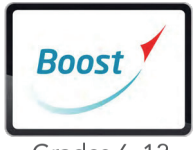

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From the President of Asocopi

Claudia María Uribe Hoyos

As an active member of our Association and a part of the Board of Directors during the last four years, I have deeply understood and embraced the core of what belonging to Asocopi means: serving our teaching community by promoting growth possibilities all along the country, the region, and why not, worldwide. It is a complex and challenging task that requires a strong commitment, shared visions from different colleagues, and their teaching experiences in all levels of education. At the same time, we need the strong conviction to work together and raise our voices in a society and educational system that must look at the essence of our exercise: helping other human beings to find who they are. My intention is not to be perceived as an idealist but as an educator. My responsibility is to urge our community leaders to encourage ASOCOPI and leverage the narratives and historical experiences we have built. We have grown in these 59 years of service to the community; we have walked a path where we have understood the need to provide our associates with more inclusive, diverse, contextualized, and respectful language teaching practices.

As part of this understanding, we have crafted the 59th Asocopi Annual and 5th International Conference, and 4th LAALTA Conference, for a whole year. It has been a time of cooperation, negotiation, and polishing the details to talk about democracy and language education. Universidad del Norte, in Barranquilla, will be the scenario where all the attendees to our Event will share their deepest connections and constructions related to a process of learning assessment that focuses on social justice. In this sense, it is fair to say, that we are achieving another of our objectives: to promote the exchange of ideas, and experiences, both nationally and internationally. And this is how ASOCOPI goes beyond.

I would like to express my gratitude to ASOCOPI for trusting our Board of Directors for the 2022-2024 term. The Board has been committed to furthering our Association's mission to serve as a guiding light for every educator who has benefitted from or engaged with the various activities we have undertaken.

To the teachers attending our Conference 2024 looking for a space to grow, question, and learn together, I want them to know, they are the heart of Asocopi. To our international plenary speakers, Dr. Christian Walter, Dr. Priyanvada Abeywickrama, and Dr. Jamie L. Schissel, my deepest appreciation for participating in our conference and sharing your insights with the sole intention of fostering a stronger community. To our national plenary speakers Mg. Frank Giraldo, Dr. Katherine Bolaños, and Mg. Jorge Mario Perdomo Santacruz, you are part of that answer that ASOCOPI always looks.

To my ASOCOPI family members of the Board of Directors Kaithie Ramírez, Adriana Sánchez, Clara Lozano, Jhonatan Vásquez-Guarnizo, and our Administrative Manager, Myriam Vera, working with you every single week has taught me endurance and enriched my perspective on how so many different ideas and narratives can be together to accomplish a common objective: the good of our Association. I cherish you all!

To Edgar Lucero (HOW Editor) and José David Largo (HOW Assistant Editor): Thank you for believing that HOW Journal is the voice of our academic community and that all the different perspectives matter. To Sileny Villaveces, our accountant, your wisdom and vision always show more positive scenarios. All of you are Asocopi!

I would like to finish by stating that ASOCOPI deserves to grow and show our communities how relevant it is for teachers to work together looking for scenarios that enrich our knowledge, practices, and humanity. In that sense, 2025 will be a festive year for us, we will be celebrating 60 years of working together for the betterment of our profession. It will be amazing if all our members can contribute to activities along the regions and country, and why not, globally. In October 2025, we will get together in Santa Marta for our 60th National and 6th International Conference. Let´s get ready to show the maturity of our beloved Association.

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Dios Nos Hizo Diferentes: Children's Spiritual Activism in an EFL Classroom

Dios Nos Hizo Diferentes: Activismo Espiritual en los Niños y Niñas en un Aula de Inglés Como Lengua Extranjera

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Abstract

Though language education and research have pushed back against traditional, hegemonic ways of teaching, they continue to exclude conversations on spirituality. Moreover, a deficit lens in language education perpetuates a focus on what needs to be improved rather than on our students' assets. In this pedagogical intervention, we begin by weaving the work of feminists of color to discuss what asset-based, desired-based research and feminist pedagogy can contribute to understanding children's spiritual activism. We worked with 31 fourth graders in a private school in Duitama, Colombia. As the study took place during the pandemic and mass mobilizations, the children shared their spirituality to cope with reality. Furthermore, the children's spirituality demonstrated their belief in a higher power, positive emotions to comfort others, hope for a better future, and an understanding of equity based on race and gender. We invite language educators and researchers to create spaces for children to share

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their spiritual activism through the integration of feminist pedagogy focused on asset and desire-based approaches.

Keywords: asset-based, children, desire-based, EFL, equity, feminist pedagogy, spiritual activism

Resumen

Aunque la educación y la investigación en idiomas han rechazado las formas tradicionales y hegemónicas de enseñanza, continúan excluyendo las conversaciones sobre espiritualidad. Además, existe una perspectiva de déficit en la educación de idiomas que perpetúa el enfoque en lo que es necesario mejorar en lugar de los talentos existentes en nuestros estudiantes. En esta intervención pedagógica, comenzamos tejiendo el trabajo desde las feministas de color para discutir qué investigación y qué pedagogía feminista basada en los talentos y los deseos pueden contribuir a la comprensión del activismo espiritual de los niños. Trabajamos con 31 estudiantes de cuarto grado en una escuela privada en Duitama, Colombia. Ya que el estudio se desarrolló durante la pandemia y las movilizaciones masivas, los niños compartieron su espiritualidad como una forma de afrontar la realidad. En consecuencia, su espiritualidad demostró su creencia en un poder superior, emociones positivas para consolar a los demás, esperanza de un futuro mejor y una comprensión de la equidad basada en la raza y el género. Invitamos a educadores e investigadores de idiomas a crear espacios para que los niños compartan su activismo espiritual por medio de la integración de una pedagogía feminista centrada en enfoques basados en talentos y deseos.

Palabras Clave: metodología basada en fortalezas, niños, metodología basada en deseos, activísimo espiritual, equidad, ILE, niños, pedagogía feminista

A Dream Called Pedagogy

Not only Martin Luther King
but also me, I do have a dream.
As Lennon sang extraordinary verses,
I am a dreamer in all the senses.
When I think of pedagogy,
sharing is all that I see.
Just comprehension for you and me,
the warm place to be unique,
the land to grow my roots and beliefs.
The future is bright
if we search for a light
that lights us inside
and impulses an action that changes
someone's life. (Angie)

In the traditional banking system of education, Paulo Freire talked about how the teacher is the sole knowledge provider. The teacher, a *passive technician*, deposits information into their students' minds to be retrieved later. Though the traditional banking system has been critiqued for years, it lives in all language education and research facets. Terry Osborn[3] (2007) stated, "positivistic limitations within the field (of language teaching) have stifled or even excluded inquiry into the relationship between language learning, teaching, and spirit, based on the false neutrality of so-called 'scientific evidence'" (p. 5). Though research may be conducted under a qualitative paradigm, a deficit view of language learners focuses on what they *lack* and not what they *have*. Other paradigms that push back on traditional banking education have also limited spiritual voices from being heard in the language classroom.

Our work in Colombia has shown that being *transformative intellectuals* is impossible while perpetuating traditional teaching and research practices. First, teaching requires direct involvement with other human beings while understanding their worldviews and self-perceptions. Second, we must humanize who we are as teachers and researchers. Lastly, we need to push for room to dream and re-imagine education together.

The following article is our re-imagining of education with a group of fourth-grade students in an English language classroom in a private school in Duitama, Colombia. We integrated feminist pedagogy to invite students to multiple ways of seeing the world while challenging traditional language learning and research approaches. We integrate the work of women of color in education that connects asset-based learning, desired-based research, feminist pedagogy, and spiritual activism. By weaving the contributions of Black, Chicana/Latina, and Native scholars, we address social issues in the classroom that center children's dreams and hopes for the future. For the current study, we sought to answer the question '*What do children reveal about their spiritual activism regarding social justice issues?'* We, the educators and children, discussed issues related to racism, sexism, ableism, and ageism. Data like children's drawings, poems, and messages helped us better understand how they used spirituality to re-imagine a better world and cope with social injustices.

Our Positionality

Angie

My family consists of my mom, sister, and me. We have lived in Boyacá since we were children. In this region of the country, the traditional Catholic culture is rooted in daily practices. When I was at school, the curriculum was based on Catholicism and social politics;

[3] We use the first and last name for in-text citations as a form of citational justice and a feminist stance to highlight women's scholarship.

however, I started digging into how spirituality may look to me and how I could see the world from there. When I became a teacher, I returned to teach at Catholic schools and realized that everything was the same as when I was a child. I knew I wanted richer experiences for my students, from how we related to each other to how we felt in class and the accountability we experienced there.

Anna

I grew up in the United States as a first-generation Latina proud of my Colombian roots. As a child, I went to a predominantly Black Catholic school. When I turned eight, my family moved, and I began my journey through predominantly White public educational spaces where I was constantly racialized by my peers and teachers. When I became a teacher in higher education, it became clear that I needed to stop the perpetuation of racialization and gender aggression in the classroom.

Together, we present this work that stems from Angie's master's dissertation and many conversations on feminism, faith, and spirituality. Before beginning the study, we nourished critical dialogue on our intersectional identities (race, gender, age, ethnicity, spirituality, etc.) to understand the multiple points of privilege and oppression we faced. We are cognizant that we and the children we worked with are part of the dominant "mestizo" culture in Colombia that is socially privileged by the State. At the same time, Anna's racialization as a woman of color in the U.S. and her current work with marginalized communities, as well as our experiences as women in a *machista* [male-dominated] culture, provided lenses to understand asset and desire-based frameworks. From our conversations, the study emerged; it is founded on feminist pedagogy and asset-based frameworks aligned with a critical perspective in which every child was welcome to contribute from their ways of being, knowing, and power. This study represents our friendship and unity in academia; it is also a call to action to re-think language education.

Conceptual Framework

Asset and Desire-Based Research

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) research can often depict students from a deficit lens. Phrases like '*How we can improve x with y'* still dominate academic discourses. Wang et al. (2021) stated, "Deficit views involve a narrow focus on what students do not have or cannot do" (p. 1). In Colombia, the EFL deficit lens comes from a history of national bilingual policies and external entities that have displaced local stakeholders as knowledge providers and creators. For example, the British Council administered three English language diagnostic exams in Colombia in 2005. This entity claimed that 98.2% of Colombian teachers and 93.6% of students were below an advanced English language proficiency level (Usma, 2009).

The exams were then used to "designate the British Council in Colombia as the leading implementation agency around the country" (p. 129). Almost 20 years later, we still see news headlines such as '*Colombia, con uno de los niveles de inglés más bajos del mundo'* [Colombia, one of the worst English levels in the world] (Chacón, 2021). Reports like these fail to capture the multiplicity of cultures, languages, and assets among Colombian educators and students.

Unfortunately, a deficit-based approach in language research focuses on children's foreign language deficiencies and how they can be solved with external approaches. Deficit thinking can lead teacher-researchers to see children's academic performance as the sole indicator of success with low performance falsely attributed to a lack of cultural knowledge or parental involvement in their education (Yosso, 2005). Often, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other minoritized communities are represented as static, singular identities in need of help from institutional experts. Hence, an asset-based approach to research and learning recognizes that students bring much more to the table, whether it be through familial, linguistic, social, navigational, aspirational, or resistance capital (Yosso, 2005). Even when materials include BIPOC communities, minoritized people are often presented as 'damaged' without taking the time to explore their assets, wishes, hopes, and dreams (Tuck, 2009). For instance, Bonilla (2008) found that EFL textbooks perpetuated the dominant White American and British culture, presented a superficial view of multiculturalism, and were filled with gender and race stereotypes. In a more recent study, Nuñez Pardo (2022) found the perpetuation of Anglo-Saxon ideologies that diminished gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in Colombian English Textbooks, as well as placing the reader "as an object focused on bare decoding and literal reading of predetermined knowledge" (p. 709). Colombian scholars like Ramos-Holguín (2021) and Granados-Beltrán (2022) have pushed for the creation of culturally relevant material that invites critical interculturality, or the recognition of multiple ways of knowing, being, and power through dialogues of care and action.

For the following study, we implemented an asset and desire-based lens. A desire-based approach to research emphasizes "understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" (Tuck, 2009, p. 416). A desire-based approach provides space to introduce social justice issues and BIPOC communities from their imaging and hopes without focusing only on the 'damage' done. Furthermore, a desire-based framework invites children to reflect on their longing, creativity, imagination, and hope for a more equitable future. In addition, we chose to use feminist pedagogy to expand further the potential of asset and desire-based frameworks on spiritual activism research.

Feminist Pedagogy

Carolyn Shrewsbury (1987) defined feminist pedagogy as "a vision of the classroom as a liberatory environment in which we, teacher-student and student-teacher, act as subjects,

not objects" (p. 6). Influenced by critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy has an education for liberation agenda. However, we note that not all feminism is practiced the same way. Indigenous scholar Sandy Grande (2003) pointed out that "'mainstream' feminism uses colonial discourses that consequently essentialized feminist pedagogy. In this light, feminist pedagogy becomes a simplistic project concerned with 'giving voice' to the 'silenced desires' of (white) women" (pp. 331-332). Pushing back on "damaged-centered" research, we intentionally implemented bell hooks' feminist pedagogy focused on the intersection of race and gender, the lived experience as a place of theory, education as liberatory practice, and a holistic recognition of the human being.

We want to highlight hooks' attention to community, radical love, and spirituality. hooks (2001) stated,

> All the great social movements for freedom and justice in our society have promoted a love ethic. Concern for the collective good of our nation, city, or neighbor rooted in the values of love makes us all seek to nurture and protect that good. (p. 98)

When we speak about using a feminist pedagogy that advances the efforts of BIPOC communities and focuses on children's desires, it is quintessential to include a love ethic. Without love, we fall into a deficit, damage-centered lens. To include love is also to talk about collective future dreaming. Darnell L. Moore (2018) stated, "The way we treat people; our willingness or unwillingness to engage others; our care; our love is as crucial and political as anything else, because Black radical love not only anticipates liberatory Black futures, but also leans into such futures" (p. 328). Love, then, becomes a collective way to care for others and the self, and it is both longed for and desired as it becomes part of a re-imagined future for/with BIPOC communities and children.

Spiritual Activism

bell hooks often wrote about spirituality stating that "Living life in touch with the divine spirit lets us see the light of love in all living beings" (2011, p. 71). For hooks, spirituality was "about commitment to a way of thinking and behaving that honors principles of inter-being and interconnectedness" (p. 77). A spiritual connection has empowered humanity to overcome wars, pandemics, and various systems of oppression. One example is the Civil Rights Movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who used peaceful protest and direct action to fight segregation. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had a spiritual identity evident in his sermons, in which people saw the "chant as a form of prayer…chants were a way of understanding and preserving spirituality" (Uribe, 2016, p. 34). Together, they transformed adversity into action through the hope of change. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, "With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together,

knowing that we will be free one day" (1963). Without a doubt, spirituality has carried BIPOC communities in the struggle for freedom and justice; it continues to be a staple in community care and wellness (López Salas, 2023).

We recognize spirituality as a way of knowing and understanding the world and a way for children to cope with social injustice. Gloria Anzaldúa contributed profoundly to Chicana/Latina feminist, queer, and cultural theories in addition to our construction of spiritual activism. Anzaldúa's concept of spiritual activism connects to *conocimiento* - her theory on consciousness and knowledge about one's inner (mental, emotional, spiritual) and outer (social, political, cultural) experiences. Anzaldúa (2002, as cited in Keating, 2022, p. 203) stated,

> The inner/outer work makes bridges between the life of the mind, the life of the body, and the life of the spirit, the life of the collective. In the moments of connection between the inner and outer worlds the soul and physical world come together, intersect. Spiritual activism stitches the two fabrics together.

Spiritual activism joins the physical and spiritual worlds connecting body, mind, spirit, and collective. For Anzaldúa, spiritual activism was "spirituality for social change, spirituality that posits a relational worldview and uses this holistic worldview" (Keating, 2008, p. 54). Acknowledging spiritual activism as a way children cope with social injustice is a means of inviting broader world views that decolonize pedagogy and research. Therefore, children use spiritual activism to see their inner world and transform their outer world.

In the figure below, we summarize our conceptual framework. Asset-based research is a lens that sees the children and each other as knowledge creators. Desire-based research allows us to focus on the children's hopes, longing, and future dreaming as knowledge. Feminist pedagogy is the bridge that motivates a complete transformation of the environment and power structures in the classroom to get to spiritual activism, a decolonial understanding of how children cope with and act upon social injustices.

Pedagogical Intervention

The following study is situated under a qualitative paradigm due to our interest in "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). We utilized a critical epistemological lens to plan the study and analyze the data. A critical epistemology sees reality as multiple and shaped by social, cultural, historical, and political contexts (Luttrell, 2010). The critical research objective is to work for and with participants to uncover the structures of oppression that can lead to emancipation and empowerment.

Figure 1. *Our Lenses*

For us, feminist pedagogy was the bridge to unveil children's spiritual activism. Feminist pedagogy is a conscious and intentional view of education that recognizes systemic oppression and privilege while striving toward emancipation and empowerment. hooks (1994) stated that "making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy" (p. 39). Below, we introduce the six pillars of feminist pedagogy (Webb et al., 2002), which we integrated during the study.

Table 1. *The Six Pillars of Feminist Pedagogy*

Pillar	Focus	Implementation
Reformation of the relationship between professor and student	Teachers and students share power in the classroom.	• Plan lessons that create spaces for children to dialogue. • Invite community members (teachers, parents, grandparents) to the class. • Organize desks in a circle or have class outside.
Empowerment of teachers and students	Involves principles of democracy and shared power.	• Create a book of messages for undergraduate students and read responses as a group. • Read '*I'm Glad to Be Me*' and listen to "*Hey Black Child*" by Maya Angelou and interpreted by Pe'Tehn Raighn Kem. • Discuss positions of power and participation with the children.

Pillar	Focus	Implementation
Building community	Builds community within and outside the classroom.	• Read *'The Things That Really Matter'* by Rafiloe Moahloli, Natalie Pierre, and Eugene Subi Bosa. • Write a book of messages to undergraduate students. • Listen to "*Imagine*" by John Lennon; understand that we are not alone, there is room for everyone.
Privileging the individual voice as a way of knowing	Sees knowledge as co-constructed and connected to context and culture.	• Listen to grandparents share stories in the classroom. • Create posters describing their grandparents' strengths.
Respect for diversity of personal experience	Generates theory from personal experience.	• Read *'Hear My Voice'* by Warren Binford • Draw a dream world.
Challenging traditional views	Challenges universal knowledge and objective.	• Read *'The Girl with the Rough Face'* by Rafe Martin and David Shannon to challenge traditional beauty standards.

Setting and Participants

We integrated local social issues happening within our context and provided spaces for our students to discuss these events critically. The first reason was because we carried out this study during the pandemic. The second was the mass Colombian mobilizations that escalated on April 28, 2021, due to tax reforms, health and economic inequities, and police brutality. Angie taught at a private Catholic school in Duitama, Boyacá, and Anna was a public university professor in a language education department. Both the pandemic and mobilizations shook our community, especially knowing that among the murdered in the mobilizations were a 17-year-old boy and several university students. Moreover, images of gender-based violence during the protests circulated in mass media.

We worked with 31 students (20 girls, 11 boys) in fourth grade. The children came from different socio-economic backgrounds with some students' families able to afford tuition while others relied on scholarships. We discussed privilege in the classroom since most students came from middle-class families. Other community members were part of the process, such as Anna's university students and the children's grandparents. We acknowledge their contributions as part of the study. We informed all the parents about the study and obtained their consent. Additionally, the children's assent was asked for, and we informed

them when we collected data and recorded the workshop sessions. The names that appear in this study are all pseudonyms chosen by the participants.

We designed five workshops centered on local issues (see Table 3). Each workshop lasted two weeks. Additionally, we integrated materials like children's books, videos, and poems to facilitate the discussion. The materials were often created by BIPOC communities and exemplified an asset and desired-based lens (see Table 2). Based on the workshops, the data we collected came primarily from the children's artifacts, such as their drawings, messages, and poems.

Table 2. *Workshops and Data Collection Process*

Week	Topic	Data Collection Instruments
1-2	Mental Health	Messages of comfort related to COVID-19 and the mobilizations exchanged between college students and children
3-4	Beauty Standards	Artifacts (drawings) and focus group discussion based on the characters in *The Girl with the Rough Face.*
5-6	Immigration	Artifacts (drawings) based on children's imagined worlds.
7-9	Racism	Documents (poems) after watching and discussing "*I'm Glad to Be Me*".
10-12	Ageism	Artifacts, observations, and interview transcriptions based on personal stories and grandparents' contributions to the class.

For this paper's purposes, we focused on the weeks we discussed mental health, immigration, and racism as they yielded the most data on children's social justice perspectives. In the following section, we describe the type of data analysis we used and the results from our study.

Findings

We worked together to code and discuss the main themes by collaborative data analysis (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Our analysis was a conversation that brought many insights and admiration concerning the children's spiritual activism. The data presented below came primarily from the female participants, as they mostly expressed their spiritual activism to discuss social justice issues. We found four main themes: *Spirituality and a Higher Power*; *Emotions as Part of Spirituality; Hope*; and *Spirituality and Gender.*

Spirituality and a Higher Power

This first theme emerged from the students' messages of hope and other representations of spirituality during the study. Spirituality is a personal journey of how one's spirit is

connected to a higher power. Koenig (2009) stated that patients with medical and psychiatric illnesses use religion and spirituality as a coping mechanism. In this case, we focused on the children's spiritual beliefs in connection to empathy and support of others during the pandemic and mobilizations.

One of the first activities we collaborated on was writing messages between the children and university students. The first excerpt[4] is a message written by Danna, a fourth grader, to Anna's class, "because only God knows why you put them, He makes you stronger every day" (Danna).

In the excerpt, Danna mentioned God as a higher power that controls our lives. Beyond that, she showed her vision of hope and strength founded in her spirituality. Her individual spiritual beliefs were a way for her to overcome tough situations in life. Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg (1993) critiqued children's cognitive development theories in what they termed "post-formal thinking". Kincheloe and Steinberg stated, "Moving to post-formality, critical educators politicize cognition; they attempt to disengage themselves from socio-interpersonal norms and ideological expectations" (p. 297). In other words, young children can critically construct knowledge based on personal experiences and daily life situations that challenge "norms".

According to Susannah Cole (2011), post-formalism can help us understand children's spirituality as a means of expression, thereby, bringing up "questions of purpose, meaning, human dignity, freedom, and social responsibility" (p. 8). Moreover, Cole stated that creativity supports children's spiritual knowledge creation. Acknowledging and respecting children's spirituality is connected to how feminist pedagogy privileges the individual voice as a way of knowing and respects the diversity of personal experience. When children's knowledges are brought into the classroom, as an act of challenging traditional education, they are validated and appreciated. However, we note that spirituality in the classroom is not meant to be evaluated but comprehended and honored.

In the following message, The Star placed herself in her reader's shoes and envisioned their situation. The Star spoke of strength and courage through her spirituality: "Hello, I just wanted to tell you that I am sorry for your loss. I hope you recover soon. God gives you a lot of strength because heaven takes care of you" (The Star).

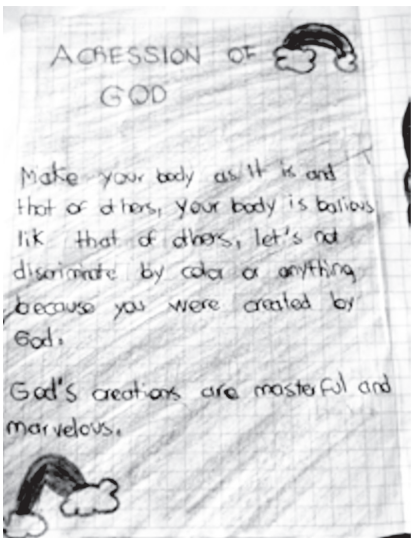
In The Star's message, she imagined that her reader had lost someone due to the pandemic or mobilizations. Like Ranico 21, she mentioned God as a higher power and source of strength. Her message contained a spiritual vision of the world, as she attributed

[4] The excerpts in this paper are verbatim. We take a stance to not use [sic] to highlight language errors, as part of an asset-based approach to honor children's language choices.

qualities and actions to 'heaven' and a higher power that would take care of the person reading this message.

The Star showed aspects of hope and future dreaming. Gutiérrez (2022) mentioned that a desire-based approach to spiritual activism understands hope as the future of a community. The Star expressed her empathy, which comes from her inner understanding of the world. Children can contribute to the future of their community by first validating that there is actual pain being felt and that unjust situations are happening. Second, they see hope in their future without ignoring the pain. As Gutiérrez stated, "We cannot heal without tending to wounds" (p. 318). Hence, The Star acknowledged the pain from her spiritual understanding to help the other heal.

During the workshops, we discussed segregation, discrimination, and racism with the children. Understanding their ideas and beliefs about the topic was essential for us, including any personal experiences they may have had. The children spoke about feeling left out when they played games at school or when others unfairly treated them because of their appearance or outfit. In the children's artwork and messages, they shared their beliefs about equity, physical appearance, and spirituality. Bat Bunny, a participating student, created the following excerpt and image; she showed that she believed that we are all God's creation.



Make your body as it is and that of hers, your body is balious lik (sic) that of others, let's not discriminate by color or anything because you were created by God. God's creations are masterful and marvelous. (Bat Bunny)

Figure 2. *Bat Bunny's Dream World*

Bat Bunny shared her understanding of equity through the lens that we are all creations of a superior being who made us with unique characteristics. We noted Bat Bunny's language choices, as she described the assets of others as valuable, masterful, and marvelous. Gutiérrez (2022) stated that spirituality is "the various ways people see unity in all things and draw on tradition to heal and remake ourselves" (p. 381). Bat Bunny saw unity and value in all bodies. For her, we are all created by a higher power, and therefore, we must not discriminate against others based on 'color' or race. Bat Bunny's spiritual activism invited her readers to treat others fairly.

The excerpts and images we included in this category are full of power and strength. The children made complex language choices to offer positive messages and provide comfort from their spirituality. The children encouraged others to overcome difficult situations while also acknowledging their tribulations.

Emotions as Part of Spirituality

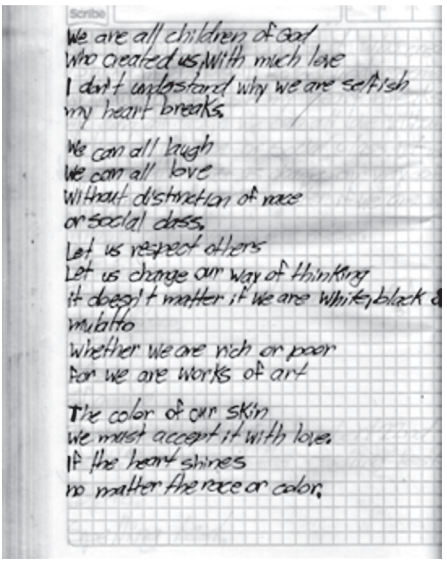
One of the main takeaways from this study was how children expressed spirituality as separate from religious rituals or traditions. Spirituality is attached to the children's emotions, sources of strength, and hope. This second main theme comes from the children's positive and hopeful emotions connected to their spirituality. In the activity where the children wrote messages to the university students, they encouraged others to stay positive despite the difficult situation. Even though they were aware of the threats from the pandemic and mobilizations, the children made communication choices to write uplifting messages, such as Happy Face's excerpt: "Hello! I come to say some beautiful words that can make you smile, smile every day and God **will** make you laugh" (Happy face).

Happy Face used positive words like "beautiful", "smile", and "laugh". From a communicative perspective, he was able to convey happiness and joy. He saw the possibility of feeling joy through God; that is the way he thought people could experience relief. His message also stated that if his readers can keep positive, God will bring joy to their lives.

Empathy was another emotion that dominated the children's messages and artwork. In the next excerpt, Ana Morales' message showed how she understood other's suffering: "Although my arms can't hug you to protect you, I hug you in my pray (sic)" (Ana Morales).

In Ana Morales' excerpt, her spiritual activism was the connection between the inner world and the material reality. There, Ana Morales understood that she could not engage in physical affection because of the pandemic. Nevertheless, she imagined a spiritual hug where the embrace was carried out not by her arms but by her prayers. She could empathize with the other, imagining their situation and offering her support through spiritual affection.

The following poem came from a workshop where we discussed racism and anti-Blackness. We saw a video where Pe'Tehn Raighn Kem, a three-year-old girl, interpreted "Hey Black Child" by Maya Angelou. We chose this video as an example of how children's voices can be heard in different spaces and empower their communities. The children were then invited to write poems about any social justice topic discussed in class. They started the creation at home with the help of their community. The results were full of emotional and spiritual content, as seen in Migue's poem below.



We are all children of God
who created us, with much love
I don't understand why we are selfish
my heart breaks

We can all laugh
we can all love
without discrimination of race
and social class
Let us respect others
Let us change our way of thinking
it doesn't matter if we are white, or black
or mulatto
whether we are rich or poor
for we are works of art

The color of their skin
we must accept it with love
if the heart shines
No matter the race or color.

Figure 3. *Migue's Poem*

The children were free to choose any topic they wanted, so the fact that Migue chose racism as the main topic of his poem is an interest he showed. In the first stanza, he took a critical position where discrimination made no sense since there is equality in God's creation. For Migue, God created everyone with physical differences but with the commonality that they are all "children of God". The way to see unity in these poems and the different artifacts is through one creation that has the characteristic of being diverse. The concept of diversity is expressed as something made on purpose, not to be fixed to make everyone look the same. Finishing the first stanza, Migue brought up how his heart broke because of social injustices. In the second stanza, Migue started with positive language and a call to action. Here, we saw

how social justice started from a critical consciousness of treating others better regardless of the color of their skin. This critical consciousness is connected to Migue's heart, the place where spirituality emerges.

Hope

Another main theme was hope. Hope, or the belief that better days will come, is part of future dreaming Bettina Love (2019) wrote about hope among BIPOC communities and education. She stated, "They hope that life can and will be better for the next generation. That is the grit of dark people. They work endlessly for the next generation and the next day with resolve, purpose, hope, faith, and a desire for their children to thrive one day off the labor of their grit" (p. 78). Hence, hope for a better future for BIPOC communities must go hand in hand with actions and solutions to make it happen. In this section, we share how children display their hopes for a more equitable future connected to their spiritual activism.

As mentioned before, part of the data collection took place during the national mobilizations. In the following excerpt, Happy Face wrote a message to the university students, which we previously analyzed because of its positive messages. We returned to understand how hope was being discussed: "Hello! I come to say some beautiful words that can make you smile, smile every day and God will make you laugh" (Happy Face).

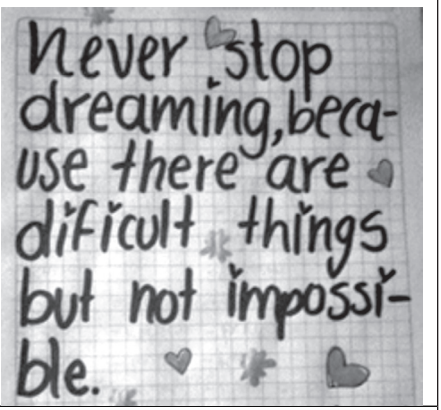
Happy Face's message was written with present and future tenses. Though Angie was not explicitly teaching verb tenses nor asking the children to use the future conjugation, Happy Face made linguistic choices to convey his message. Happy Face first stated an action. He was sharing these "beautiful words" that would hopefully cause the reader to smile. Happy Face recognized that the words he was sharing were valuable and could affect whoever read them. To close his statement, he declared his spirituality by mentioning that God would make that person laugh. He used the future tense 'will' to show how God's actions would have positive effects on the reader. Happy Face's message was filled with hope rooted in the action he took through his words and the hope that a higher power would bring joy to another's life.

Hope and its connection to future dreaming were also visible in the responses the children received from the undergraduate language majors.

In the response messages, the university students referenced finding comfort in the children's messages. They saw them as a light, "super-champions", and the future. One aspect of feminist pedagogy that promotes an asset and desired-based lens is building a community where everyone, regardless of age or status, is valued and appreciated.

Hi Super Champions!
I hope you be (sic) well. Your messages were very touching. You are great people and remember 'no matter how big the waves of the sea are, the important thing, is to accept the risk and be willing to go through them'
See you later guys…

Figure 4. *Undergraduates' Responses to Children*



Never stop dreaming, because there are dificult (sic) things but not impossible.

Figure 5. *Undergraduates' Responses to Children*

In the next excerpts, Ranico 21 and Oriana wrote messages that wove spiritual activism and hope with a consciousness of the material world: "It takes bad days to realize how beautiful others are" (Ranico 21 Artifact 1); "Don't give up and move on, God is with you" (Oriana, Student Artifact 1).

Ranico 21 showed us how she understood that bad days were happening right then. However, she had hope that beautiful days would come. Living the experience of a bad day allows us to recognize that other days can be beautiful. For Oriana, her way of comforting others during these difficult times was by telling her reader not to give up. At the same time, she mentioned that God was with the person who would read her message. Here, she connected what was happening at present with messages of comfort and a connection to a higher power as a protector and guide.

Spirituality and Gender

In this section, we discuss the representation of gender and spirituality through the children's drawings. Spiritual activism connects to how we see ourselves, our faith, and the

material world. In that sense, spiritual activism like gender is a social construct shaped by cultural, political, and historical contexts. In this study, the children attended a Catholic private school with teachings that most likely aligned with what they learned at home from their parents. Though Angie did not teach religion nor require the children to talk about their vision of spirituality, the children chose to represent their faith and beliefs in a higher power together with their visions of equity and justice.

The first image comes from Estrella's dream world. The image below also has a quote that said, "*Dios nos hizo diferentes"* [God made us different].

Dios nos hizo diferentes.
[God made us all different]

Figure 6. *Estrella's Dream World*

In Estrella's drawing, a Black and White girl are playing together underneath a smiling angel. The girls were wearing dresses and were of equal height. One aspect to note is that Angie's classroom had no Black children. So, for Estrella to draw a Black child was significant because her dream world included People of Color. Moreover, Estrella believed that God created all of us differently.

At the same time, Estrella's vision of a spiritual being, the angel, is White and male. According to Stuart Hall (2020), "Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things" (p. 74). In this case, the children are still developing their understanding of spirituality and religion based on the signs and symbols they see and receive from their school, community, and home. How children envision spiritual beings could replicate how they see their spiritual activism.

Steven Roberts, a Stanford University psychologist, worked with 1,000 Christians and asked them to identify the picture of a person that represented their image of God. Then, they were asked to choose the image of a person that looked like a leader. The results revealed that the participants who chose White male images for God were also more likely to choose White male leaders over Black and/or female candidates (Grewal, 2020). In Tomás' dream world below, the future is White and male. Tomás drew the peace dove presiding over three light-skinned male children. We highlight that even though none of the children present in Angie's classroom identified as Afro-descendant, many of the children were darker-skinned. Nevertheless, the children often drew themselves as having light skin. When Angie asked the children to pick the color that best represented their own, all the children selected the light-skin crayon.

In Figure 8 Ranico 21 drew her dream world, one where the rich give to the poor. She also added her reflection to the side.

Like Estrella, Ranico 21 stated her spiritual activism that everyone, regardless of their identity, was God's creation and, consequently, should help each other. In Ranico 21's dream world, the rich help the poor. Interestingly, the rich also continue helping the poor over time, as expressed by the speech bubble "I will keep helping you". For Ranico 21, a future for humanity is only possible through a long-term relationship with the more economically privileged helping those in need.

One aspect to highlight is that Ranico 21 drew two White men carrying out the conversation on social justice. We know that Ranico 21 is not a White male; however, the poor, old man and the rich man were drawn as such. Though all the colors were available for Ranico 21 to use, her image of wealth is a White male with light red hair, a characteristic that none of the children have nor do their communities typically share. At the same time, the

Figure 7. *Tomás' Dream World*

Mira te doy este dinero para tus hijos para que les compres comida. Te voy a seguir ayudando
[Look, let me give you this money for your children so you can buy them food. I will keep helping you.]

Gracias, señor. Ojalá todos los ricos fueran así.
[Thank you, sir. I wish all rich people were like this.]

"All human beings should help each other regardless of color or social status. We are all children of *Dios*."

Figure 8. *Ranico 21's Dream World*

poor man was older than the rich man, and he also carried out a heterosexual male identity as a father who had children to feed. We noted the importance of representation through visuals or written words on what the poor and rich look like, as well as the causes of poverty in a country like Colombia. As Ranico 21 and all the children in this study grow older, social representations will continue to shape how they perceive race, gender, ability, age, and other social constructs and whether they will see the connection between discrimination and systemic oppression.

Just as certain gender and race stereotypes were perpetuated in the children's drawings, they were also challenged and negotiated. For example, Sara's dream world (Figure 9) showed girls and boys engaging in different activities together.

In the first panel of the drawing, a White boy and a Black boy are going to the clothing store, an activity often associated with femininity. In the second panel, two White girls and one Black girl are smiling together, all of which are the same height. In the third panel, one Black and one White person are playing soccer, but the gender was not made explicit. The fourth panel has integrated White and Black men and women waiting at the bank. In the fifth and sixth panels, Sara chose not to show any faces, but their hands were playing with a hair comb, hair tie, and dolls. As with the other participants, equity was represented by the integration of Black and White people. In the panels where Sara attempted to represent gender, the girls and boys were separated. Nevertheless, boys and girls were carrying out activities that challenged gender stereotypes.

Spirituality is a strength that both male and female children employ in times of hardship and comforting others. Stereotypes that label women as weak, fragile, and soft, and men as strong, brave, and athletic are common in Colombia. However, spirituality

Figure 9. *Sara's Dream World*

is a source of strength, especially for women during difficult times. Angela Lederach (2018) conducted an ethnography in Colombia with the Youth Peace Provokers of the Alta Montaña. She found that their experiences in the aftermath of decades of war were gendered. She wrote, "How young people navigate, resist and mobilize within the complex landscape of armed conflict shapes their identities, roles and approaches to peace in the aftermath" (pp. 200-201). What this means for our context and the study results is that how children perceive spirituality and gender will also shape their identities as peacemakers and spiritual activists. Hence, a connection to one's spirituality fosters a sense of activism and leadership when partaking in social justice; thereby, encouraging young girls and boys to become peacemakers.

Conclusion

Children bring their spirituality as making sense of the world and coping through difficult times. Their spirituality was connected to their emotions, hope for the future, empathy, and even peacebuilding. Though the children attended a religious institution, they did not discuss religious beliefs or traditions. Rather, they tapped into their spirituality by mentioning God as a higher power in times of need. Furthermore, they saw God as the creator of all beings, which justified their belief that we were made differently but equal in God's love. Hence, the children's notions of equity were connected to their belief that God created us.

During difficult situations, the children used positive language to uplift their readers. They imagine three dimensions: their reality, the imagined reality of the other, and a spiritual plane that protected and guided them both. The children understood that their

readers were in pain. Without diminishing their tribulations, they used positive language to aid in the healing process. Hope was another aspect that emerged from the children's artwork, messages, and poems. Hope was visible in their belief that better days would come. Children made language choices to use future tenses to show a certainty that God would protect and heal the other. Finally, the children's representations of race and gender demonstrated their understanding of spirituality and social justice as a gendered experience. For the children, equity was shown through drawings of White and Black children of equal height sharing space. In another drawing, the child's future world was White and male. In another, gender roles were negotiated. When we think of spirituality as a source of power, children can re-imagine a world where strength is no longer a masculine characteristic. For BIPOC children, especially young girls defining their role as peacemakers in the Colombian context, how children see themselves in terms of spirituality will affect how they perform their activism.

We invite language educators interested in creating spaces to listen to students' spiritual voices to remember that there is no singular way to practice feminist pedagogy. Students' languages, needs, interests, and local contexts should always come first. Additionally, teachers should get comfortable with self-reflection. They can keep a journal to explore their positionalities and reflect on their positions of power in the classroom. Applying the six pillars of feminist pedagogy, or some variation of the pillars, to make a complete classroom reformation becomes necessary. We believe that changing one aspect without considering the classroom layout, who gets to participate, what is being challenged in the curriculum, or even who is invited to speak will not create a place for children to share their true selves. Lastly, we request that language educators and researchers bring spirituality to humanize ourselves and our students into the conversation. For decades, we have combated deficit lenses with participatory action research, narrative inquiry, critical discourse analysis, and more. However, little attention has been given to children's spiritual activism. In our nation which has suffered tremendously from social injustice and intergenerational trauma, children remind us to look inward to begin the healing process.

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Inner Speech and Speed Reading: An Analysis of Written Texts Internalization

Habla Interna y Lectura Rápida: Un Análisis de la Internalización de Textos Escritos

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Abstract

Silent reading frequently entails engaging the "inner voice," a phenomenon in which individuals subvocally articulate words in their minds. This inner voice is understood to stem from the internalization process, wherein external verbal speech transitions into internal dialogue. However, the mechanisms through which foreign language learners internalize written content, particularly in a speed-reading framework, remain under-explored due to the inherent difficulties in observing such a process. To shed light on this, a qualitative study was carried out; it employed journals and the recall technique to examine the initial stages of internalization of written text by foreign language learners within a speed-reading program. This program aims to enhance the pace and comprehension of reading English texts. The study reveals that learners start to internalize the written language through a series of inner speech uses such as subvocalization, literal translation, repetition, fluent reading, and the formation of mental imagery associations with the language. The findings further indicate that, as learners advance in the speed-reading course, their mental translation efforts become more subconscious, facilitating the

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transition to using inner speech as a cognitive tool through associations with mental images. This shift may play a crucial role in the efficiency and efficacy of acquiring reading skills in a foreign language.

Keywords: foreign language, inner speech, internalization, speed reading

Resumen

La lectura silenciosa a menudo implica involucrar la "voz interior", un fenómeno en el que los individuos articulan palabras sub-vocalmente en sus mentes. Se entiende que esta voz interior proviene del proceso de internalización, en el que el habla verbal externa se transforma en diálogo interno. Sin embargo, los mecanismos a través de los cuales los aprendices de un idioma extranjero internalizan el contenido escrito, especialmente en un marco de lectura rápida, permanecen poco explorados debido a las dificultades inherentes en observar dicho proceso. Para arrojar luz sobre esto, se llevó a cabo una investigación cualitativa en la que se utilizó diarios y la técnica de recuerdo para examinar las etapas iniciales de la internalización de textos escritos por aprendices de un idioma extranjero dentro de un programa de lectura rápida. Este programa tuvo como objetivo mejorar el ritmo y la comprensión de la lectura de textos en inglés. El estudio revela que los aprendices comienzan a internalizar el lenguaje escrito a través de una serie de usos del habla interna: subvocalización, traducción literal, repetición, lectura fluida y la formación de asociaciones de imágenes mentales con el lenguaje. Los hallazgos indican además que, a medida que los aprendices avanzan en el curso de lectura rápida, sus esfuerzos de traducción mental se vuelven más subconscientes, posiblemente facilitando la transición al uso del habla interna como herramienta cognitiva, predominantemente a través de asociaciones con imágenes mentales. Este cambio puede desempeñar un papel crucial en la eficiencia y eficacia de la adquisición de habilidades de lectura en un idioma extranjero.

Palabras clave: lengua extranjera, discurso interno, interiorización, lectura rápida

Introduction

Inner speech is a culturally and socially constructed psychological tool that mediates and supports thought. Inner speech has its origin in the interpersonal sphere of social language. Children internalize this social language until it becomes a private discourse, a thinking tool (Guerrero, 2005). The development of the capacity to "think words" in one's native language begins with the incorporation of social conversation into children's cognitive processes, first evident in their private speech and later in their silent inner language (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 230). However, the process through which adults cultivate this ability in a foreign or second language (hereafter L2) by reading texts in that language remains a topic of inquiry. This paper discusses how students of English as a foreign language use inner speech and start internalizing the L2 in a speed-reading program. Studying the development of inner speech during L2 reading offers valuable insights into the process of acquiring an L2. This is because learning an L2 involves internalizing the social language of that L2 into one's inner speech (Lantolf, 2003).

Research in cognitive studies has demonstrated that inner speech, characterized by distinct phonetics, plays a crucial role in silent reading, enabling individuals to generate auditory images of the text (Kurby et al., 2009; Petkov & Belin, 2013). This internal language can mimic the nuances of different voices (Alexander & Nygaard, 2008), including the reader's own (Filik & Barber, 2011), and varies in vividness based on the narrative style (Yao et al., 2011). Moreover, inner speech serves as a silent rehearsal mechanism, enhancing comprehension (Baddeley et al., 1975), memory retention (Pollatsek et al., 1992), vocabulary acquisition (Baddeley et al., 1998), and the interpretation of complex texts (Baddeley & Lewis, 1981).

Research on inner speech in the context of L2 reading suggests that this internal dialogue plays a critical role in the semantic processing of L2 words, helping learners understand and interpret the meanings of words more effectively (Segalowitz & Hébert, 1990). Additionally, the extent and nature of inner speech are linked to the reader's proficiency in the L2, with more proficient individuals potentially engaging in more sophisticated internal dialogue (Nassaji & Geva, 1999). Despite this, even learners who have reached an advanced proficiency level in their L2 studies continue to depend on phonological processing—the mental manipulation of sounds—to comprehend texts. This reliance on phonological aspects indicates that the sound structure of language remains a crucial component of reading comprehension across different levels of language mastery (Kato, 2009).

Other studies based on the sociocultural perspective (Ehrich, 2006; García et al., 2020; Guerrero, 2004; Sokolov, 1972) have identified the transformations and uses of inner speech in reading. Researchers have explained that the inner voice while reading might become shorter for simple texts and longer for complex ones (Ehrich, 2006; Sokolov, 1972). This inner voice is essential for understanding texts and helping remember them (Sokolov, 1972). Additionally, this inner speech can act as a spontaneous mental practice after reading, which is a sign of learning an L2 (McQuillan & Rodrigo, 1995). The inner speech also plays a role in processing written information in an L2, often through translation (Upton & Lee-Thompson, 2001). When learning a new language, this internal voice is initially used to repeat words quietly, comprehend the new language, and form connections (García et al., 2020; Guerrero, 2004).

While numerous studies have advanced the understanding of inner speech during silent reading, the specific ways in which foreign language learners engage in internal dialogue while assimilating L2 written material remain ambiguous. Addressing this gap, this study aims to elucidate the uses of inner speech in reading L2 texts and how L2 beginners internalize written language through a speed-reading program. Uncovering these mechanisms is vital as it could transform teaching methodologies about reading, enhance language acquisition strategies, and improve the effectiveness of L2 learning. By understanding the intricacies

of internal discourse in L2 reading, educators can develop more targeted interventions to support language proficiency and fluency.

Theoretical Framework

Inner Speech

Inner speech has been understood from two perspectives: cognitive and cultural. From a cognitive viewpoint, inner speech is the essential mechanism for the phonological loop, an active and interactive memory process in the form of auditory images –listening to sounds in mind– and articulatory rehearsal –speaking words silently (Guerrero, 2018). From a sociocultural perspective, inner speech is a unique psychological phenomenon: a living process of the birth of thought in the word (Vygotsky, 1986). Vygotsky (1986) supposed that thought was reconstructed and modified by becoming a speech. Therefore, thought was not expressed but was realized in words. From this angle, inner speech is not just a cognitive tool but also a cultural phenomenon, deeply intertwined with the individual's social environment.

This sociocultural viewpoint provides a foundational context for understanding the internalization process of a language, which Vygotsky (1986) delineated in a three-level model as progressing from social speech through private language to inner speech. Based on Vygotsky's ideas about the internalization process, Fernyhough (2004) proposed a four-level model extension. Fernyhough's model starts with external dialogue, continues with private speech, then expands internal discourse, and finally, condenses inner speech.

Similarly, based on L2-inner speech research, Guerrero (2009) proposed that the internalization of social language in L2 develops in four stages: pre-intellectual, private speech, early inner speech, and intellectual. In the pre-intellectual stage, the primary use of inner speech is reduced to basic communicative purposes; it does not involve the fusion of thought and L2 at the level of inner speech. Reading and writing are diminished to decoding the written and oral text using translation to achieve a minimum understanding. The next stage, private speech, is characterized by audible, self-directed, sub-vocal (silent) speech. Private speech turns social discourse into L2 and forms an internal mental plane mediated by the L2. The following stage is the early inner speech; however, it is not observable; Guerrero (2009) states that a gradual decrease in L1 mediation can occur in this stage due to the increasing use of L2 as a tool for thinking. Finally, in the intellectual stage, learners can carry out a sustained intellectual activity in L2. Guerrero (2009) assures that some developments must have occurred to reach this stage. Advances include ample internalization of L2 in grammar, lexicon, phonology, semantics, and a conceptual change involving grammatical and lexical concepts.

Speed Reading and L2

Becoming a fluent reader implies enhancing the ability to read a text at an appropriate pace, with good comprehension. To become fluent means to develop "the ability to read a text quickly, smoothly, effortlessly and automatically, with little attention to the mechanics of reading such as decoding" (Meyer, 1999, p. 284). Language processing in reading must be automatic so that the slightest attention or cognitive ability is not required (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). By automatically recognizing words, readers can use their finite mental resources on one essential reading task: comprehension.

Different teaching techniques to improve reading fluency in L2 consider the previous crucial findings about reading; among them are repeated reading, extensive reading, and speed reading. Speed reading –also called timed reading– implies that learners read an L2 text under time pressure to improve fluency at an optimal speed with comprehension. In a typical timed-reading program, readers read several texts with high-frequency words, repeated vocabulary, and a specified length. By practicing speed reading with multiple texts over time, readers recognize words more quickly, giving them time to focus on comprehension and increasing speed. Numerous studies of speed-reading programs have shown these positive results (e.g., Armagan & Genc, 2017; Chang, 2010; Debbabi et al., 2019; Macalister, 2010; Nation & Tran, 2014; Robson, 2019; Tran, 2012).

Inner Speech and Speed Reading

Research on the interplay between inner speech and speed reading has uncovered significant implications for how individuals understand and teach L2 reading. One of the pioneering observations was made by Huey (1968) who suggested that, during speed reading, readers grasp the text's meanings through visual cues alone, except for crucial parts that need concise inner speech for better understanding. Sokolov (1972) added that while simple texts require minimal inner speech, complex ones demand a more elaborate internal dialogue for comprehension. More recently, Zhou and Christianson (2016) found that auditory perceptual simulation during silent reading can increase reading speed and comprehension; finally, Gagl et al. (2018) observed that the rate of eye movements during reading aligns with speech rhythm, further suggesting a connection between inner speech and reading speed, indicating that the internal vocalization might pace reading.

Unlike previous research, the promoters of the L1 speed reading claimed that, through training, fast readers could increase speed by inhibiting mental sub-vocalization. According to L1 speed reading proponents, inner speech is a habit that stems from the fact that one learns to read aloud before beginning to read silently. For L1 speed reading proponents, inner speech is an obstacle to reading speed (Rayner et al., 2016). Thanks to studies on mental sub-vocalization from the cognitive paradigm, today's inner speech plays a vital role in word

identification and understanding during silent reading (Leinenger, 2014). Rayner et al. (2016) affirm that even people who read sentences with the *rapid serial visual presentation* (RSVP) at 720 words per minute generate mental representations based on the sounds of words.

By contrast, speed-reading programs in L2 seek to have students read at an average speed of 250 to 300 words per minute. Consider the scenario where L2 students read too slowly, for example, at a rate of fewer than 100 words per minute. In this case, students will have forgotten what the passage says at the top of a page when they reach the end of the text (Nation, 2005). Therefore, the faster an L2 student reads, the more effective and enjoyable the L2 reading experience will be (Quinn et al., 2007).

Methodology

This paper presents the findings of a qualitative study that collected information during an academic year from 15 students who were between 18 and 23 years old. The 15 students' native language was Spanish. All these students had an A1 proficiency level in English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001). They were enrolled at a public university in the southwest of Colombia and came from various socioeconomic strata and places of origin within the region. The teacher-researcher used diaries and the recall technique to determine what students could say about their inner speech in a series of speed-reading activities. Students kept a journal to describe any form of internal thought language that occurred while reading. The book used for the reading activity was *Reading for Speed and Fluency* by Nation and Malarcher (2007), Book 1, which contains 300-word long passages to practice speed reading. This book was designed to enhance speed reading skills. Its 300-word-long passages offer a consistent and controlled length that facilitates the measurement and comparison of reading speeds and comprehension levels.

The timed reading activity lasted about 12 minutes. Students performed this activity at the beginning of every session (two sessions per week). In each speed-reading activity, the teacher-researcher asked all students to read at the same time. After students finished reading, each one raised their hand and checked the time the teacher-researcher had pointed on the board. Each student noted the time and answered the five comprehension questions on the back of the reading text. Once the reading activity finished, students checked the answers, looked at the reading chart, and entered their time and comprehension scores on the graph. As soon as the entire speed-reading activity finished, students wrote their retrospective accounts about the inner speech they experienced during the speed-reading exercise in their journals.

Students received directions on how to keep a diary in line with Curtis and Bailey (2007). They suggest that journals contain factual records and interpretations, evidence for statements, and detailed chronological order entries. Besides, diaries must summarize the class information and L1 use; students should have reasonable time limits for making diary entries. Additionally, the directions included the following definition of inner speech: "Inner speech is any language that occurs in your mind and is not spoken aloud. Inner speech may include sounds, words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, and even conversations in English" (Guerrero, 2004, p. 93).

The teacher-researcher regularly reviewed the diaries to monitor students' reflections and progress in speed reading. Whenever entries indicated unclear or complex experiences, the teacher-researcher employed the recall technique. This involved discussing diary entries with students and prompting them to elaborate on their recorded observations. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of students' inner speech processes, providing valuable insights into their learning experiences. An example of a diary entry, translated from Spanish into English, in which the recall technique was used, is:

Diary entry:

When reading "The Library of the Future," I found I had many known words, so while I was reading them, I translated them in my mind into Spanish. However, at the same time, I did not understand the complete sentence, the context, or the meaning; that is why I read the complete sentence again, while that was happening the words that I did not know I vocalized them in a low voice several times, but in English without knowing exactly how it would be its pronunciation, then I made a mixture in my mind in repeating the words in English that I did not know and when I got to what I knew I would simply translate them. P13

Researcher's question:

Could you please monitor in the following speed-reading activity if you translate in your mind what you know and sub-vocalize what you do not know as you claim happened with this reading?

Participant's replay:

For this occasion, the speed reading "Changing Books" facilitated my comprehension, fluency (in terms of reading in English), pronunciation, and translation of most of the words, and the few that I did not know, I was able to relate them or make sense of them in some way. While I was reading, I was doing it in English, focusing on the pronunciation, but at the same time, in my mind, I was translating it into Spanish. It also happened a lot that while I was reading in English, I did it in a spoken mental way; likewise, I repeated some sentences, the first time I read in English and then in Spanish mentally in this way I stored and memorized the writing of the words (an adequate form of grammar) and on the other hand, I retain its meaning. P13

The teacher-researcher communicated to students the objective of collecting data on their inner language during speed-reading exercises, emphasizing the contribution to understanding reading processes. Students were informed about the research scope, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. They expressed their willingness to participate and provided informed consent, ensuring that the study adhered to ethical standards in educational research, particularly about voluntary participation and data protection.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

We carried out a direct content analysis and identified themes considering the following criteria developed by Guerrero (2004) and replicated by García et al. (2020): (1) Topics refer to inner speech, not outer speech. Inner speech is a disguised language behavior; it is a "hidden verbalization" (Sokolov 1972, p. 1), including cases of sub-vocal speech in which students articulate language in low or inaudible vocalization. (2) A topic is not what the study participants said or wrote openly, but what students said to themselves silently while reading a text. (3) A topic can describe any stretch of internally verbalized language, including isolated or grouped sounds, words, phrases, sentences, or conversations. (5) Topics can appear in the following verbal contexts: Statements that use verbs that denote mental operations as *I thought, remembered, imagined, saw (in my mind)* and statements using words like *in my mind, in my head, intern, internally.* (6) Topics are comments on specific occurrences (as opposed to generalizations) of inner speech. Specific events are events or specific instances in which students experience inner speech.

Table 1 presents the uses of inner speech and the frequencies of the themes and categories reported by participants in the speed-reading activity. The data, derived from participants' spoken reflections and comments collected immediately after the speed-reading sessions, indicate that inner speech in speed reading primarily facilitates text comprehension (60%), internal language reproduction (30.5%), association of language with mental images (7.5%), and self-regulation during reading (2%). These results are congruent with previous findings (e.g., García et al., 2020).

Table 2 below shows the classification of categories of internal discourse from the most frequent to the least frequent, according to participants' reports. Students use inner speech very frequently during speed reading to vocalize in English (68 cases), translate word by word (67 cases), read fluently (36 cases), and relate language to context (23 cases). Students use internal language less often to imagine (14 cases), omit words or phrases (11 cases), repeat unknown words or parts of the text (10 cases), and reread words or sentences (10 cases). Finally, students use less inner speech to self-regulate (5 cases), associate language

with mental images (5 cases), deduce (4 cases), and listen or reproduce words insistently in silence (2 cases).

Table 1. *Inner Speech Use: Frequency of Categories by Participants*

Inner speechTheme/ Categories	Number of cases per participant															Total	
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15	#	%
Language internal reproduction																78	30.5
Vocalize	2	7	2	4	3	3	2	1	2	2	6	3	9	12	10	68	26.6
Repeat	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	0	10	3.9
Message comprehension																153	60
Translate	1	2	3	5	3	5	4	8	4	4	5	1	3	8	11	67	26.2
Reread	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	10	3.9
Relate	1	0	0	7	2	1	2	4	1	0	3	0	1	1	0	23	9
Omit	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	0	2	1	11	4.3
Deduce	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	1.6
Playback	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0.8
Read fluently	0	2	10	2	0	0	4	0	0	1	2	7	5	1	2	36	14.2
Association with mental images																19	7.5
Imagine	0	2	5	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	14	5.5
Associate	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2
Self-regulation	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5	2
Totals	8	15	27	18	10	10	18	16	8	10	19	18	26	27	25	255	100

Table 2. *Classification of Categories of Internal Speech According to the Frequency of Use Reported by the Study Participants*

Category	Description	# Students	Cases
Vocalize	Sub-vocalize or vocalize mentally the text in English	15	68
Translate	Use the L1 to understand the L2 language	15	67
Read fluently	Feel as if reading a text written in L1	10	36
Relate	Relate words or phrases with context	10	23
Imagine	Represent mentally what the author describes	5	14

Category	Description	# Students	Cases
Omit	Omit words or phrases to continue reading	8	11
Repeat	Repeat to fix or hold language in memory and imitate pronunciation	6	10
Reread	Read again to understand the text message	8	10
Self-regulate	Use inner speech to regulate behavior while reading	2	5
Associate	Make associations with a visual image or with a concrete referent	2	5
Deduce	Deduce and improvise something mentally to understand	3	4
Playback	Listen or reproduce words insistently in silence	2	2

The most frequent uses of inner speech in speed reading used by all participants were to vocalize in English (26.6%) and translate to understand the text's message (26.3%). From these uses, it is inferred that most students are in a pre-intellectual stage in their internalization process, according to Guerrero (2009). At this stage, students reproduce language internally as it appears in the written text because they have not internalized it. There is still no language transformation at the syntactic, lexical, and semantic level that allows inferring that thought is mediated by L2 (Guerrero, 2009). Students at this stage are immersed in translation to mediate their thinking and achieve a minimal understanding of the written text. For example, one participant says:

> I started to read English in my mind and later tried to translate. When it was difficult for me to understand the context, I related it to a word, and when I understood the meaning, I read mentally in Spanish. P4.

As seen, thinking is fully mediated by L1. Students' dependence on mental translation as a recurrent use of their inner discourse confirms that the internalization of L2 is just beginning. The translation fulfills specific functions related to understanding the text message. Students use mental translation to keep meaning in memory, and integrate and assimilate it (Kern, 1994). A participant says: *"In this reading, I got a little more confused with the vocabulary, I tried to read next, but many words truncated me, and I had to read in parts in Spanish and mentally join the meanings"* P2. Comprehension difficulties without translating are due to a lack of automatization in word recognition and short-term memory storage limitations. Therefore, using L1 to read L2 texts mentally helps the reader decode more words and automatically synthesize semantic content. Words in L1 become familiar and can be stored faster and more efficiently than words in L2 that are unknown and new. Once the vocabulary is in L1, students can combine it into meaningful propositions through the synthesis process, then, understanding is achieved (Kern, 1994). In this sense, the conflict students experience

when vocalizing in English and trying to understand the message of the untranslated text is perceptible. This struggle may be particularly evident given that their English proficiency is at the A1 proficiency level, which could limit their ability to integrate and understand the language seamlessly:

> In reading, there are more words that I already understand; I try to do it in English, but when I find new words, I lose "the thread," and I start to do it in Spanish, perhaps, that's why I can't reduce the time; generally, those parts I have to skip them and try not to lose the idea of the text. P10

Using inner speech to vocalize and subvocalize in English (and Spanish) all or parts of the text during speed reading indicates that most students are also going through the stage of private speech. Fernyhough (2004) considers that private speech is one of the first phases that external language goes through to become internal discourse. The private expression transforms social speech inward into L2, contributing to forming an inner mental plane mediated by L2 (Guerrero, 2009). Sokolov (1972) considers that the mental articulation of words when reading a text in a foreign language by beginning students is essential to remember and understand the message of a text. The following is an example in which a participant states how the rapid vocalization of the written L2 text causes pronunciation and comprehension problems in L2 reading:

> In this case, I tried to pronounce the reading quickly as long as it allowed me to ignore my inner voice. Then it happens that the more I want to "dodge" my internal voice, the more confused in the pronunciation I get, and even more, it makes me forget the meanings of the words that I knew completely before starting it ... P1

Using inner speech as fluent reading (14.2%) suggests that some participants are in the third stage of internalizing a language: the early stages of inner speech. Fernyhough (2004) calls this stage expanded inner speech because private speech is completely internalized and concealed. However, even so, it manifests itself as a process in which one speaks silently to oneself. For Guerrero (2009), the early inner discourse is a transitory stage between audible private speech and silent self-directed speech, characterized by a decrease in the role of L1 as a mediator. Due to the constant practice of speed reading, there is less dependence on L1 as word-by-word translation. A participant states that: *"With the reading, I felt quite comfortable, while I was doing it, I felt as if it were in Spanish because I read quite quickly…."* P3. Some studies on mental translation in L2 reading have reported that dependence on L1 as the language of thought decreases as competence in L2 increases (e.g., Upton, 1998; Upton & Lee-Thompson, 2001). Falla-Wood (2018), for example, states that the frequent use of mental translation makes it automatic, and it becomes a mental translation product that becomes procedural knowledge, stored in the long-term memory.

From the students' reports, it is inferred that participants use an expanded inner speech by involving the internal articulation of the read language. Therefore, language preserves the social acoustic properties, which indicates a partial syntactic and semantic transformation. Fernyhough (2004) considers that in this stage of expanded inner speech, the semantic transformations of language described by Vygotsky (1986) such as the predominance of meaning over meaning, agglutination, and infusion of meaning have not yet been entirely carried out. However, internal speech as imagination and associations with mental images (7.5%) suggests that a few students in the study may be initiating their intellectual stage in the L2 internalization process. For Guerrero (2009), the intellectual stage indicates the ability to think in L2. For Fernyhough (2004), condensed internal speech means students have carried out the syntactic and semantic transformations of the language, ensuring the possibility of "thinking in pure meanings" (Fernyhough, 2004, p. 55). Likewise, Sokolov (1972) affirms that linguistic, synthetic, and contextual language aspects must integrate a single meaning in the reader's consciousness to understand a written text directly. According to Sokolov (1972), these semantic generalizations can evoke graphic images carrying a general meaning. A participant says, for example:

> The moment I read in English directly, well it is not all the time, organically the image of the action is reflected because certain words are familiar, and I automatically understand what is happening…. P12

Using inner speech to imagine and make associations with mental images involves employing inner speech to mediate thought in at least some parts of the text. Abbreviated inner speech becomes a storage mechanism that condenses text fragments into units of meaning when words are easy to understand (Ehrich, 2006). In this sense, inner speech is reduced; that is, it loses its acoustic property, passing to condensed mental discourse. Internal speech undergoes a radical rearrangement of the entire verbal structure of mental operations. Reasoning also develops without inner language, becoming a very abbreviated and generalized code, a language of "semantic complexes," verbal statements sometimes combined with graphic images (Sokolov, 1972, p. 71). A student says:

> While I was reading, I began to remember various songs by Michael Jackson, and some by Elvis, as they are some of the favorite singers of my father and my brother, being quite easy to understand I finished it quite quickly, while I agreed with what presented in the text because, as such, there is only one king of rock and roll, and it cannot be other than Elvis. P3

The percentages of frequencies indicate how participants use inner speech in L2 reading. The analysis, nevertheless, should not neglect the fact that lying behind the total figures, there are individuals with peculiar behaviors.

Conclusions

The study of inner speech in speed reading texts in L2 over two semesters suggests that beginning English learners use inner speech in various mental operations related to the reading process. The internal discourse is involved in the mental reproduction of language, understanding text messages, association with mental images, and self-regulation. Inner speech in reading L2 texts is often used to sub-vocalize, mentally vocalize in English, and translate word by word. Examples of L2 inner speech also occur to a considerable degree for reading fluently, relating words to context, imagining, omitting, repeating, and re-reading. Less frequent is employing inner speech to self-regulate, make mental associations, deduce, and listen/reproduce words in silence insistently. The use and frequencies of inner speech may vary among students. These transformations may depend significantly on the level of L2 proficiency and a multiplicity of factors (cultural environment, social interactions, historical context, individual characteristics, socioeconomic status, etc.) that make up an individual's "social development situation" (Vygotsky & Rieber, 1998, p. 198).

Regarding the internalization of written language in L2 through speed reading, this study suggests that students of an L2 can experience different phases in their reading process (Fernyhough, 2004; Guerrero, 2009). Inner speech evolves from an expanded form to a condensed form. The uses of inner speech suggest that beginning students start their internalization process with the prelinguistic and private speech phases. Inner speech is frequently used to sub-vocalize, mentally vocalize in English, and translate word by word. In this phase, students also use inner speech to reread, repeat, omit, and associate words with the context, thus achieving a fragmented understanding of the text. In the next phase, early stages of internal speech (Guerrero, 2009) or expanded speech (Fernyhough, 2004), students experience fluent reading due to the effortless translation that facilitates the integration of the meaning of the text. In this phase, mental translation is starting to be automatized. Students experience a gradual decrease in L1 mediation due to the transition to unconscious and automatic processes. Finally, some students experience the intellectual phase (Guerrero, 2009) or condensed speech (Fernyhough, 2004) as visual perceptual simulations. These visual simulations are an automatic and integral part of silent reading indicative of understanding a text (Perrone-Bertolotti et al., 2014) and referred to by Fernyhough (2004) as experimenting with "fragmented and condensed series of verbal images" (p. 54).

Internalization of L2 speech through speed reading is a continuous process. Using private speech, expanded inner language, and condensed internal discourse is always in play during the L2 reading. Therefore, beginning L2 learners should have opportunities to contact speed-reading texts to promote L2 inner speech development and reading fluency.

This approach, while beneficial, has its limitations, particularly for beginners at a lower proficiency level, such as A1. These students may find speed reading challenging which leads

to frustration or demotivation. Besides, the effectiveness of speed reading in fostering L2 inner speech can vary among individuals, influenced by factors like their previous reading habits or familiarity with L2 texts. Consequently, educators need to meticulously scaffold speed reading activities to match students' proficiency levels and learning preferences. This situation also underscores a potential research avenue exploring how varying L2 proficiency levels affect the efficacy of speed reading in inner speech development. Furthermore, educators are encouraged to incorporate complementary strategies such as interactive reading or multimodal inputs, catering to an array of learner needs and bolstering the internalization process.

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HOW

The Use of a Storyboard Platform to Enhance Reading Comprehension: A Pedagogical Experience with EFL Pre-Service Teachers

Uso de la Plataforma en Línea de Guion Gráfico para la Comprensión Lectora de Estudiantes de Pregrado: Una Experiencia Pedagógica

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Abstract

This study was based on an innovation project at the university level with English as a Foreign Language pre-service teachers. This experience was implemented with several language levels in different academic periods of the programme. The project aimed to apply a technological tool such as

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StoryboardThat, in contrast to the traditional pen-on-paper test, so that students could develop a zest for reading, allowing them to use it themselves and apply it in their teaching practices. After learning how to use the platform, they worked using a fiction novel assigned. In groups, they created three to six scenes summarizing one chapter and presented it to their peers. They stated that the project helped them improve their reading skills and inspired them to read more and use other similar platforms as an alternative in their future teaching practice. This pedagogical experience demonstrates that teachers foster a more positive attitude toward reading by integrating creativity into reading comprehension; it also equips pre-service teachers with practical tools and collaborative techniques they can apply in their future EFL teaching practice.

Keywords: EFL, pre-service teachers, reading comprehension, StoryboardThat platform

Resumen

Este estudio se basa en un proyecto de innovación pedagógica realizado a nivel universitario con futuros profesores de inglés. Esta experiencia se implementó en distintos niveles y en distintos semestres del programa. El objetivo del proyecto era implementar una herramienta tecnológica como StoyboardThat, en contraste con las pruebas tradicionales de comprensión lectora escritas en lápiz y papel, de manera que los estudiantes pudieran desarrollar entusiasmo por la lectura, además de darles la oportunidad no solo de usarla ellos mismos, sino de aplicarla en sus propias prácticas docentes. Los estudiantes, previa capacitación en el uso de la plataforma, utilizaron una novela asignada para crear, en grupos, de tres a seis escenas de un capítulo en la plataforma y que resumiera el capítulo para posteriormente presentarlo a sus compañeros. Los estudiantes expresaron que el proyecto no solamente les ayudó a mejorar sus habilidades de lectura comprensiva, sino que también los motivó a leer más frecuentemente y utilizar otras plataformas similares como una opción en su futuro desempeño docente. Esta experiencia pedagógica demuestra que se fomenta una actitud más positiva hacia la lectura al integrar creatividad en la comprensión lectora, y que también proporciona a los futuros profesores herramientas prácticas y estrategias colaborativas que luego implementarán en sus futuras clases como profesores de inglés.

Palabras clave: EFL, comprensión lectora, plataforma StoryboardThat, estudiantes en práctica

Introduction

Reading comprehension as an active process of understanding and constructing meaning is by far the most important skill to embark on any career at the university level. This is especially relevant for students of English language teaching undergraduate programmes since reading skills will not only help them succeed in their professional training, but they will also have the enormous responsibility to develop reading skills in their English language learners.,

Chilean school students have systematically ranked poorly in standardized national and international reading tests in their mother language (Spanish in this case): the latest OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) ranking released in

2019 places Chilean students within the 20 lowest scores among all OECD countries, so the challenge for future teachers to develop reading skills in English seems to be twice as difficult. Educational inequalities are related to the levels of literacy that students reach at the end of their school years.

That is why the search for reading strategies for future teachers to overcome their reading comprehension weaknesses is of paramount importance. They may learn ways to help their future students to become better readers. In their study, Granado and Puig (2014) start from the assumption that students' reading motivation and, thus, practice, depend largely on teachers' reading habits, which are thought to be emulated by students. If this were so, any effort to develop pre-service teachers' reading skills and enthusiasm would be worth the effort.

Among the various factors alluded to have undermined the taste for reading, technology has been the first to blame. Teachers and professors observe that students are increasingly reluctant to engage with books or long-form texts. Digital learners, surrounded by a constant stream of technological stimuli, often find reading novels, articles, or other texts dull and uninteresting by comparison. Therefore, reading a book and using a technological platform to create comics seem to reduce the gap between these competing interests. Incorporating ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) in higher education, particularly in pedagogical training, has modified undergraduates' profiles, making technology use part of the explicitly declared skills and abilities.

Another important factor that may prevent, especially adolescents, from the pleasure of reading, is that the main pursuit at their age is to build strong social ties with peers; thus, it is not surprising that spending time in solitary activities such as reading is often avoided and seen as a form of ostracism.

Active reading strategies allow students to work in small cooperative groups to carry out reading-related tasks which involve, as is the case of creating a graphic organizer such as a storyboard, exchanging reading strategies, collaboratively checking, and making sense of the context to visualize the scenes and put them into graphics. Visuals are by far the most powerful aspect of learning, especially among millennials. Graphic applications such as visual learning elements will enhance effectiveness in teaching and learning processes (Jandhyala, 2017). As Noordan et al. (2022) conclude in their review, the use of ICTs in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) on reading comprehension is a field that remains unexplored.

Literature Review

This innovation project has been carried out to ameliorate the lack of reading comprehension skills of English language teaching undergraduate students, and to engender

enthusiasm towards reading using the graphic organizer platform StoryboardThat. The rationale for using a digital storyboard platform for intensive reading comprehension of fiction novels is based on three criteria: (a) the cognitive advantages of graphic organizers, (b) the necessary incorporation of ICT in EFL teaching and learning, and (c) the socializing nature of Collaborative reading.

Varvel and Lindeman (2005) state that "storyboards are a means to graphically represent layout, organization, content, and linkages of information to create a conceptual idea of the information, location, meaning, and appearance" (p. 1). Therefore, using the abovementioned storyboard platform seems suitable because it not only develops what Varvel and Lindeman (2005) assure but also has the advantage of using technology essential in this 21st century. The storyboard used as a teaching and learning strategy should be considered useful to make students understand fiction texts. Moreover, it should be the basis for developing more analytical texts as learners start working with various reading skills such as skimming, summarizing, and increasing vocabulary (a must in EFL) among others.

The following sections will be structured around the rationale for using this platform, considering extant successful reading comprehension experiences for using graphic organizers, collaborative reading, technology, and active versus passive reading.

Graphic Organizers

Ausubel (1968), in his seminal work on meaningful learning, highlighted the importance of graphic organizers as a means of relating previous knowledge to new content visually and coherently to make learning meaningful. He divided advanced organizers into four types: Expository, Skimming, Graphic, and Narrative. The latter is a storytelling or story-mapping tool; in this way, it helps readers incorporate and retain new information by establishing visual arrays of the content of a narrative.

Concept mapping and other graphical tools have been vastly used and documented as effective tools in several subjects and skills. Specifically, in EFL reading comprehension, an experimental study (Öztürk, 2012) showed how, after a 12-week treatment, reading comprehension tasks using graphic organizers outperformed those that did not. This study was applied to 50 intermediate-level EFL learners, and the type of graphic organizers used were spider maps, fishbones, comparison and contrast, problem-solution, Venn diagrams, and storyboard, among others.

Although storyboards are not widely used as a reading strategy among EFL teachers, some enlightening experiences are worth mentioning. Bruce (2011) explains how storyboards in poetry and fiction can be compared with texts and films. Regarding fiction, chapter summaries, identification of story elements, and comparison of print and film interpretations

of a passage are described and shared with classmates. According to Bruce (2011), "The discussion that ensues is often a rich interchange of how they visualized the events, focusing on the surprising commonalities and variations of individual interpretations" (p. 81).

The effectiveness of a storyboard graphic organizer as a post-reading activity has also been reported and explained in a study carried out in an ESL class in a public school in North Carolina, United States (Molina-Naar, 2013). The participants, six-limited-proficient students, were given a pre and post-test to compare their results before and after using storyboarding apart from the student's portfolio and a teacher's journal. The reading assignment was a set of short stories that students read, analysed, and discussed before being trained and prompted to draw scenes in a storyboard layout. Molina-Naar (2013) points out that the sample is limited, and the findings are inconclusive. Nonetheless, the results were positive and showed an improvement in quantitative terms (all six students raised their scores in the post-test) and the students' motivation while working on the task. This was evident in their portfolios where they expressed their positive perception about using the storyboard. In this study, the advisability of applying this strategy for a longer period and of incorporating technology is stated as "The design of storyboards using computers might have a much more positive impact on the students as they could have the opportunity to increase their knowledge of technology and augment their motivation" (Molina-Naar, 2013, p. 164).

In a nutshell, apart from the clear benefits of using visuals to enhance reading comprehension, Bruce (2011) and Molina-Naar (2013) highlight its socializing and collaborative aspects.

Collaborative Reading

In EFL teaching, group work has always been encouraged mainly in developing speaking skills since oral production is an interactive and social activity. Additionally, task-based and project-based approaches involve group work for information searching, organizing data, and writing or producing a given outcome. Collaborative learning has been extensively researched and documented as an effective technique. Laal and Ghodsi (2011) summarized and categorized the benefits of collaborative learning into four major categories "social, psychological, academic, and assessment" (Laal & Ghodsi, 2011, p. 487). Among the academic benefits identified are critical thinking skills, students' involvement in learning, and academic result improvement.

However, up to date, in Chilean EFL classrooms, reading is still treated as a solitary endeavour and students are reluctant to spend their time reading. Most EFL reading work has focused on reading strategies such as activating previous knowledge, skimming and scanning, and reading for main ideas, among others. However, little has been researched specifically on collaborative reading in EFL classrooms.

Evidence of international research on the area is far from conclusive; however, an increased interest in tackling reading comprehension problems has emerged and moved towards more interactive ways of developing this skill. For instance, EFL learners in 11th grade in a Chilean school perceived that having collaborative activities in their reading classes motivated them to engage in the activity; learners with low reading skills benefited from those with higher reading skills (Lizana Miranda, 2017). Similarly, an Iranian study on the application of collaborative learning in reading tasks shows positive results, "Collaborative reading resulted in consistently and significantly higher scores than private reading for all four texts" (Momtaz & Garner, 2010, p. 2). This quasi-experimental study was applied to a control (private reading) and an experimental CL (collaborative learning) group, 18 students each. The independent sample T-Test that compared the pre and post-test revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group significantly. The strategies used spontaneously by the students in collaborative reading were "...brainstorming, summarizing, paraphrasing, meta-linguistic utterances, and interaction management utterances" (Momtaz & Garner, 2010, p. 8). The qualitative part of the study aimed at students' perception of the (CL) task and the researchers explain their answers in these terms: "A number of interviewees commented that collaborative reading provided them with an enjoyable and relaxed learning environment, thus leading to the removal of affective filters…" (Momtaz & Garner, 2010, p. 10). In the same line, Zoghi et al. (2010) conducted a mixed-method study in an Iranian University with 42 university students. Unlike the first-mentioned study, the quantitative results obtained from a dependent-sample T-test showed no significant improvement in students' scores on the reading pre and post-tests statistical analysis, the qualitative analysis, though, showed that 87% of students had a positive perception about this modified collaborative strategic reading (MCSR).

ICTs concerning Reading

Even though using ICTs in schools seems effective, this might just be a perception. A review of the Chilean EFL classroom use of ICTs showed that after 2016, studies have been steady, but the number of empirical research exploring this topic is still limited (Vega et al., 2023). According to Gubbels et al. (2020), using ICTs should be moderate as the availability of the ICT resource and its use have not shown a direct improvement relationship with (digital) reading comprehension, at least in the Dutch context. However, the results illustrate the advantages ICTs bring when used with moderation. There is still no consensus on whether ICTs enhance reading comprehension skills, but the literature agrees they do not harm such a skill. Maduabuchi and Emechebe (2016) state that ICTs and reading comprehension can help students in various ways. They mention the increase in the range of vocabulary building and usage as students have access to online dictionaries. They add that…" their students were

looking forward to their reading comprehension lessons showing growth in their students' learning process and promotion of meaningful learning among others" (p. 5).

In the present study, the main purpose is not only to enhance ICT skills but also, mainly, to use them as a tool to improve reading comprehension skills. 21st-century students were born with ICTs, it is part of their culture; therefore, teachers must use it for higher aims such as developing good readers, especially with students whose goal is to become teachers of English. Acuña-Torres et al. (2024) recommend training teachers to strengthen their pedagogical skills and digital abilities to enhance their teaching practice.

Active vs Passive Reading

Reading in the EFL classroom is an ability that starts being developed in elementary school in Chile, as stated in the English National Curriculum. It is most probable that teachers might resort to passive reading when working with this linguistic skill in ESL (English as a Second Language)/EFL because it brings various advantages. To start, it is something that students do in silence at school or home; thus, the teacher can use it for other tasks they might find more important. Additionally, when working or assessing the text given, teachers tend to use objective items such as true or false, multiple choice, matching, or fill-in-the-gap. These items are easy to check for the teacher; the problem is that they tend to make students read more superficially as the answers are in the text in one way or another. Tomitch (2000) argues that passive reading and assessment scarcely foster between-line reading; it does not open interaction with others, debating, or discussing the text. Moreover, the activity objectives are not challenging; needless to say, they do not motivate students. Thus, they make reading a dull activity.

In contrast, active reading will engage students, as they must interact with peers (pairs or groups). The "items" will transform into a real activity or task. The interaction that emerges while reading with someone results in active communication. Students can share opinions and argue their interpretation of the text linking this with their background, making reading a meaningful and social activity (Tomitch, 2000). Students can try to visualize what they are reading, ask questions to each other, agree, and disagree. In this way, the traditional passive reading transforms into active reading.

If going back some decades, Ausubel (1968), Davies (1995), and Grabe (1997) were already referring to this active reading and what it involves. These authors were already talking about different types of active reading with graphic organizers and the creation of diagrams, among others. Nowadays, various graphic organizers can help students improve their reading comprehension. Tomitch (2000) considers active reading tasks to foster critical thinking skills.

The Pedagogical Innovation

Context and Participants

This pedagogical innovation took place in the English Pedagogy Programme at Universidad Andrés Bello, Viña del Mar, and the participants belonged to cohort 2018. Figure 1 (below) shows their initial competencies to start university life in different skills in their mother tongue (Spanish). In written production and study habits, students met the expected standards. Nevertheless, their reading comprehension and reasoning results did not. Through the (AES) Accompaniment Programme for First-Year Students, the Education Faculty provided students with workshops to help them improve their weaknesses in their native language. This pedagogical innovation project aims at helping students enhance reading comprehension in the target language. The competences in reading comprehension, written production, and learning strategies EFL students had when entering the university are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

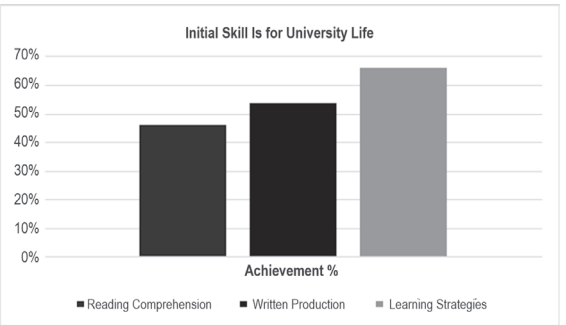

Figure 1. *Cohort 2018 Initial Skills for University Life*

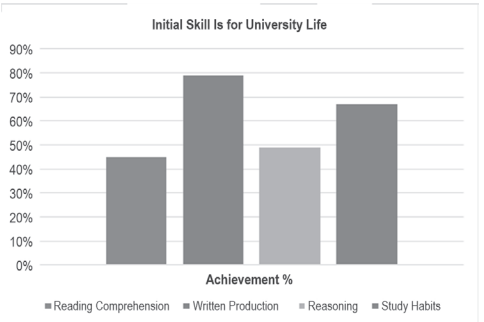

Figure 2. *Cohort 2019 Initial Skills for University Life*

Objectives

The general objective of this pedagogical intervention was to develop reading comprehension skills and vocabulary through a graphic organizer such as StoryboardThat. Besides, a specific objective aimed at exploring the students' perceptions of using StoryboardThat in their EFL classes.

Instruments

There are two instruments to collect information about this pedagogical experience: an open-ended questionnaire and a focus group. Both instruments collected data about students 'perception of using the graphic organizer, for their reading comprehension and vocabulary development, and to elicit whether they would incorporate it into their teaching practice.

Pedagogical Intervention

The implementation of StoryboardThat as a graphic organizer to enhance reading comprehension was in seven stages as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Description of the Steps Carried Out during the Project*

Steps	Description	Students´ task
1	Selection of novel	Agree on one novel
2	Assign chapters/parts of the story and a deadline for reading the text	Form groups and begin reading
3	Socialization of rubric	Agree on criteria used
4	Presentation of StoryboardThat	Familiarize yourself with the platform
5	Computer lab work	Work on the summary to select scenes
6	Presentation of storyboard	Present and discuss their chapter to the class using StoryboardThat as a visual aid
7	Feedback to students	The teacher and students participate in the feedback giving opinions about the task

The first stage consisted of choosing a novel to read according to the students' linguistic level and interests. The instructor would provide students with a list of texts for the learners to agree on the most interesting. In general terms, no one was eager to read a text that did not, in some way, attract their attention. In the second stage, students were divided into groups of three/four members and assigned a text chapter. The groups were formed randomly, so they had to share ideas and discuss their part of the story with students they did not usually work with.

Then, in the third stage, the rating scale (Likert Scale) was socialized with students (see Figure 3) to agree on the criteria for assessment. As a result, the following criteria were considered:

Figure 3. *Storyboard Likert Scale for Assessment*

Facultad de Educación y Ciencias Sociales
Carrera Pedagogía en Inglés
Language II – Reading Skill

UNIVERSIDAD ANDRES BELLO

STORYBOARD LIKERT SCALE
Intensive Reading "The Illustrated Man" by Ray Bradbury

Name _____ Date_____

Criteria	Excellent (7-6)	Good (5-4)	Fair (3-2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Delivery				
Clear, audible voice.				
Holds attention with the use of eye contact, seldom looking at notes.				
Makes no grammar or pronunciation mistakes (at level).				
Content				
Clearly explains the story with the help of the images.				
Explains the context, the climax, and resolution of the story.				
Provides relevant details of the chapter.				
Demonstrates full knowledge by answering questions.				
Graphics				
The storyboard complies with the layout and contains all the elements required.				
The storyboard's graphics explain and reinforce screen text and presentation.				
Graphics are coherent with the story background (setting, costumes, etc.).				
The storyboard has no misspellings or grammatical errors (at level).				
The storyboard scenes summarize the chapter's main ideas.				
Comments:				

The fourth step was introducing students to the StoryboardThat platform; they got familiar with all its tools. Students had to create three cells to retell the story of the chapter assigned. The platform allowed more cells, but the idea was to make students summarize the most important parts through scenes. Figure 4 shows an example of the cell format used.

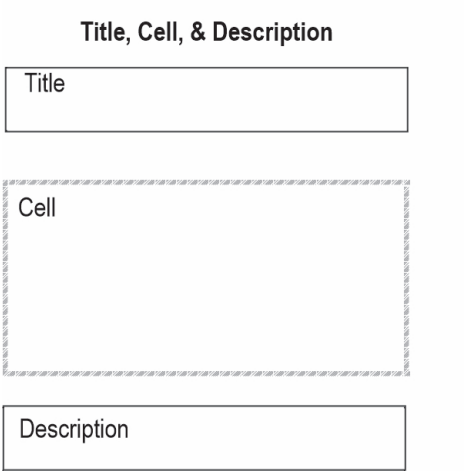

Figure 4. *Example of Format of the Scene Cells*

Having had sufficient time (one lesson) to learn the use of the platform, students started their task at the computer laboratory. Students had to read their text in advance to be ready to discuss and work on the storyboard with their peers.

There were three 90-minute lessons for students to work on the StoryboardThat platform. Once they finished, they presented the storyboard and explained each chapter based on the graphics displayed. Finally, the audience asked questions about the chapters presented. To finish the activity, feedback was given by both, the teacher and students.

Findings

The purpose of the intervention presented as an innovative project aimed at enhancing reading comprehension skills and developing a zest for reading by using the StoryBoardThat technological tool as a pedagogical experience with EFL pre-service teachers.

Student's perceptions regarding this experience are varied. From the open questionnaire, the five following categories emerged (Table 2): content skills, pedagogical activities, creativity, attitude, feelings, and process.

The content skill category considers developing reading strategies: summarizing, finding the main idea, focusing, comprehension, analysis, scanning, and retelling, which are the content knowledge developed within an EFL teacher formation programme.

The pedagogical activities category illustrates the pedagogical approach used during the intervention. These activities consider interactions within the learning experience, which foster students' engagement resulting in a dynamic classroom environment.

The creativity category refers to how students can depict their understanding of the chapter in a graphical way. Students could develop their designs in the platform generating novel and varied ideas graphically to represent their understanding of the reading texts.

The feelings category shows the emotional reactions the participants experienced during the intervention using the StoryboardThat technological tool. Most participants perceived the experiences as entertaining, while other students felt them boring.

Finally, the process category is defined as evaluating the experience and procedure involved in the intervention. The actions that took place during the experience using the platform as a tool in the collaborative reading strategy were considered useful, but time-consuming.

Table 2. *Categories and Sub-categories from Pre-service Teachers' Perspective.*

Categories	Views (subcategories)	Frequency
Content Skills	Summarizing	10
	Finding main idea	7
	Focusing	5
	Reading Comprehension	4
	Analysis	3
	Scanning	2
	Retelling	2
Pedagogical activity	Interactive	5
	Engaging	2
	Dynamic	1
Creativity	Creativity	18

Categories	Views (subcategories)	Frequency
Feelings	Entertaining	7
	Boring	4
	Platform dislike	2
Process	Useful/effective tool	16
	Time consuming	12
	Innovative	3
	Less time and effort	1

Frequency was added to each subcategory to illustrate the most common views pre-service teachers had from the categories that arose. They agree that summarizing and finding the main ideas are the content knowledge skills they mostly developed during the intervention. The most common pedagogical activity they thought they experienced during the intervention was the interaction with peers. The following excerpts from the most frequent sub-categories of each category are presented below. All excerpts are quoted as the students uttered them (some may contain syntactic or morphological mistakes).

Table 3. *Excerpts for the Sub-categories*

Subcategory	Students' Ideas in the Interviews
Summarizing	Student 1: "*Making a summary and if is too long, make a shorter summary to fit the information and important details into the storyboard.*" Student 2:" *I highlighted the more important things and then put them on the storyboard.*"
Finding Main Idea	Student 1: *"Finding the main ideas of each chapter, and discriminating the most important moments to present."* Student 2: *"I think it is a good method as we need to use our summarizing skills, discriminating the main ideas of the book and chapters."*
Interactive	Student 1: *"StoryboardThat is an interactive and fast way to develop a task, also, students have the chance to elaborate an artistic task so, they won't be that stressed about the task."* Student 2: "*There is more interaction, more creativity, easier to understand the reading and if you are kinaesthetic at the moment of creating the comics you can easily understand what you have read."*
Engaging	Student 1: *"...believe that is more interesting and engaging to students rather than reading a traditional study guide."* Student 2: *"The traditional method is less engaging for the students; thus, it makes reading comprehension more difficult."*
Creativity	Student 1: *"Personally, I find it positive that it allows us to portray what is understood through our own words and images, it allows us to use creativity and bring words from a book to life."* Student 2: "*It is a great place where you can improve your creativity.*"
Entertaining	Student 1: "*Since you create the content according to your perspective, I think it can be something very entertaining."* Student 2: *"It helps students understand the reading much more, they can get more ideas of what it would look like in real life and there is entertainment in the form of explanatory drawings."*

Subcategory	Students' Ideas in the Interviews
Boring	*Student 1: "It takes a lot of time to prepare, it's kind of boring and you practically have to do two jobs (works???)"* Student 2: *"A disadvantage could be that a student that does not enjoy this type of activity can find the assignment boring. Besides, even if it is an entertaining activity, that does not mean that it improves reading comprehension skills since you can create a comic without having to read the whole chapter or book."*
Useful/effective Tool	Student 1: "*It could be a very useful strategy to understand better what you are reading."* Student 2: *"I'm not a fan of StoryboardThat, but I consider it as a useful tool for the development of reading comprehension, it facilitates the process."*
Time-consuming	Student 1: *"It is a very arduous and time-consuming job as you have to think about what the environment is like, what the surroundings could be like, and so on."* Student 2: "*I hate when we have to do this because it takes a lot of time and it is tedious."*

The focus group (FG) results show similarities with the findings from the interviews. The most relevant factor in using StoryboradThat platform is the development of the summarizing skill, together with creativity and interaction, as shown in the following excerpts:

> FG: "*…it helped me a lot to get, especially in the last one we did, to get the main idea, I could finally summarize".*
>
> FG: *"I used it as part of a project in my practicum, and it was a success, although it was not the same as we did it at the university, the students in High School had to create a story of their own".*
>
> FG: "*The dialogues presented in the storyboard by my classmates made me understand much better the main ideas in the book we had to read.*"

However, a factor that was not mentioned in the interviews, but was highlighted in the focus group, is the importance of visual elements:

> FG: "*...it (storyboard) helps most of the students to understand, because many people are 'visual', just few students are 'auditory' or 'oral', and when they see a reading that is too extensive, they say 'ahhhh... how boring', but if they see a picture or a graphic, it is great… and this way they engage and want to continue…*"

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

According to Paulson (2006), the low reading comprehension level of university students is a "get students through" (p. 52) approach in college developmental reading courses. Focusing on study assistance may inadvertently signal students that reading has no intrinsic value (Paulson, 2006). If that were the case with pedagogy students, the vicious circle of teachers who are poor readers and who at this time are unable to develop reading skills and reading interest in their students would completely undermine the possibility of reverting the low reading comprehension levels exhibited by Chilean students in the last years. That is

why, any fruitful attempt to improve this distressing picture should be attended, especially in pedagogy schools.

The pedagogical experience obtained through the application of StoryboardThat has offered a more than satisfactory result. In general terms, although some senior students believe the platform is time-consuming; they read the assigned novel and presented their chapters. This did not happen with the other cohorts who did not use StoryboardThat. The students who summarized their chapters in the number of cells given also customized characters and settings appropriately and gave details about the scenes. They have improved their reading skills and showed their creativity. Creativity is an essential 21st-century skill that is increasingly required across all professional domains and must be cultivated, mainly in the educational field.

From the point of view of language learning, all four basic language skills were trained since they read, wrote, spoke, and listened while preparing the chapters in groups and when presenting their parts to the class. This platform, and similar ones, will attract students as the new generations have been born surrounded by screens. Thus, if there is a deficiency in reading comprehension, teachers can always look for technological tools to support it.

The students who participated in this experience noticed the need they had themselves to develop reading skills, and therefore, the need their learners in the practicum might have. They stated the usefulness of the platform and the willingness to replicate the experience in their future practice, which can be considered a positive impact. The impact technological tools might have on school learners' reading comprehension is a crucial issue for designing educational strategies in the new landscape (Escobar-Tapias & Mendoza-Granados, 2023). At the same time, curricula should be designed and integrated with technological tools to facilitate the sharing of work between students and teachers to promote positive effects on motivation for all participants (Noordan et al., 2022).

As stated before, using this platform, or others alike, might be seen as time-consuming. However, in the long term, the results will demonstrate the opposite, as the advantages of its use, for certain, can outweigh any potential drawbacks.

The implications of the present pedagogical experience can be viewed from both, teachers and pre-service teachers. Teachers can help students change their negative perspective on reading by developing reading comprehension skills and creativity. Students can highlight the possibility of expressing their understanding by visual aids and interactions with peers in a collaborative task, which somehow, they might apply in their future teaching praxis as EFL teachers.

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HOW

Enhancing Reading Skills through Scaffolding Strategies in Eighth-Grade EFL Students

Mejorando la Competencia Lectora a través de Estrategias de Andamiaje en Estudiantes de Octavo Grado de ILE

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Abstract

This research focuses on how designing, implementing, and evaluating didactic strategies and activities based on scaffolding with visualization and the use of graphic organizers guide the process of reading comprehension in an eighth-grade public school course placed at A1 level. The research methodology was framed as action research with a mixed-method approach and a quasi-experimental design with no control group. There were 31 participants aged 12 to 18. The research design implied (1) a pretest, (2) a diagnostic analysis, (3) intervention, (4) a posttest, and (5) final analysis. After gathering information from the pretest initial diagnostic data, the pedagogical intervention with ten task-like scaffolding activities was applied and assessed with rubrics. Posttest data were collected and accounted for from the researcher's journal notes. Both reading comprehension tests, the pretest, and the posttest had 21 questions divided into literal, inferential, and evaluative levels. Results obtained using descriptive statistics exposed, from the posttest, some improvement in the literal and evaluative level questions but a slight decline in inferential level questions contrasted with the pretest results. Data demonstrated that some external factors like time, academic aids, and responsibility influenced the outcome positively or negatively.

Keywords: graphic, organizer, quasi-experiment, reading, scaffolding, strategy, visualization

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Resumen

Esta investigación se enfoca en cómo el diseño, la implementación y evaluación de estrategias y actividades didácticas basadas en el andamiaje con visualización y organizadores gráficos orientan el proceso de comprensión lectora en un curso de octavo grado de una escuela pública de nivel A1. La metodología se enmarcó en la investigación acción con un enfoque mixto y un diseño cuasiexperimental sin grupo de control. Hubo 31 participantes de 12 a 18 años. El diseño de la investigación implicó 1) un pretest, 2) un análisis de diagnóstico, 3) una intervención, 4) un post test y 5) un análisis final. Después de recopilar los datos de diagnóstico del pretest, se implementó la intervención pedagógica con diez actividades de andamiaje tipo tarea y se evaluó mediante el uso de rúbricas. Se recopilaron los datos del post test y, la triangulación de datos también tuvo en cuenta las notas del diario de campo. Ambas pruebas de comprensión lectora, el pretest y el post test contaban con 21 preguntas divididas en niveles literal, inferencial y crítico. Los resultados obtenidos mediante estadística descriptiva mostraron cierta mejora en el post test en las preguntas de nivel literal y crítico pero una ligera desmejora en las preguntas de nivel inferencial contrastados con los resultados del pretest. Los datos demostraron que algunos factores externos como el tiempo, las ayudas académicas y la responsabilidad influyeron positiva o negativamente en el resultado.

Palabras clave: lectura, estrategia, andamiaje, visualización, gráfico, organizador, cuasiexperimental

Introduction

This paper shares the experience and results of developing action research at a public school with EFL students in Galeras, Sucre state, Colombia. The school faces significant challenges in improving their reading skills. The students are beginners in English language learning at an A1 level. The context presents a lack of appropriate academic and technological resources and insufficient parental support.

The primary issue is the students' difficulty in comprehending English texts, which is a crucial skill for their academic progress and future opportunities, in other words, they must succeed in the academic world. Reading is a vital receptive skill that will complement other skills like writing or listening directly or indirectly. Nunan (1999) claims that "unlike speaking, reading is not something that every individual learns to do" (p. 249), which means that it must be instructed and seriously taught. In addition, results of standardized tests like Saber 11, a high school exit exam administered in grade 11 -comparable to the SAT and ACT exams in the United States-, show a consistent and repetitive weakness in reading comprehension levels in English.

The problem is exacerbated by the lack of effective teaching strategies and resources that cater to the specific needs of EFL students in this context, that is why developing strategies that help learners understand what they read based on a scaffold, a supporting structure that utilizes numerous means, intends to tackle deficiencies in reading. Scaffolding strategies are effective in enhancing reading comprehension among EFL students instructional scaffolding

strategies are not an element of novelty in research and academic fields; they have displayed satisfactory results and demonstrated other beneficial features like effectiveness, easiness of implementation, and time-saving since these strategies involve breaking down learning into manageable steps, providing necessary assistance at each step, and gradually reducing the level of support as students master the learning. This process paves their learning as a supporting tool to gain skillfulness in reading in another language.

Walqui (2006) declares that, "scaffolding makes it possible to provide academically challenging instruction for ELLs (English language learners) in secondary schools" (p. 177), which indicates that scaffolding is useful for helping English language learners get properly taught at this level of education and with a defying task as improving reading. Besides, "well-constructed scaffolds optimize students learning, provide a supportive environment as well as it facilitates student independence" (Salem, 2017, p. 98); thus, these types of activities and strategies may support, sustain, and lead a process of enhancement of reading skills in English for the context, population, and situation that is intended.

This research is of critical importance, as it seeks to address a pressing educational issue in a context where students are already disadvantaged. By developing and testing new strategies and activities, this research could provide valuable insights and practical solutions that could be applied in similar contexts elsewhere. Therefore, this action research aims to design, implement, and evaluate scaffolding strategies and reading activities to improve the reading skills of eighth-grade EFL students in this context.

Theoretical Framework

This research is essential to define and lean on numerous terms like reading, a receptive skill that offers "input" or information to the individual. Reading is "a subtle and complex process that involves sensation, perception, comprehension, application and integration" (Bolain, 2008, as cited in Al Aila, 2015, p. 33). It is in fact, a multistep process that starts by simply observing and ends up in comprehending and responding effectively. In such a process, the meaning is the inner core.

The previous definition conveys that reading is a complex process that involves observation, interpretation, and cognition to get meaning from symbols. Grabe and Stoller (2013) add that reading requires considerable cognitive effort; therefore, it can be considered an achievement regardless it is done in the mother tongue or a foreign language. Reading skills have a wide scope of influence; several tasks can be achieved during the reading process if the learner is trained sufficiently. As with any other ability involving a complex series of actions, reading is susceptible to be honed. As for reading comprehension, Snow (2002) asserts that it is "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning

through interaction and involvement with written language" (p. 11). She states that reading has a double purpose, both related to meaning and the decoding of written symbols, where meaning is at the center of it. It can be said then that reading comprehension plays an exquisite role in obtaining knowledge and other language skills in one's native language or a different one like English. Al Aila (2015) sustains that reading proficiency in a foreign language is frequently required for academic accomplishment, career success, and personal growth as it helps expand vocabulary.

One might think that reading is a plain and flatline-shaped exercise that does not demand effort while readers are going deeper into the meaning of the text, but they might be able to perform certain tasks depending on how deep their cognitive skills go. There are different levels of reading comprehension, e.g., literal level, interpretive level, and applied level (Vacca & Vacca, 1986, as cited in Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2015) or literal level, inferential level, evaluative level, and creative level (Al Aila, 2015).

However, for the present research, it was decided, for practical reasons, to work on only three levels: the literal level (also called factual level), inferential level (or interpretive level), and evaluative level (also called critical level).

Regarding the literal level, it involves understanding the specific information in the text, e.g., comprehending the main ideas, factual details, and stated points of view as well as memory and superficial comprehension (Whitten, 2004). At the inferential level, the reader must go through the text and conclude topics that are not explicitly mentioned. A text can imply certain ideas and concepts that may not be apparent at first glance, so readers must infer them (Victoria State Government, 2018): attaching new learning to old information, making logical leaps and educated guesses, and reading between the lines to determine what is meant by what is written (Whitten, 2004). Finally, the evaluative level demands critical thinking, which requires readers to be analytical, form judgments, recognize points of view, assess the strength of readings and their meanings, and infer reasons (Al Aila, 2015). Evaluative comprehension requires the reader to go further denotation to consider what they think and believe about the message in the text.

To this point, reading has been demonstrated to be a very demanding activity to perform and teach, nevertheless, there are still ways to cope with it using, for instance, a reading comprehension strategy, which is a "cognitive or behavioral action that is enacted under particular contextual conditions, to improve some aspect of comprehension" (McNamara, 2007, p. 6). Actions to be done are directed to reading comprehension enhancement luckily by conscious steps to make sense of text passages. Comprehension then includes the basic idea of making sense using strategies and other factors. Strategies to reach these goals are varied, for example, predicting, inferring, synthesizing, skimming, scanning, re-reading, and sounding out.

Several authors suggest other strategies such as monitoring comprehension, metacognitive analysis, graphic and semantic organizers, answering questions, generating questions, recognizing story structure, summarizing, setting purposes for reading, previewing and predicting, activating prior knowledge, and clarifying; other suggested strategies include fixing, visualizing, drawing inferences, thinking aloud, retelling, mental imagery, text structure awareness, and mnemonic support practice (see Al Aila, 2015). Undoubtedly, numerous strategies are available depending on the purpose of the reading, the user, or how deep the reader or the teacher wants to go on comprehension.

In that context of a multiplicity of strategies, scaffolding appears to complement them since, in education or instruction, it is a good metaphor for supporting students. The term derives from Jerome Bruner's work and was originally meant to offer support by giving learners a framework to build their knowledge, as it is used to support a structure that is being built. In that process, a teacher, a peer, or a competent person assists another person to perform a task beyond their current capability.

Scaffolding can enhance the construction of knowledge and the mastery of new abilities. Clark and Graves (2005) remark that scaffolding is, by far, the most favored, adaptable, and effective teaching strategy that allows learners to understand parts of a task and how they interconnect. It can be said that scaffolding provides learners with academic direction. Walqui (2006) and Salem (2017) point out that scaffolding instruction is beneficial for helping EFL students get better taught and learning optimization. Graves and Fitzgerald (2004) state that scaffolding is flexible, so it can be used before, during, and after any reading activity. Huggins and Edwards (2011) claim that it is practical in second/foreign language learning since it is paramount in assisting and developing reading comprehension. Yu (2004) affirms that scaffolding is not a permanent duty because it is temporarily provided and gradually removed as the learner becomes more competent and independent.

As Archer (2008) indicates, scaffolding for reading comprehension can be divided into three phases; the before-reading phase where pronunciation and meaning are taught, background knowledge is activated, and text is previewed. In the during-reading phase, reading practice occurs, questions are asked, and strategies for passage reading are applied. Finally, in the after-reading phase, students should be engaged in discussion, and explicit instruction on comprehension skills and vocabulary practice should be provided.

Principally, this study implemented two strategies: scaffolding mediated using visualizing, and scaffolding using graphic organizers. As for the first, Herrel and Jordan (2004, as cited in Lestari & Misdi, 2016) claim that "visual scaffolding is a strategy for teaching English that uses drawings, photographs, and other visuals to help students to better understand the language" (p. 133). This claim correlates with the conception of mental imagery, which in turn is a strategy that relies on forming mental images while reading (Schirmer & McGough,

2005). The strategy can be used before, while, and after reading as it is useful in improving reading comprehension with EFL/ESL learners (Erfani et al., 2011; Ghazanfari, 2011). Visualizing text is a crucial skill for students because if they can get the picture, they often have the concept. When students do not get those pictures in their heads, the teacher may need to think aloud and talk to them through the ideas in the text, explaining the pictures that come to mind.

In the second place, graphic organizers are "visual representations of information from a text that depict the relationships between concepts, the text structure, and key concepts of the text" (Miranda, 2013, p. 100). They provide both a way to recognize text structures and set them up. Learners will better understand information if relationships among the text are shown visually. They might be useful to support students in predicting, organizing their ideas and information, recalling information, expanding their knowledge, comparing their background knowledge to information provided in the learning material, and better understanding their reading texts (Echeverri & McNulty, 2010). There are several graphic organizers, for example, hierarchical, conceptual, sequential, evaluative, relational, and cyclical (Gil-García & Villegas, 2003). Additionally, graphic organizers can be utilized in any reading stage, namely, before, during, and after reading.

Methodology

This study is framed as educational action research in which the teacher should be a problem-solving agent in society. Ferrance (2000) states that action research "helps to confer relevance and validity to a disciplined study" (p. 13), being a chance to look at one's teaching in a structured manner. It also combines features of quantitative and qualitative approaches, making it a mixed method because it involves quantifying data and begins with conscious observation of the researcher's reality, following a descriptive and interpretive analysis (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Particularly, this research followed the principles of a quasi-experimental design with no control group, which means that experimental units are not assigned at random. Therefore, there are no group comparisons; instead, there are intervention activities for all the participants.

Participants

The eighth grade has 31 students, 19 of them are females and 12 are males; their age ranges from 12 to 18. They belong to low-income families and have experienced phenomena like displacement (five of them), extreme poverty, family dysfunctionality, and forced emigration. Eight are Venezuelan-born students with cultural uprooting problems; others come from rural areas. Their English language proficiency was not officially measured, but

it is limited to almost A1 level descriptors even though they should be at A2.2 according to Colombian English language education guidelines.

Instruments

***Pretest*:** It was a multiple-choice reading diagnostic test that contained 21 reading different level comprehension questions with options from A to D. Questions were randomly disposed and divided into three short texts (*My Name is John, All About Space, and Football*). Questions were written to establish any progress in the reading comprehension skills and levels.

***Posttest*:** It assessed participants' skill development at the end of the intervention. The pretest and the posttest had the same content and number of questions; both had the same three short-text structures; however, the questions differed in form and wording. To guarantee the reliability and validity of these instruments in measuring changes, texts were extracted from certified sources belonging to an A1 English language proficiency level.

***Rubric*:** Each rubric consisted of four criteria related to the design and sequencing of visualization work (mental imagery) and graphic organizers respectively. These criteria also included descriptors for a three-level reading comprehension scale: literal, inferential, and evaluative. Rubrics had four levels of assessment (from advanced to below basic) and a numerical indicator from 4 to 1, being four the highest level and one the lowest level.

***Journal*:** It was a retelling of what the teacher/researcher observed, did, or experienced. It was a valuable tool because, in addition to its perspective and scope, it assisted in keeping detailed documentation of the research process; it helped track the development of the research understanding and provided a context for reflecting on emerging situations. Observations were therefore kept in this journal.

Procedure

***Exploration*:** This action research started with the reflection on several issues and problems that affected the teaching and learning situation of the teacher/researcher, mainly using observation. Reading was selected as the research topic and a specific course of action was devised, the idea of measuring reading comprehension through a test became more evident.

***Planning*:** This phase was divided as follows:

- **Stage I**. Identifying area of focus (exploration), reviewing related literature, developing research questions and objectives, and preparing paperwork for the action research. Based on the conditions surrounding the context, research questions and objectives were written.

- **Stage II**. Strategy design and preparation of instruments for data collection. Collecting initial diagnostic data from the pretest. Creation of lesson plans, reading comprehension tests, and rubrics.
- **Stage III**. Implementation of intervention and data collection with a journal and rubrics; data collection from posttest as specified in the timeline.
- **Stage IV**. Comparing and evaluating all data collected. Preparing a report of the study.

Pedagogical Intervention Using Scaffolding Strategies in Class Activities

The intervention implemented instructional reading activities that were intended to help students improve reading comprehension using visualization and graphic organizers. It trained participants to be able to: (a) apply visualizing scaffolding strategies through reading activities for reading comprehension, (b) analyze information by using graphic organizers for written material understanding, and (c) develop strength and weakness awareness when self-assessing reading performance with the rubrics.

The intervention design had ten different task-like activities in a sequence; these activities involved other language skills, for example, speaking (discussion) and writing. The activities focused on specific visualizing charts and graphic organizers. They also had a similar structure, an introductory part of instructions, a scaffolding activity, a reading passage, comprehension questions, a discussion/sharing section, and the application of the rubric.

The introductory part consisted of the name and the type of activity, the necessary resources, and the allotted time for each activity. It also contained a short description of the reading task and the language focus dealing with grammar. The scaffolding activity was specially planned to work as a support for reading comprehension. Table 1 summarizes the names of the reading passages and the types of scaffolding activities.

Table 1. *Summary of Activities*

Activity	Name	Type
Activity 1	Five Collie Puppies for Sale	Visualizing frame
Activity 2	Feeding our Pets	Graphic Organizer – Venn Diagram
Activity 3	My Neighbor's Dog is Purple	Visualizing chart
Activity 4	Spider Webs	Graphic Organizer – KWL
Activity 5	My Wonderful Family	Visualizing three-column chart
Activity 6	Stonehenge	Graphic Organizer – Mind map

Activity	Name	Type
Activity 7	Incredible but True	Visualizing with a two-column chart
Activity 8	Preparing Food	Graphic Organizer –Steps in a process diagram
Activity 9	Golden Homework Tips	Visualizing the "movie in my mind" chart
Activity 10	A Family Holiday	Graphic Organizer – Story elements

Note: Data collected by the author.

The reading passage was also a delicate issue since all the readings had to be for the A1 English language proficiency level or adapted to comply with language requirements; for instance, vocabulary or grammatical tenses. Most readings were of about 150-170 words with common topics like family, pets, and daily activities. As for the comprehension questions, they were written to, first, collect the new information obtained with the support of the scaffold and, secondly, to train learners to answer questions of different levels (literal, inferential, and evaluative). The questions referred to the reading passages and enhanced reading comprehension subsequently.

The last step was the application of the rubric that guaranteed a free self-assessment process. Once students got used to the rubrics, they could objectively assign points depending on their achieved level of comprehension and the general work overview. Each activity was organized in a lesson plan with common steps for reading comprehension. Steps comprised a section for pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading. Besides, there were two final sections for discussion-socialization and assessment.

Pre-reading had distinct goals to pave the way for students to engage with the activity and the reading passage topic. The teacher/researcher requested students to preview the text using questions, revise unknown vocabulary, introduce pronunciation of difficult words, activate simple background knowledge, relate some reading aspects to students' lives, and explain the corresponding scaffolding activity. Students paid attention to instructions, solved questions regarding the text, and took notes.

During the reading, the teacher/researcher guided students in reading the passage asking questions to check their understanding. The teacher/researcher made students generate questions on the content and stimulated personal and silent reading. Students were also encouraged to take notes to develop the corresponding scaffolding strategy, either with the visualization or graphic organizers. Once the information was reorganized, the chart or the drawing was completed; the teacher/researcher checked students' work without any intervention or correction.

The after-reading comprised tasks like completing the graphic organizers or the visualization charts. Afterward, the teacher/researcher engaged students in a short presentation and discussion on the material and the product obtained from the task. Comprehension questions and answers were explained and discussed.

Data Analysis

Implementing scaffolding activities to enhance reading comprehension in the classroom was applied over seven weeks. Pretest and posttest generated a large amount of quantitative data while the teacher/researcher's observation of students' reactions towards activities, their participation, interaction, motivation, and reading comprehension development produced a similar quantity of qualitative information.

This step required a sensible and systematic analysis process by using descriptive statistics to measure the results of the tests, tabulated in a Microsoft Excel file. Firstly, a four-column table contained the participants' names, the number of correct literal questions, inferential questions, and evaluative questions (out of seven questions). These data were organized to calculate the arithmetic mean of information corresponding to the pretest and posttest, which went before and after the implementation of the strategies respectively.

A second kind of chart resulted from the percentage analysis of valid answers. These two pie charts showed the general results of both pretest and posttest and the three categories in different colors with their specific percentage. A third chart was necessary since data from both tests had to be represented and compared in a bar chart to measure the effectiveness of the reading comprehension process and the differences among arithmetic means. Therefore, a general table was created to organize information about each student; it contained ten columns representing each activity. Then, a new auxiliary table was created for the graphic organizer activities to combine them and get the arithmetic means from each. Bar charts were designed to represent this information and make comparisons.

Data from the rubrics were deeply studied to expose how students assessed themselves, which activities were best valued; visualizing or graphic organizers, and know the arithmetic mean of the ten activities. Data from journal entries were also vital to understanding students' dynamics while doing activities in the classroom, determining how successful an activity or a course of actions was, getting impressions given by certain participants, and noticing recurring patterns or significant events pertinent to discern students' cognitive demands and motivational levels.

Results

The following are the results obtained in order of analysis: pretest, posttest, rubrics, and journal. As shown in Figure 1, all the levels have at least one correct answer out of a

maximum of seven. The maximum number of correct literal questions (light blue) was six, the inferential questions (light gold) were seven, and the evaluative questions (dark blue) were five.

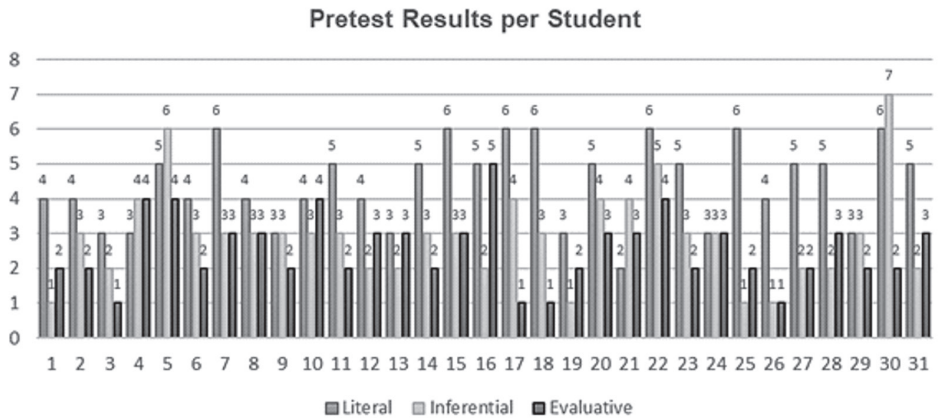

Figure 1. *Pretest Results per Student*

This initial analysis only considered the number of right questions by each category without assigning any special quantitative or qualitative value to items. This means that talking about the arithmetic mean, 4,59 literal questions as well as 2,94 inferential questions, and 2,55 evaluative questions out of seven were correctly answered. For the pretest mean ($\bar{X}$) or average score, the teacher/researcher applied the following statistical formula $\bar{X} = \sum x/n$. Its symbols stand for: ($\bar{X}$) the mean or average, ($\sum$) the sum that follows (x) individual scores, and (n) the number of test-takers. This formula shows the average of a sum of numbers reflecting the central tendency of the position of the numbers. Then:

Literal questions	Inferential questions	Evaluative questions
Mean = $\bar{X} = \sum x/n$	Mean = $\bar{X} = \sum x/n$	Mean = $\bar{X} = \sum x/n$
$\bar{X}$ = 1380/31	$\bar{X}$ = 910/31	$\bar{X}$ = 790/31
$\bar{X}$ = **44.52**	$\bar{X}$ = **29.35**	$\bar{X}$ = **25.48**

The mean ($\bar{X}$) indicates that test-takers in the literal question category had an average score of 44.52, for inferential questions a score of 29.35, and for evaluative questions a score of 25.48. These results mean that the group only got a mean of 99.35 points out of 210 possible (47.3% accuracy). The standard deviation was chosen as a measurement because it compared each data point to the mean of all data points, it displayed whether the data points

are nearby or whether they are spread out. Thus, the analysis of the standard deviations, concerning the mean ($\bar{X}$), in all categories, showed that individual scores were determining factors to categorize the group of questions as heterogeneous. For instance, the standard deviation for literal questions was 11.55 away from its mean (44.52), for inferential questions was 13.39 away from its mean (29.35), and finally, for evaluative questions was 9.73 away from its mean (25.48). Figure 2 is due to those students who scored quite high and students who scored quite low in comparison to the distance (X- $\bar{X}$) between individual scores (X) and the mean ($\bar{X}$).

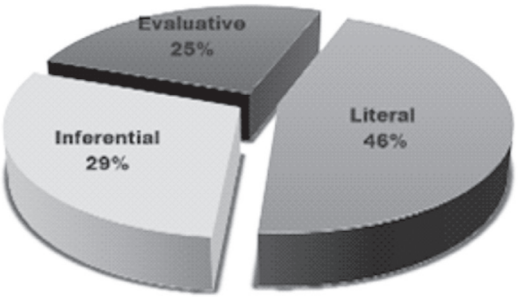

Figure 2. *Pretest Accuracy Results*

The pie chart in Figure 2 shows the level of accuracy in the pretest general results and the levels of accuracy per category in the pretest. This means that only 46% of the literal questions, 29% of the inferential questions, and 25% of the evaluative questions were correctly answered.

Regarding the posttest, all the levels had at least one correct answer out of seven right answers per category. The maximum number of good literal questions was seven, the inferential questions were five, and the evaluative questions were six. Figure 3 depicts this information in light blue for literal, light gold for inferential, and dark blue for evaluative.

The mean ($\bar{X}$) indicates that test-takers in the literal question category had an average score of 51.29, for inferential questions a score of 25.16, and for evaluative questions, a score of 27.74. These results show that the group only got a mean of 104.19 points out of 210 points possible (49.6% accuracy). The analysis of the standard deviations (that describe how dispersed a set of data is) concerning the mean ($\bar{X}$) in all categories showed that individual scores witness a degree of heterogeneity in the group of questions. The following is a summary of the processed data showing the standard deviations for the three categories of questions:

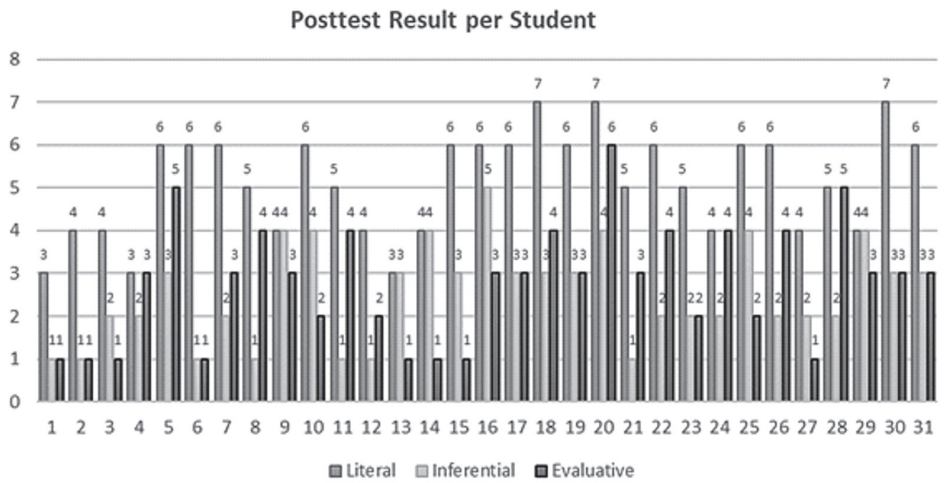

Figure 3. *Posttest Results per Student*

Literal questions	Inferential questions	Evaluative questions
s = √∑ (x- $\bar{X}$) /n-1	s = √∑ (x- $\bar{X}$) /n-1	s = √∑ (x- $\bar{X}$) /n-1
s = 4348,39/31-1	*s = 3974,19*/31-1	*s = 5741,94*/31-1
s = √139,27	*s* = √127,20	*s* = √184,22
s = 11,80	s = 11,28	s = 13,57

Figure 4 shows the level of accuracy in posttest general results, which means that 50% of the literal questions, 24% of the inferential questions, and 26% of the evaluative questions were correctly answered.

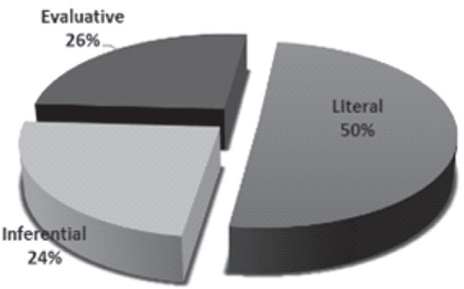

Figure 4. *Posttest Accuracy Results*

A comparative analysis of the results from the pretest and the posttest revealed a slight growth in the average score or mean of the posttest in certain areas but a non-trivial deterioration of other general aspects, in other words, numbers indicate a better performance which might have changed the original educational situation, but not completely. Table 2 below shows each test's average score (mean) and the accuracy percentage.

Table 2. *Average Score Comparison*

Average Score		
Test	**Total Mean**	**% Accuracy**
Pretest	99.35/210	47.3
Posttest	104.19/210	49.6
Difference	4.84	2.3

Note: Data provided by author.

For the categories (literal, inferential, and evaluative levels), both tests were statistically similar with small differences. Figure 5 compares the pretest and posttest concerning those categories and the number of correct answers. The analysis showed that the arithmetic mean for literal and evaluative questions increased; however, the inferential questions mean decreased.

As for the standard deviations, the literal questions in the pretest were closer (s = 11,55) to the mean than in the posttest (s = 11,80). This result means that the group was slightly less dispersed in the first test in this category. Inferential questions were more attached to the mean in the posttest (s = 11,28) than in the pretest (s = 13,39). For evaluative questions, the pretest (s = 9,73) showed better uniformity than the posttest (s = 13,57).

The previous comparison may not be uncomfortable if references are obtained in the pretest and posttest. However, it may be remarkable when considering that the closer the standard deviation is to 0 the better for homogeneity. Observing the smallest amount (s = 9,73) obtained during both tests, it might be inferred that the group where tests were taken was unstable in answering questionnaires like a test and responding to activities. Besides, the group may have been unstable in their language knowledge and their performance level.

The rubrics created to assess to what extent students developed a consciousness of evaluation also deserved another revising perspective since they could indicate activities students considered easier or more difficult to do, students' level of commitment, or even the level of acceptance of either a visualizing activity or a graphic organizer-based activity.

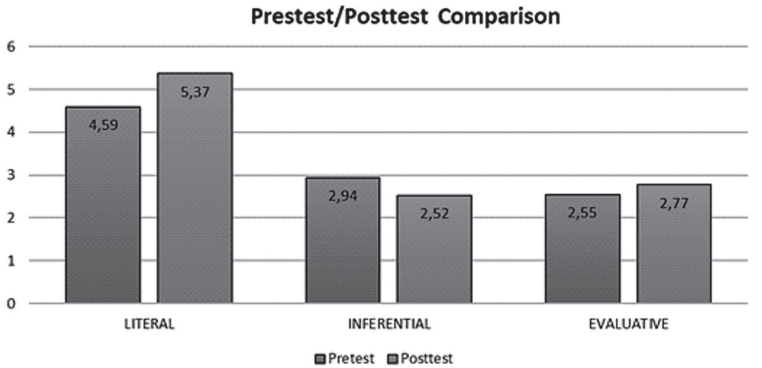

Figure 5. *Pretest and Posttest Category Comparison*

Results were paradoxical because it was found that an important percentage of activities were never done or submitted to be analyzed. Results also showed that visualizing activities were better valued (10,4 points) than graphic organizer-based activities (9,6 points). Finally, students who did activities and scored them responsibly tended to get some improvement.

So far, results from the pretest indicated that all the participants answered all-level questions but did better in literal questions. Results also showed the presence of a high standard deviation index; posttest results showed improvement in some categories of questions but also a decrease in inferential questions which ended up negatively affecting its general numerical results; standard deviation looked better, closer to the mean but still too high to demonstrate homogeneity.

Discussion and Conclusions

Results are important because they help understand the nature of the context and strategy implementation. Thus, based on the data analysis, the researcher can state that participants improved slightly their reading skills by implementing scaffolding activities. Nonetheless, results also revealed that only two levels of comprehension displayed positive progress while the other seemed to weaken. In general terms, the results are consistent with theory and other similar research. For instance, Lestari and Misdi (2016) indicated a difference in students' learning before and after visual scaffolding was applied in their context. A similar phenomenon happened to Abdul-Majeed and Muhammad (2015); they sustained that scaffolding is a process that supports and improves students' performance, before, during, and after reading. This way, graphic organizers, pictures, and charts can all serve as scaffolding tools.

Statistics showed that the scaffolding strategy that may best develop eighth graders' reading skills was visualizing because students demonstrated a preference for the graphic organizer-based activities, probably, due to the lower level of cognitive demand exhibited when students were asked to make drawings by using clue words or expressions from the texts, instead of arranging information in charts or diagrams. Visualizing did not demand strenuous tasks except those that used words or descriptions of mental images.

According to Lestari and Misdi (2016), visual scaffolding may be presented in various ways while teaching reading, but its achievement heavily depends on how it is applied. For the context in question, drawings represented more simplicity and less use of written language. It can be asserted that both types of strategies (visualizing and graphic organizers) are advisable; nevertheless, visualizing is more recommendable for less experienced language learners although graphic organizers might be a source of motivation, fun, and utility while remembering specificities and understanding what is being read (Echeverri & McNulty, 2010).

On the other hand, one factor that could contribute to obtaining the factual outcome was the dissimilarity in the participants' English language proficiency levels. Following it, vocabulary represented a big challenge that participants had not faced before, thus, working on previous knowledge of the topic and using scaffolding activities denoted an absolute progress during the application. In this respect, Brigham et al. (2007) assure that reading comprehension relates to understanding the lexicon and previous information about the text topics.

Consequently, based on the two tests' results, participants required more training with inferential and evaluative reading levels since reading is not only interpreting written messages literally, but getting concealed details, author's purpose, and more. That is how, in many cases, it was observed that activities reached their goals and made students study the text thoroughly; however, a good percentage of students did not respond accordingly to the activities, and thus, they did not get enough practice. This is why, commitment to do activities and following instructions in participants were highly advisable.

As it can be noticed, implementing a reading comprehension strategy can lead the researcher to meet unexpected experiences and results. For example, the research plan was intended to enhance the reading skill, but the significant dispersion of the standard deviation allowed saying that the level of development of this reception skill was not the same for each participant. Conversely, these results differ in some respects from a study by Sukyadi and Hasanah (2010), they concluded that the improvement of experimental groups in reading comprehension was on both types of questions, literal and inferential, other studies, like those conducted by Al Aila (2015) and Al Eissa and Al-Bargi (2017), proved a rise in

motivation. In contrast, the current study did not reach that improvement at the inferential level but at the evaluative level with a stable motivation.

Finally, the study results implicate a series of pedagogical recommendations and associations as follows: It is suggested that teachers use visualizing and graphic organizers and other scaffolding strategies such as tables, graphs, and visuals, as well as cooperative learning and hands-on activities (Bradley & Bradley, 2004) regularly to improve reading skills. Scaffolding activities are not an end in themselves, they are the gap between the student's comprehension and the text; in this perspective, it is much better to teach students some reading strategies than reading skills in isolation.

To sum up, the results possibly appear insignificant; however, they help affirm that the reading comprehension process may be difficult; scaffolding can help make this experience enriching. To do so, knowing the context, the population, and the language proficiency level of language in a detailed way will benefit the selection of suitable strategies and maintain motivation. Furthermore, unforeseen circumstances may completely alter outcomes, so making sound generalizations about the scaffolding effects can empower students.

The study encountered some limitations and weaknesses. The first one has to do with the sample size, a smaller sample chosen at random would have been more comfortable for strategies to be applied and analyzed. Although the literature review was extensive, no prior research studies on visualizing and graphic organizer-based activities combined were found. Additionally, the participants' English fluency level embodied vast barriers mainly when they wanted to know what the text conveyed and asked for, or while sharing information. This demanded a lot of active work for the teacher/researcher who always tried to compensate for deficiencies by being a mediator between participants and the language needed. A noticeable weakness was the lack of some critical data from part of the self-assessment rubrics that were never provided by students and could have changed the aftermath in deciding the most valued strategy. This fact was compensated with the observations of the teacher/researcher since we noted that activities with visualizing tasks were more enjoyable, interesting, and less demanding.

Finally, similar research should continue in reading with an exclusive type of text, e.g., narratives with one or two categories of questions. The study should also take a long-term period using only one strategy of preference or be extrapolated to the writing production. Suggestions for further research must also include a more extended action plan that envisions more time to apply the strategies, varied activities, peer support, and proficiency tests.

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Configuring Collocations and Prepositions in Essay Writing through a Corpus-based Strategy

Estructuración de Colocaciones y Preposiciones en Escritura de Ensayos Usando un Corpus Lingüístico

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Abstract

The correct use of collocations and prepositions plays an essential role in writing. Previous research has demonstrated that students, who master these lexical elements, have a better language awareness, improve their reading and listening comprehension, and are more creative when making a composition. However, little specific work has been done in this regard in Colombia, especially with adolescents. This action research study explores the affordances of a corpus in English as a foreign language writing of fourteen students at the high school level. Surveys, teacher's journals, and classroom artifacts were used to collect data. Findings show that the corpus contributed positively to L2 writing in two ways. The participants could self-correct their mistakes associated with the use of collocations and prepositions, and the tool amplified participants' autonomy, decision-making, and data analysis skills. Although a corpus represents an alternative for error correction processes, it requires a well-structured instructional design process to deal with difficulties related to using commands derived from a corpus-based strategy.

Keywords: academic writing, collocations, corpus linguistics, prepositions

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Resumen

El uso correcto de colocaciones y preposiciones tiene un papel primordial en la escritura. Investigaciones previas han demostrado que los estudiantes que dominan estos elementos léxicos tienen mejor conciencia del idioma, mejoran su compresión de lectura y escucha, y son más recursivos al escribir. Sin embargo, pocos estudios relacionados con el uso de colocaciones y preposiciones se han hecho en Colombia. La presente investigación-acción tiene como objetivo explorar el uso de un corpus lingüístico en la escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera de estudiantes de secundaria. Los métodos de recolección de datos incluyen diarios del docente, encuestas y escritos de los estudiantes. Los resultados de esta investigación contribuyen en la corrección de errores de escritura en inglés de dos maneras. Primero, los estudiantes autocorrigieron sus errores relacionados con colocaciones y preposiciones utilizando un corpus lingüístico. Asimismo, la implementación del corpus lingüístico en procesos de corrección de escritos potenció la autonomía de los estudiantes y fortaleció sus habilidades de toma de decisiones y análisis de información. Aunque un corpus lingüístico representa una alternativa para procesos de corrección de errores, su uso requiere un diseño instruccional estructurado para contrarrestar las dificultades relacionadas con el uso de los comandos que se utilizan en los corpus lingüísticos.

Palabras clave: colocaciones, corpus lingüístico, preposiciones, escritura académica

Introduction

Several factors interplay in the process of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Learners must learn syntax, vocabulary, and phonetics to master and use a foreign language competently in real-life settings. They also go through an acculturation process and develop a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting (Brown, 2007; Hoff & Core, 2013). Mastering the four linguistic skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) requires a considerable amount of time and implies commitment and ongoing practice. Even though a simultaneous development of the four linguistic skills is desirable, reading and writing are the linguistic abilities that demand a longer process as they both are part of the advanced stages of language development (Hoff & Core 2013; Kennison, 2014; Stern, 1970).

Learning to write effectively is an ability that learners typically find complicated and tumultuous, which might be attributed to different factors. While Tribble (1996) pointed out that there is a natural refusal to write in our mother tongue or any other language, Benko (2012) argued that inappropriate curriculum and teachers, who are insufficiently trained for teaching students writing, affect writing development. Moreover, a lack of practice in modeling, telling, retelling, or transforming pieces of information also prevents students from acquiring writing competence (Benko, 2012; Graham & Perin, 2007; Myles, 2002).

When teaching writing, it is key to consider its types (e.g., creative, social, personal, etc.) as each type has its conventions. However, educators from schools to higher education levels typically put aside academic writing development due to its complexity. Academic writing requires the writer to be informed while possessing higher-order thinking skills

and a sustained commitment to the writing task (Listyani, 2018; Myles, 2002; Oshima & Hogue, 2007). It also requires integration of audience, purpose, organization, style, flow, and presentation (Swales & Feak, 2004). The latter, which is related to the identification of different structural mistakes through proofreading, is one of the concerns of this study.

While conventions of academic writing may be one issue, information and communication technologies (ICTs, hereafter) have brought several changes as they have had a critical influence on the ways we create written content, communicate, and engage with other writers and readers (Hyland, 2002). Indeed, with the ascendance of ICTs as content media, technology has become a multi-purpose tool in learners' personal and professional lives (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). Thus, new technologies influence our lives unquestionably.

A corpus which is a collection of spoken or written examples of a language in which one can find word frequencies, concordance lines of words, and excerpts of texts (O'Keeffe et al., 2007) is a technological tool that has been used in multiple fields, including education. Numerous research studies have shown the benefits of using corpora in educational settings. These include the making of English language dictionaries and textbook dialogues, and the improvement of learners' language awareness (Biber et al., 1998; Granger, 1998; Johns, 1991; Kettemann, 1995). Nevertheless, many scholars have questioned corpora usage in those contexts as they wonder whether the sample of texts found in a corpus, which are withdrawn from their original context, can be considered suitable for educational purposes.

Little specific work has been done on implementing a corpus, like the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), in educational settings in Colombia. Thus, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of a corpus-based strategy combined with the writing process approach to improve the configuration of collocations and prepositions in essay writing in an EFL context amongst adolescents.

Thus, to confirm the impact, whether positive or negative, of implementing a corpus-based strategy for error correction, the following specific objectives have been established: (a) to determine the advantages and disadvantages of using this type of tool from the students and teacher's perspective, and (b) to determine how learners become autonomous when correcting their writing mistakes throughout the use of a corpus.

Qualitative Question

What does incorporating the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) in the writing process tell us about the configuration of collocations and prepositions in essay writing in the EFL context?

Hypotheses

This study investigated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis one:

- H_0: Implementing a corpus-based strategy will increase the mistakes between the first and second versions of writing task 1.
- H_1: Implementing a corpus-based strategy will decrease the mistakes between the first and second versions of writing task 1.

Hypothesis two:

- H_0: The average of collocation and preposition mistakes of the Pre-test is equal to the Post-test ($\mu Pre = \mu Post$).
- H_1: The average of collocation and preposition mistakes of the Pre-test is not equal to the Post-test ($\mu Pre \neq \mu Post$).

Mixed Methods Question

Do the qualitative and quantitative data converge to support the conclusion that a corpus-based strategy combined with the writing process approach improves the configuration of collocations and prepositions in essay writing in EFL scenarios and learners' autonomy when correcting their compositions?

Definition of Terms

Collocation

It is how words combine in a language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing. For example, in English, it is said 'strong wind', but 'heavy rain'. It would be odd to say 'heavy wind' or 'strong rain'. Whilst all four of these words would be recognized by a learner at the pre-intermediate or even elementary level, it takes a greater degree of language competence to combine them correctly in productive use. To a native speaker, these combinations are highly predictable; to a learner, they are anything but. The full range of collocations is the following (Oxford Collocations Dictionary, 2002):

- **Adjective + noun:** bright/harsh/intense/strong light.
- **Quantifier + noun:** a beam/ray of light
- **Verb + noun:** cast/emit/give/provide/shed light.

- **Noun + verb:** light gleams/ glows/shines.
- **Noun + noun:** a light source.
- **Preposition + noun:** by the light of the moon.
- **Noun + preposition**: the light from the window.
- **Adverb + verb:** choose carefully.
- **Verb + verb:** be free to choose.
- **Verb + preposition:** choose between two things.
- **Verb + adjective:** make/ keep/ declare something safe.
- **Adverb + adjective:** perfectly/not entirely/environmentally safe.
- **Adjective + preposition:** safe from attack.

Preposition

A word that is used with nouns, pronouns, and gerunds to link them grammatically to other words. The phrase so formed, consisting of a preposition and its complement, is prepositional. In English, a prepositional phrase may be "discontinuous", as in 'Who(m) did you speak to?' Prepositions may express such meanings as a possession (e.g., the leg of the table), direction (e.g., to the bank), place (e.g., at the corner), or time (e.g., before now) (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

Literature Review

Studies in Corpus-based Strategies

A corpus is a collection of texts in written or spoken forms stored on a computer and analyzed through computer software programs (O'Keefe et al., 2002). One of the main functions of a Corpus, as O'Keeffe et al. (2007) pointed out is "to generate word frequency lists and concordance lines of words and clusters (or chunks)" (p. 1). This has led researchers to use corpora to deal with emergent phenomena regarding language analysis and teaching.

Johns (1991) was a pioneer for the use of corpora in language learning and highlighted their potential which has been widely acknowledged. With the emergence of ICTs, the use of corpora in language learning processes has become more common, giving students samples of language use in different contexts. Corpus researchers have revolutionized English language teaching as they have found that corpora usage fosters inductive learning (Kheirzadeh & Marandi, 2014) and improves learners' language awareness (Biber et al., 1998; Granger, 1998; Johns, 1991; Kettemann, 1995).

Numerous studies have revealed that the use of corpora and Data-Driven Learning (DDL) assists students in solving writing problems and raising language awareness (Lee, 2011; Luo, 2015; Luo & Liao, 2015; Vyatkina, 2016; Yoon, 2008). Teachers have used corpora to provide students with opportunities to correct peers' writing and guide them to identify mistakes, give suggestions, and make accurate corrections. Students can benefit from the samples of language use found in a corpus to avoid lexicon-grammatical mistakes which can be translated into quality compositions. A corpus is likely to lead students to be more aware of their mistakes as they must analyze and compare language use samples before using them in free production practices.

Equally important, research studies have revealed how the implementation of corpora increased students' autonomy (Huang, 2011; Kheirzadeh & Marandi, 2014; Nesselhauf, 2004; Vyatkina, 2016; Yoon 2008; Zhang & Liu, 2014) and helped them build confidence in their L2 writing (Lai, 2015; Yoon & Hirvela, 2004), which are two aspects to highlight considering that a corpus is a database.

Hegelheimer's (2006) study focused on investigating the utility of an online resource to improve advanced-level ESL students' writing, finding a considerable error reduction in their writing while students exhibited a better understanding of language features when using a corpus-based resource called iWRITE. Other studies focused on using corpora as a tool for analyzing language patterns included Huang's (2008) which focused on analyzing the use of genitive (my) and accusative (me) subjects functioning as complements and examining meta-discourse. Reimerink (2006) analyzed the use of verbs in different sections of medical research articles, demonstrating, on one hand, that lexical domains were distributed differently in each part of an article, and on the other, that there was a complex relationship between a research article and its abstract.

Many studies have highlighted the difficulty of implementing a corpus in language teaching because of the training time, lack of analytical skills, and use of different commands to certain searches (Huang, 2011; Kheirzadeh & Marandi, 2014; Nesselhauf, 2004; Vyatkina, 2016; Yoon 2008; Yoon & Hirvela, 2004; Zhang & Liu, 2014). Other studies have shown benefits related to participants' positive attitudes toward corpus use in language teaching and learning processes (Braun, 2007; Gaskell & Cobb, 2004; Lee & Swales, 2006; Luo, 2016).

Process Approach

Writing develops higher-order skills which lead students to evaluate and analyze the information in-depth, develop unique points of view, and focus on using language conventions in contextually appropriate ways (Harmer, 2004). The process approach is recognized for its benefits and the teacher's role, whose main responsibility is to draw out students' potential, be a facilitator, and provide little or no input (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2003). This

approach relates to linguistic skills (planning and drafting) rather than linguistic knowledge (grammar and text structures). Writing is mainly seen as a series of stages that, if undertaken during iterative writing, will develop language skills unconsciously.

Tribble (1996) identifies four stages to the process approach: prewriting, composing/drafting, revising, and editing (as cited in Badger & White, 2001). However, Hyland (2003) argues that this approach is recursive, interactive, and simultaneous as the writer can review, evaluate, revise, and rewrite parts of the work at any stage. Thus, Hyland (2003) urges teachers to avoid an emphasis on form since this approach aims at helping learners develop their strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas, and to mature their metacognitive writing.

Numerous studies have pointed out that the process approach is effective in different EFL contexts (Akinwamide, 2012; Alodwan & Ibnian, 2014; Ho, 2006; Laksmi, 2006). These studies demonstrated that students improved their writing production and became more autonomous. Similarly, other studies demonstrated that the process approach improved students' confidence and motivation as they were more secure about what and how they wanted to express themselves through their writing (Díaz Ramírez, 2014; Faraj, 2015; Melgarejo, 2010). Al-sawalha's (2014) study revealed the potential of process writing for English literature students. Before implementing the process approach, his participants did not feel at ease when writing; after implementing this approach, participants overcame writer's block, organized their ideas better, and gained the necessary cognitive skills to produce better writing.

Studies in Writing Learning

Numerous studies in Colombia have confirmed that advanced students at the university level, and even students of undergraduate foreign language teaching programs, have difficulties dealing with academic writing (Escobar Alméciga & Reid, 2014; Gómez, 2011; Robayo & Hernández, 2013; Zuñiga & Macias, 2006). Among the most common causes are poor writing instruction, difficulty with language structures, disorganization of ideas, and lack of discursive skills. Other studies have confirmed that the main difficulty of other EFL students (with an L1 other than Spanish) is related to the lack of previous experience and practice with the target language (Al-Badi, 2015; Sağlamel & Kayaoğlu, 2015).

Xudong et al.'s (2010) study focused on the benefits of explicit instruction and strategies to write in an academic context. This study demonstrated that the students who attended English for Specific Purposes courses improved their academic vocabulary and gained confidence in writing papers. Yamada (2000) found that summary writing activities used to teach textual patterns improved students' comprehension skills and writing production, and increased content knowledge in their academic fields. Castro Garcé's (2016) study

demonstrated that by demystifying academic writing and providing students with practice in doing different writing tasks, master's program students at a Colombian university could acknowledge the importance of producing academic texts in their professional lives and gain confidence to continue facing challenges regarding this skill.

Methodology

Research Design

This study had an action research design which involves identifying problematic situations in the classroom to find a solution by being reflective, discerning, and analyzing teaching situations in depth (Burns, 2010; Hopkins, 2008). Moreover, it was informed by a convergent mixed-method design (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) in which the quantitative and the qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then compared to determine whether the findings of the data set converge with or diverge from each other (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021).

Both data sets were equally weighted by collecting information from the same number of individuals. This design was chosen "to increase the validity of construct and inquiry inferences" (Greene, 2007, p. 100). Using both data sets served to obtain more information rooted in the participants' transactions and interactions, offering a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. The qualitative strand of the study consisted of the responses to the open-ended questions in the pre- and post-implementation surveys and the teacher's journal notes analysis. The quantitative strand referred to analyzing the number of collocation and preposition mistakes in students' compositions.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using three methods, surveys, a teacher's journal, and classroom artifacts. The participants completed three surveys (pre-, while-, and post-implementation). The surveys (Appendix A) had closed and open-ended questions to gather information about students' digital competence level, opinions regarding the use of ICT tools at school, previous experience with corpora for educational purposes, and perceptions regarding the whole implementation process.

The teacher's journal (Appendix B) was used *in situ* to record classroom situations and participants' reactions, attitudes, and behaviors toward corpus use. This instrument also aimed at gathering data about the lesson objectives, what went well, and what the teacher would have done differently in the lesson. Moreover, the journal included two spaces in which the researcher could write down overall descriptions of in-class situations and reflections on

the lesson. Entries to the journal were written immediately after each session to guarantee the accuracy of descriptions and thoughts.

Considering the nature of this study, the classroom artifacts (Appendix C) were essential because they allowed the researcher to identify students' difficulties and accomplishments, give them feedback, track their improvement process, and observe their outcomes after using the corpus for essay writing correction. As part of this instrument, the researcher used a correction code (Appendix D) to revise students' papers and treat their tasks with the same rigor.

Participants

14 tenth-grade students (N=14) from a bilingual private school in Bogota, Colombia, participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 15 to 17. They were selected using purposeful sampling which seeks "to discover, understand, and gain insight" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61) on a phenomenon. The participants were selected considering their English proficiency level. They had a B2 level according to standards established in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR (Council of Europe, 2014), which favored the purposes of the study as people who have this level can produce coherent and cohesive compositions.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the ethical treatment of participants--all minor students-- consent forms were distributed to inform them and their parents about the study (Appendix E). The consent forms clarified that the study did not aim to evaluate their performance, collect personal information, or cause any harm. Additionally, participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. These forms and all related documentation were reviewed and approved by the director of the Master's Program in English Language Teaching at a private university in Chia, Colombia.

All participants' information was anonymized by assigning each participant a unique code consisting of numbers and letters. The data sets were organized and stored in an encrypted folder on the researcher's laptop, ensuring data protection and preventing breaches.

Implementation

The pedagogical implementation was carried out in a nine-week period, which included a pre-implementation stage week, a four-week training stage, and a four-week production stage. In the pre-implementation week, the project was socialized with the school board, students, and students' parents. The researcher conducted a pre-implementation survey to gather information regarding students' previous knowledge about essay writing, process approach, and corpora.

Then, during the training stage, the students attended four input workshops related to the stages of the process approach (pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing). Subsequently, the students attended workshops on essay writing structure, collocations and prepositions, correction code, and using the corpus (COCA). After this stage, a while implementation survey was conducted to assess the workshops, identify learners' difficulties during the training, and make the necessary modifications for the next stage. Finally, during the four-week production stage, learners focused on writing their essays about a given topic following the stages of the process approach, using the corpus in the editing stage of their writing process, and submitting a final version of their essays. As the researcher, I designed the action plan including the training stages, the instructional material, and data collection instruments.

Findings

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, I conducted a preliminary data analysis (Grbich, 2013), which involved reviewing my data sets twice, taking notes of key points related to the topic of my research study, and memoing to keep track of emerging ideas during the preliminary analysis. This process favored the identification of concurrent patterns and the configuration of a set of codes. Then, I used an axial and selective coding strategy (Creswell, 2012), enabling me to classify and arrange several pieces of information, examine relationships in the data more efficiently, and generate the final themes. This process was guided by an inductive approach, avoiding the influence of a pre-existing coding framework and my analytical biases (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A one-sample t-test, with an alpha level of 0.05 served to analyze the quantitative data, facilitating the identification of numerical trends and patterns of language use. The data were displayed through raw scores and percentages, graphs, and a descriptive analysis. A methodological triangulation was used to analyze data by comparing and merging qualitative and quantitative findings. To understand the findings completely, I selected the most relevant data to be detailed and organized into the identified themes.

Enhancing Error Correction Autonomy and Language Awareness

Correcting Writing Errors Autonomously

After analyzing the post-implementation surveys and the teacher's journal, the participants expressed they had benefitted from incorporating the corpus in various ways, more specifically gains associated with their autonomy when correcting their papers (See excerpt 1).

Excerpt 1. Responses to question five post-implementation survey, "Do you think that the use of a corpus has helped you become more autonomous when correcting writing mistakes? Yes - No Why?" (Unedited)
"Yes, because if I received a good feedback [sic], I could use it to correct my mistakes by myself" (Student 2) "Yes, because I don't need to take time from my break or a teacher who can tell me if I am writing or using collocations or prepositions well. On the contrary, I can correct my mistakes by myself using the tool" (Student 3) "Yes, because I don't have to ask for help to somebody else, I can correct my mistakes on my own. It helps to save time and effort" (Student 8)

Participants had various opinions regarding the tool. The most salient benefits were related to the fact that they could correct themselves without the teacher's intervention and save time. Furthermore, they kept using the tool individually for other purposes, indicating gains in confidence when using the tool toward the end of the implementation.

Similarly, the participants showed evolution regarding their autonomy as they got more familiar with the tool. While in the first interactions with the tool they required help, later in the process they started making decisions and using it without the teacher's intervention as depicted in excerpts 2 and 3.

Excerpt 2. Notes taken from teacher's journal. Session 1 and 2 (edition and correction sessions) (Unedited)
The students received their feedback and seemed to understand the comments and suggestions provided by me as they started working immediately with the corpus. At the beginning of this editing and error correction sessions, some students (8 students) required my intervention to remind them the commands and help them make decisions regarding the results showed by the corpus. I helped them remember the commands, but I encouraged them to make a decision in relation with the search results. (Teacher's journal comment)

Excerpt 3. Notes taken from teacher's journal. Sessions 3 and 4 (edition and correction process) (Unedited)
At the beginning of the second editing and correcting sessions, the students were more confident regarding making decisions and how to interpret the results provided by the corpus. In fact, they did not require my intervention at all in comparison to the first session when they had to use the corpus. Just a few of them (2 students) asked me to remind them the commands. However, in terms of how to interpret results and decision-making, they managed to do it by themselves. (Teacher's journal comment)

As seen in the excerpts, there is a great difference between the number of students who required help during the first two editing and correction sessions and the third and fourth sessions. A feasible explanation for this phenomenon is that the participants had never used a corpus under uncontrolled conditions before the first implementation. Instead, they used it under controlled conditions with constant teacher monitoring during the training stage. Hence, students gained more and more autonomy and confidence as they grew more familiar with the tool during the editing and writing correction sessions.

Likewise, the participants reported positive effects on their autonomy, documented in their opinions in excerpt 4 in which they had their points of view regarding the usefulness of the corpus. Many participants noticed that this tool helped them correct their mistakes and realize how to write their compositions better using examples.

Excerpt 4. Post-implementation survey, question 2. "Do you think the corpus (COCA) is useful to correct writing mistakes? Yes – No, why?"
"Yes, because the collocation mistakes can be corrected using this tool. In fact, each time that I have a doubt about the use of a collocation or a verb in certain context, I use this tool" (Student 3) "Yes, because it is sometimes difficult to realize that a word is used wrongly, and the corpus allows you to see how you can use them correctly" (Student 14)

Moreover, the participants reported becoming more autonomous toward the end of the implementation. Figure 1 depicts how they answered the following question "On a scale from 1 to 5, how autonomous have you become when correcting your compositions?" 50% of the participants felt "totally autonomous" and 43% "very autonomous," depicting a positive trend regarding student autonomy, which grew more as they got familiar with the tool.

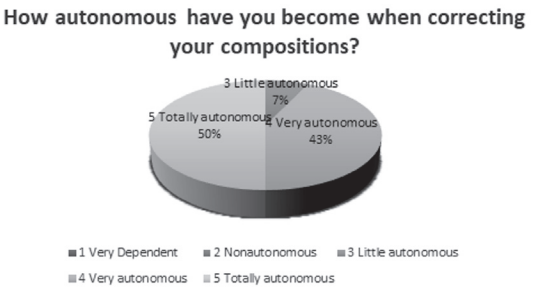

Figure 1. *Percentages of Answers for the Question "How autonomous have you become when correcting your compositions?"*

1. Very dependent, 2. Nonautonomous, 3. Little autonomous, 4. Very autonomous, 5. Totally autonomous.

In brief, the participants reported gaining more autonomy when writing their compositions and correcting them using the corpus during and toward the end of the intervention. Although most of the data in this theme were withdrawn from the post-implementation survey, the analysis of the notes and comments on different phases of the intervention in the teacher's journal, students' compositions, and answers to open-ended questions confirmed this tool may be useful enhancing student autonomy in writing development processes. Moreover, the analysis also showed the participants' perception shifts regarding using the corpus in different stages of the intervention, indicating an evolution process.

Improvements in Lexical, Grammatical, and Language Awareness Issues

The bar charts (Figures 2 and 3) depict how the participants' compositions evolved from one version to the other concerning the lexical items under study. These charts deal with the variation of error rates – collocations and prepositions - between the first version (dark grey) and the final version (light grey) of the writing task one.

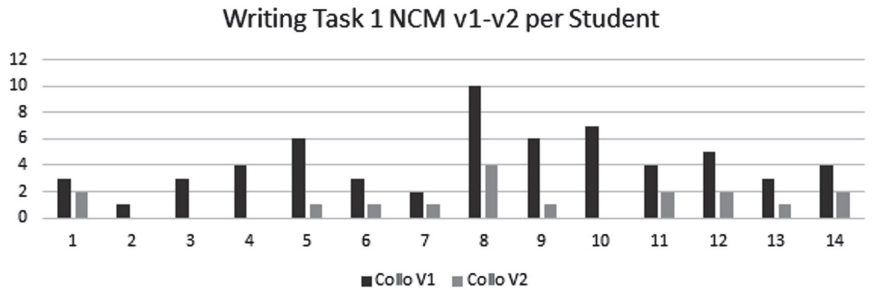

Figure 2. *This Figure Contrasts the Number of Collocation Mistakes (NCM) per Student in the First (dark grey) and Second Versions (light gray) of the Writing Task 1*

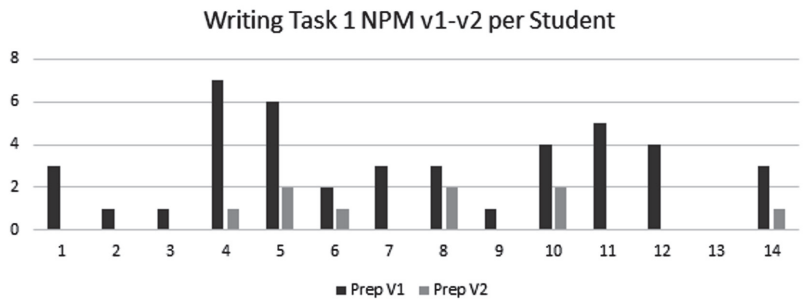

Figure 3. *his Figure Contrasts the Number of Preposition Mistakes (NPM) per Student in the First (dark grey) and Second Versions (light grey) of the Writing Task 1*

Both graphs indicate that all the participants decreased their number of collocations and prepositions mistakes considerably from the first to the second version of writing task 1. In Figure 1, although there may not have been considerable improvement among all students regarding collocation mistakes, every student showed a moderate amelioration. Indeed, only 28% of them presented an improved final version of the essay. As for preposition mistakes, there was a similar trend, but in this specific case, the improvement was more significant as 43% of the students submitted the final version of their essay with no errors of this nature.

Apart from the preliminary analysis, findings show the results of a paired t-test, which provides more detailed information regarding a statistically significant difference. As can be gleaned from Table 1, the data needed for this test were the number of collocation mistakes (NCM) and number of preposition mistakes (NPM) in writing task 1, during Pre-test (before using a corpus, V1) and Post-test (after integrating a corpus, V2). For the significance level, $\alpha = 0.05$ is used. The Null Hypothesis will be rejected if the p-value is less than (<) 0.05. On the other hand, if it is more than (>) 0.05, the Null Hypothesis will be accepted.

Hypothesis one:

- H_0: Implementing a corpus-based strategy will increase the mistakes between the first and second versions of writing task 1.
- H_1: Implementing a corpus-based strategy will decrease the mistakes between the first and second versions of writing task 1.

Table 1. *Pair Sample Test of Number of Collocations and Prepositions Mistakes in Writing Task One*

Paired Samples Test				
		t	df	Significance Two-Sided p
Pair 1	NCM V1 NCM V2	6,013	13	<,001
Pair 2	NPM V1 NPM V2	5,090	13	<,001

Note. NCM = Number of Collocations Mistakes; NPM = Number of Prepositions Mistakes; V= version.

From the statistical analysis using a paired sample t-test, it was apparent that the p-value for the Pre-test and Post-test from both items NCM and NPM respectively were 0,001 and

0,001. This result means that all the p-values are less than 0.05. Thus, the difference in the results is statistically significant.

These findings were confirmed by comparing the *t*-value and the Critical Value (CV). The t value has to be larger than the CV to reject the Null Hypothesis. The Degrees of Freedom (*df*) and the T-distribution table were used to determine the CV. The reference in the table was the cumulative probability of 90, com.prob = $t_{.90}$, and two-tails. The CV value was equal to 1.350 and the *t* value for the Pre-test and Post-test from both items NCM and NPM respectively were 6,013 and 5,090, indicating that the *t* values are much larger than the CV. In addition, the T-distribution table indicates that the results had an 80% of confidence level, confirming that the Null Hypothesis can be rejected and the results are statistically significant.

The same paired-sample test was used to determine whether there was a difference in the average number of collocation and preposition mistakes between the Pre-test and the Post-test in terms of NCM and NPM.

Hypothesis two:

- H_0: The average of collocation and preposition mistakes of the Pre-test is equal to the Post-test ($\mu Pre = \mu Post$).
- H_1: The average of collocation and preposition mistakes of the Pre-test is not equal to the Post-test ($\mu Pre \neq \mu Post$).

Table 2 shows that the average number of collocation and preposition mistakes decreased considerably between the first and second versions of writing task 1; this went from 4.3 mistakes on average to 1.2 in the whole sample. Similarly, the average number of preposition mistakes decreased substantially, going from 3 to 0.64.

Table 2. *Mean of Collocations and Prepositions Mistakes*

Paired Samples Statistics				
		Mean	**N**	**Std. Deviation**
Pair 1	Number of Collocations Mistakes Version 1	4,3571	14	2,30742
	Number of Collocations Mistakes Version 2	1,2143	14	1,12171
Pair 2	Number of Prepositions Mistakes Version 1	3,0714	14	2,01778
	Number of Prepositions Mistakes Version 2	,6429	14	,84190

Considering the abovementioned, implementing a corpus for writing error correction shows 100% effectiveness as all the participants decreased the number of mistakes in different proportions. More importantly, four participants of the total sample submitted the final version without collocation mistakes. As for preposition mistakes, the relation was eight out of fourteen who submitted the final version without them.

As for improvements in grammatical, language awareness, and lexical issues, many students maintained that the corpus had made them more aware of the importance of lexical and semantical issues (See excerpt 5).

Excerpt 5. Post-implementation survey (unedited).

"Yes, because it is a tool that helps you to comprehend more easily phrases or words by using examples" (Student 4)

"Yes, it helps you to find new words and do not repeat the ones that you already use. Besides, it gives you ideas on how to use a word in different contexts" (Student 8)

"The corpus helped me with word order, and understand the use of words in different contexts" (Student 11)

"it makes more aware of your mistakes" (Student 9)

"I think more what would be the best way to express my ideas" (Student 12)

Reflecting on the above, although the students had difficulty using the corpus during the first editing and error correction session, they overcame the difficulties and benefited from the corpus used for writing correction processes. Students' opinion also served to corroborate the gains of using a corpus; most of them pointed out that the tool had assisted them on understanding how to use words in specific contexts and improving the quality of their ideas.

Shortcomings of Using a Corpus in Writing Error Correction

Recalling Commands from the Interface and Associating Them with Linguistic Categories

The findings revealed that the participants had difficulties using the corpus. Certainly, when the participants were asked about the main difficulties of using a corpus, they mentioned that the commands (combinations of words to search) were one of them, which is evident in excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6. Post-implementation survey (unedited).
"I had some difficulty when I used the corpus because I could not remember the commands easily" (Student 3) *"You need the commands that are difficult to remember, and sometimes it is difficult to identify what command is the most appropriate" (Student 14)* *"I was confused with the use of some commands" (Student 8)*

As seen, the students complained about difficulty remembering the commands. Five out of fourteen students claimed to have difficulties doing so. This was corroborated by the notes in the teacher's journal (Excerpt 7).

Excerpt 7. Teacher's journal comments. Production stage.
"At the beginning of this editing and correcting session, some students required my intervention to remind them the commands" (teacher's journal) *"Just a few of them asked me to remind them the commands" (teacher's journal)*

However, this difficulty was not due to the participants' bad memory as the teacher taught just four commands and put them into practice during the training stage. Their difficulty was more attributed to their lack of language awareness about linguistic categories. See excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8. Teacher's journal comments. Training stage.
"Most of the students had difficulty to use the commands because they could not differentiate some lexical categories (for example: adverbs and adjectives) and each of those categories have [sic] an assigned command in the interface" (teacher's journal)

Another reason to explain why the participants had difficulty using the commands properly is related to the fact that they could not easily associate the lexical categories with their corresponding representations in the corpus. This situation is evident in the excerpts 9 and 10.

Excerpt 9. Teacher's journal comments. Training stage.
"Most of the students had difficulty to use [sic] the commands because they could not differentiate some lexical categories, nor to associate them easily to the representations that the linguistic category had in the corpus. For instance, in the corpus an adverb is represented by a "r" and adjectives by a "j". Thus, they did not understand and questioned why those commands were represented by those letters." (teacher's journal)

Excerpt 10. Post-implementation survey, question 4, On a scale from 1 to 5, how difficult was it to use a corpus (COCA) for correcting writing mistakes? Being 1 Not difficult and 5 Too difficult. Why?
"It still creates some difficulty. I had some difficulty when I used the corpus because I could not remember the commands easily. However, if you have them on hand, this tool makes your life easier" (Student 3) *"It is not difficult, because the use of this tool is very simple, it is necessary to learn the commands by memory or have them noted to find the options" (Student 9)*

Toward the end of the implementation, the students could use the commands well by making lists of them and the linguistic categories. Briefly, although a corpus for writing error correction could benefit students positively in different aspects, including language awareness and autonomy, this also might represent difficulties for students with poor language awareness. Thus, it is critical to consider what difficulties emerge using a corpus in EFL scenarios so that the training stage design goes properly based on participants' needs and characteristics.

Lack of Self-efficacy in Making Decisions

One of the problematic situations when using a corpus for error correction is related to the interpretation of the high number of results. When a person searches for a possible combination, the corpus normally displays numerous combinations and samples for each combination, as seen in Figures 4 and 5.

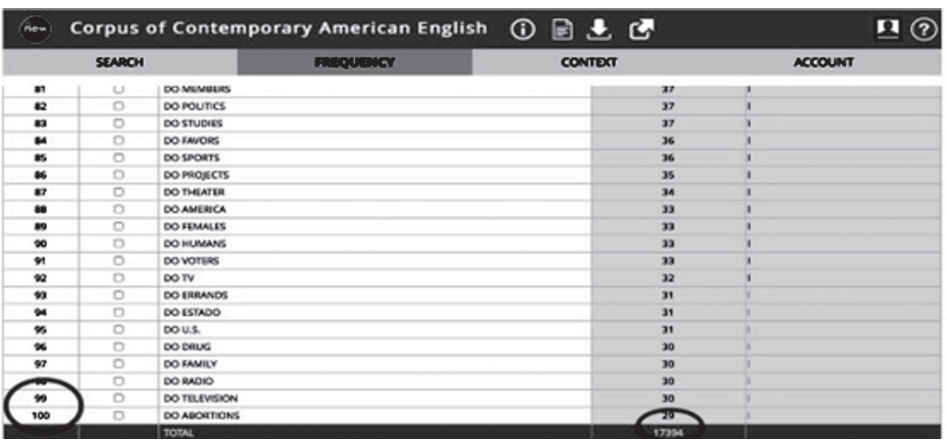

Figure 4. *Example Output of a Search (Do_n) in the Interface*

In Figure 4, it is depicted a search of the command "Do_n" which requests the corpus of finding collocations of the verb "do" with potential nouns, resulting in 100 possible combinations of "do" with nouns and 17,394 examples in total. These results hindered students' decision-making and made them feel overwhelmed. Similarly, Figure 5 displays a search of the command "think_i" which requests the corpus of finding collocations of the verb "think" with potential prepositions, resulting in 85 possible combinations and 85,448 examples.

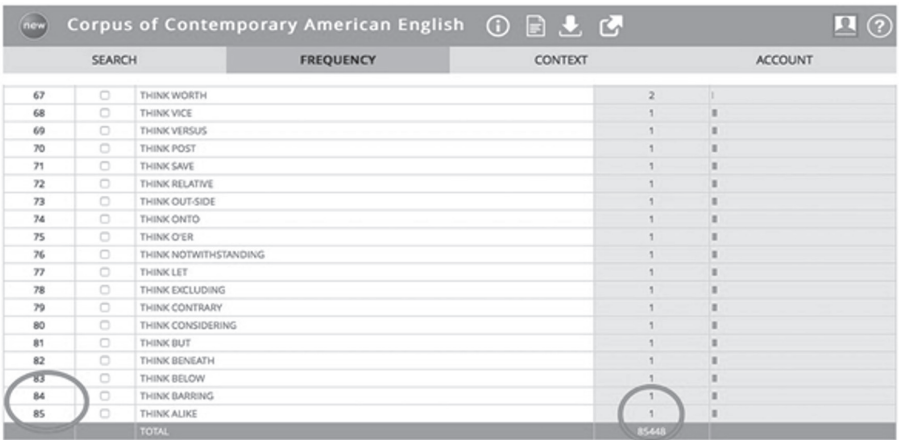

Figure 5. *Example Output of a Search (think_i) in the Interface*

This issue is another difficulty the students faced, as they had to decide on the most suitable option for their writing task by analyzing samples. This process was time-consuming and quite difficult for students with poor analytical skills. Furthermore, I confirmed students' difficulty with the number of results per search after analyzing post-implementation survey answers and notes in the teacher's journal, as evident in excerpts 11 and 12.

Excerpt 11. Post-implementation survey, question 4, On a scale from 1 to 5, how difficult was it to use a corpus (COCA) for correcting writing mistakes? Being 1 Not difficult and 5 Too difficult. Why?
"It still creates some difficulty. Sometimes it was difficult to take a decision about what option given by the corpus to use" (Student 8)

Excerpt 12. Teacher's journal comments.
"I think they needed more practice on how to use the corpus and results interpretation" (teacher's journal) *"I will make a tutorial video to reinforce their (participants) knowledge about how to use the corpus and how to interpret results so that they can feel more confident when using the tool. (teacher's journal)*

Although the participants had difficulty making decisions and interpreting the results, additional training and support materials were provided to students for using the corpus effectively through the training and production stages. Moreover, using a corpus for error correction in writing may create difficulties of a different nature. Nevertheless, the findings revealed that by implementing a corpus-based strategy appropriately, the participants may revise their essays autonomously before producing a final version and enhancing their language awareness. More importantly, the participants understood what was involved in producing high-quality and error-free written compositions.

Discussion

The present study showed the importance of incorporating error correction processes in EFL scenarios to further student writing production improvements. First, the students could self-correct their collocation mistakes using a corpus as a language use reference, relevant as teaching about collocation use has been neglected in ELT classrooms (Hashemi et al., 2012)the need for emphasis on collocations has received increasingly attention in the field of EFL teaching learning processes. Several researchers pointed out the benefits of learning collocations such as increasing learners' language competence, enhancing learners' communicative competence, and being toward native-like. So the aim of present study is to focus on investigating collocational error types made by the participants, in EFL learning, The issues for teachers during teaching collocations, the frequency of collocational errors, and the sources of collocational errors. The participants' perceptions of difficulty in collocations were also examined. Moreover, it attempts to find answers for these questions. What are instruction effects on learners' collocational competence? Which collocations need to be learned? . Similarly, the corpus contributed to deal with the use of prepositions, which is a difficult aspect to master due to their polysemous nature (Lorincz & Gordon, 2012). This is aligned with previous studies that found positive outcomes related to error correction using a corpus (Gaskell & Cobb, 2004; Lai, 2015; Smirnova, 2017; Tono et al., 2014; Yoon & Jo, 2014). Most of the students of this study showed improvements over the production and edition stages and found the tool beneficial and functional. Although a few of them had difficulty using the tool at the beginning of the process, this was addressed by revisiting some concepts to understand the tool commands and providing them with more guided practice.

In addition, the students demonstrably improved their language awareness, confirming the outcomes of previous studies (Hegelheimer, 2006; Phoocharoensil, 2012; Vieira, 2013; Vyatkina, 2016). The students could differentiate parts of the speech (verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, among others) and learn to use them properly in written tasks by the end of the implementation. Although this was out of the scope of the study, an emergent theme in

the data analysis showed that the participants indirectly improved their language awareness, particularly with the correct use of the corpus.

Implementing corpora in error correction processes fosters students' autonomy considerably echoing the conclusions of other researchers (Chambers, 2005; Huang, 2011; Kheirzadeh & Marandi, 2014; Luo & Liao, 2015; Yoon, 2008; Zhang & Liu, 2014). Over 80% of the participants expressed that, toward the end of the intervention, they needed less intervention from the teacher; they kept using the tool for corroborating the correct use of the lexicon. This was aligned with the notes of the teacher's journal which indicated that, as weeks went by, the students requested less help.

Finally, students' successful use of corpora for error correction requires well-planned training and practice. Although this study did not aim to find issues related to the constraints, training is key to achieving the expected outcomes. This validates the findings of a previous study that concluded that training is an important factor when using corpora in the classroom (Vannestål & Lindquist, 2007). Additionally, the findings of this research pitted this researcher against Boulton's (2010) conclusion, which asserted that implementing corpora in teaching might be too technically challenging.

Regardless of the difficulties that using a corpus may pose to educators in language teaching, technology-based tools are unstoppable, and students are using them more. Cellphones, tablets, social networks, and Artificial Intelligence draw students' attention and keep them on track through exposure to fast content and solutions. This situation demands teachers and school administrators adaptative dynamics to provide students with more meaningful content based on their needs and what new technologies impose. This must serve to advocate for the implementation of more robust training programs for educators and policy on how to integrate technology purposefully in educational settings.

Additionally, the role of teachers and students demands a shift in the dynamics in the classroom. Ultimately, students have already realized that they can learn at their own pace and with the material of their preference. This requires teachers to redesign their lessons carefully using instructional design models and technologies that favor their learning environment. This, in turn, will allow teachers to focus more on integrating strategies that empower and encourage learners to have more agency in their learning process.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations of this research was the participants' lack of experience in writing correction procedures. They did not initially know how to organize their ideas or draw an outline. Moreover, they were not familiar with correction codes or annotated writing tasks. This limitation posed difficulty as I had to invest more time than expected

in introducing the participants to various procedures and concepts so that they navigated smoothly throughout the implementation phases.

Another limitation was related to the time available for the intervention. It was impossible to initiate the intervention as planned because the school board allocated just a few hours of the total English lessons per week. Thus, the researcher modified and planned new activities and materials to provide students with optional input. For this purpose, the researcher made video tutorials, worksheets, and PowerPoint presentations to cover all the contents necessary for a successful intervention and favoring the student learning curve.

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Appendix A. Surveys
Name of the Project: Configuring Collocations and Prepositions in Essay Writing through a Corpus-based Strategy

Pre-Implementation Survey

First, I would like to thank you for being part of this research study and inform you that this survey will be used for research purposes. Please, answer the questions herein marking with an (x) and justifying when necessary. Second, your answers will not be subject of any evaluation, therefore it is not mandatory to provide your full name.

Objective: This survey is aimed to identify your knowledge related to writing methodologies and computer-based tools.

Name:_____ _____ **Date**:_____

1. Do you know any writing methodology (Specific steps to do a writing task)? If your answer is Yes, write which one.

   Yes ____

   No __ _ _

   Which one? _____

2. How useful may be using a writing methodology when doing your writing assignments? Explain

   _____

   _____

3. Do you think that computer-based tools (computerized instruments or software) could contribute with your writing process?

   Yes _____
   No _____
   Why?

   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Have you ever used computer-based tools such as online dictionaries, translators, tutorial videos, etc.; to improve the quality of your writing tasks? Yes _____ No _____

If YES, Which ones? (You can select more than 1 option)

a. Online Dictionaries
b. Forums
c. Translators
d. Tutorial videos
e. Blogs
f. Corpora (Data bases that contain examples of the use of a language)
g. Wikis
h. Social Network

5. How long do you use the abovementioned tools to do your writing tasks?

a. Less than 1 hour per week
b. 1-2 hours per week
c. 3-6 hours per week
d. More than 6 hours per week

Name of the Project: Configuring Collocations and Prepositions in Essay Writing through a Corpus-based Strategy

While-Implementation Survey

First, I would like to thank you for being part of this research study and inform you that this survey will be used for research purposes. Please, answer the questions herein marking with an (x) and justifying when necessary. Second, your answers will not be subject of any evaluation, therefore it is not mandatory to provide your full name.

Name:_____ Date:_____

1. How useful have you found the training workshops? Mark only one number for each item

Workshops	1 Very useless	2 Useless	3 Fairly useful	4 Useful	5 Very useful
Process Approach					
Essay Writing Structure and Correction Code					
Collocations and Prepositions					
How corpora works					

2. Which workshop did you find the most difficult?

a. Collocations and prepositions
b. Essay writing structure and correction code
c. Process approach
d. How corpora works

Why? _____

_____

_____

3. What recommendations would you like to make about the given workshops?

_____

_____

Name of the Project: Configuring Collocations and Prepositions in Essay Writing through a Corpus-based Strategy

Post-Implementation Survey

First, I would like to thank you for being part of this research study and inform you that this survey will be used for research purposes. Please, answer the questions herein marking with an (x) and justifying when necessary. Second, your answers will not be subject of any evaluation, therefore it is not mandatory to provide your full name.

Name:_____ Date: _____

1. After using the process approach (pre-writing, drafting, editing and publishing), do you think you have improved your writing skills?

   Yes ____
   No ____

   Why? _____
   _____
   _____
   How? _____
   Why not? _____

2. Do you think the corpus (COCA) is useful to correct writing mistakes?

   Yes ____

   No ____

   Why? _____
   _____
   _____

3. In which aspects do you consider the corpus contributed the most during the editing stage? (You can choose more than one option)

   a. Use of prepositions
   b. Collocations
   c. Spelling
   d. Word order
   e. None of them

4. On a scale from 1 to 5, how difficult was it to use a corpus (COCA) for correcting writing mistakes?

   Not difficult (1) Little difficult (2) Fairly difficult (3) Difficult (4) Too difficult (5)

   Why? _____

   _____

   _____

5. Do you think that the use of a corpus has helped you to become more autonomous when correcting writing mistakes?

   Yes ____

   No ____

   Why? _____

   _____

6. On a scale from 1 to 5, how autonomous have you become?

   1. Very dependent
   2. Dependent
   3. Little autonomous
   4. Very autonomous
   3. Totally autonomous

Appendix B. Teacher's Journal

Observer's name:	Session:	Date:	Time:	Implementation Stage:	Number of students:
Summary and objectives of the class activities:					
What went well? Why? How do you know? Give evidence from: - the planning - the lesson pace - the activities carried out - the students' production - class atmosphere	**Description**				
What didn't go so well? Why? How do you know? Give evidence from: - the planning - the lesson pace - the activities carried out - the students' production - the class atmosphere					
What would you do differently, if anything at all, if you were to teach this lesson again? Why?					

Appendix C. Writing Sample

Write about the following topic: Overpopulation of urban areas has led to numerous problems. Identify one or two serious ones and suggest ways that governments and individuals can tackle these problems.?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience. Write at least 250 words. (Approx. 4 paragraphs of 5 or 6 lines)

Excerpt 17. Student's writing sample

OVER POPULATION

Like his name says overpopulation is when ^ are a lot of people in the world or in a country and do not exist the necessary implements or the space for all these people. This is a serious problem because it can produce a low quality of life, and the biggest problem is that anybody make a solution for this having a lot of possibilities for decrease (VT) it. Another problem is that teenagers get pregnant in an early age because they don't buy pills for preventing.

The central problem is about teenagers because they dont use pills and don't think in the consequences that this will give you. A solution for this is that schools implement some campaigns for them and explain the consequences, but if we don't regulate it, this could produce a regular or a low quality of life. For example, you can see in traffic lights some poor people asking for some coins and sometimes they have a bigger family but they couldn't give them a good quality of life because children need a lot of things for have (VT) good health conditions. This last one could be one of the consequences of overpopulation if we don't prevent it early. One possible solution for this problem is that the States build some free schools, foundations, hospitals and houses for poor people because they really need it.

Overpopulation requires a lot of implements to guarantee to teenagers a good quality of life for example: it needs better infrastructures for hospitals with ~~an~~ advanced technology and where the State could help or give some facilities for single mothers or housewives that don't have the necessary support for keep (VT) their families. It's incredible that a woman of 15 years old gets pregnant so child and in some cases is because they don't have the required time or attention for they parents. For example one family have (VT) 2 children and the higher (WW) one it' s 15 years old and her sister is 10 years old, their parents work all day and on weekends they only sleep and they don't worry about their kids. So in weeks the higher

one go out with their friends and she comes back before they parents arrive to their house. Months later, the higher met a guy that she likes so now they are boyfriends. She goes to his house and there passed some acts that they didn't ~~have~~ plan but time later she ~~fell into account~~ realize that they didn't use protection, so now she is mother. She decided to talk with his boyfriend and said what it was the consequence. The guy decided to go out to the country and never call her. She has to accept the consequence and face the situation and get ahead. She new family and their parents in this moment fall into account that their children need more attention.

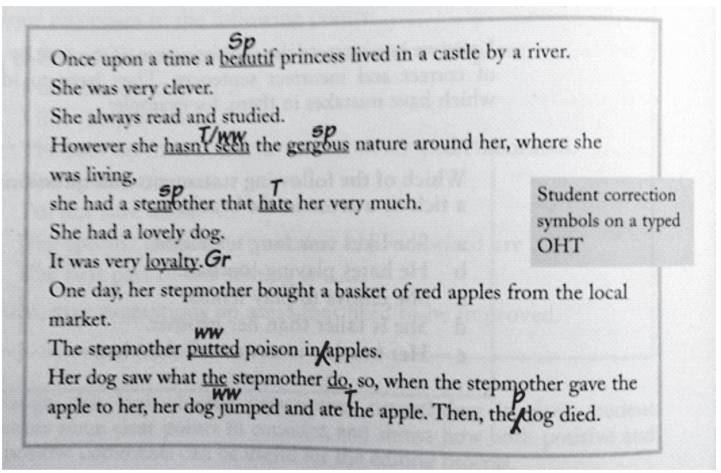
Finally, we have to find a solution for this problem if we dont want to see the terrible consequences that this produce. I believe that overpopulation is a the biggest problem that if we dont react in this moment we could have serious consequences because the world don't have the enough space for all these people, the hospitals dont reach and the States does not have the necessary resources for maintain (VT) all of them.

Appendix D. Correction Code

1. Look at the following table and read the example errors. Then, look at the next picture to see an example of how the writing assignments are revised.

CORRECTION SYMBOLS LIST

Symbol	Meaning	Example error
SP	Spelling mistake	The **answer** is **obvius**.
VT	Verb tense	I **have seen** him yesterday.
WO	Word order	I bought a **house red**.
WW	Wrong word	I am very **sensible**.
C	Capital letter	I live in **miami**.
^	Something is missing	He told ^ that he was worry.
Ø	Something is not necessary	He was not **more stronger.**
?	It is unclear	That is a **very excited photograph**.
Win a salary	Collocation mistake	Diego **win a salary** monthly.
Interested on	Preposition mistake	Diana is really **interested** on tablets.



Correction code and sample taken and adapted from: Harmer, J. (2004). How to teach writing. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Appendix E. Consent Letter Participants and Parents

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA SABANA
COLEGIO HISPANOAMERICANO CONDE ANSÚREZ
Carta de Consentimiento Padres de Familia y Participantes

INICIO

Investigación conducida por: Leonardo Aníbal Alba López

Estudiante III Semestre - Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo
Universidad de la Sabana

Titulo del Proyecto: "Configuring Collocations and Prepositions in Essay Writing through a Corpus-based Strategy"
"Uso de un *Corpus* (COCA) para mejorar el uso de colocaciones y preposiciones en escritura de ensayos"

Señores
Padres de familia de participantes
Participantes
Grado 10B
Ciudad

Cordial Saludo,

La presente tiene como objeto invitar a los estudiantes e informar a los padres de familia de los posibles participantes en el estudio de investigación titulado "Corpus as a Tool for Improving the Presentation Aspect of Essays in a B1 Group". Dicha investigación pretende explorar el impacto que tiene el uso de un corpus como herramienta de ayuda para el mejoramiento de las habilidades escritas de los estudiantes, así como determinar cuán autónomos se vuelven los estudiantes cuando se utiliza dicha herramienta para corregir sus trabajos escritos. De ser aprobada la investigación, esta se llevará a cabo durante el cuarto periodo académico del año en curso entre los meses de septiembre a noviembre en el horario de clase habitual.

Durante la investigación los estudiantes recibirán 4 talleres de capacitación relacionados con las temáticas de la investigación. El primer taller tiene que ver con el reforzamiento de conocimientos relacionados con aspectos lingüísticos como lo son las colocaciones y el uso de

preposiciones en inglés. Posteriormente, recibirán un taller relacionado con una metodología llamada "process approach" para desarrollar habilidades escritas. Adicionalmente, los estudiantes recibirán una capacitación integrada relacionada con la escritura de ensayos en inglés y los diferentes usos de un *corpus* para mejorar la calidad de trabajos escritos. Finalmente, los estudiantes empezarán una fase de producción escrita en la cual deberán aplicar los conocimientos adquiridos durante los talleres de capacitación.

Los datos para la investigación se recogerán a través de diarios hechos por el docente, encuestas a los estudiantes y los escritos que los estudiantes hagan durante la fase de producción.

Los estudiantes decidirán participar en el estudio de manera voluntaria a través de una carta de consentimiento. Es importante aclarar que no habrá consecuencias negativas si los estudiantes resuelven no participar o disponen desvincularse de la investigación en cualquier momento. Es decir, los datos obtenidos de él/ella/ellos/ellas no serán utilizados.

De igual manera, cabe aclarar que los estudiantes siguen asistiendo a sus horas de clase de inglés normalmente. Sin embargo, tres de las siete horas que toman semanalmente, se destinaran a todo lo relacionado con la investigación en mención. Asimismo, se les informa que esta investigación cuenta con el total apoyo de las directivas del colegio.

Finalmente, toda la información que los estudiantes suministren será mantenida bajo estricta confidencialidad. Los resultados y conclusiones de la investigación serán presentados únicamente en reuniones profesionales o publicadas en respetadas revistas educativas, pero el nombre y/o cualquier información que pueda identificar a los participantes no serán revelados. Los participantes serán tratados anónimamente.

Si existe preguntas relacionadas con la investigación y su desarrollo, por favor comuníquese con el profesor Leonardo Aníbal Alba López, encargado del proyecto y docente del Colegio Hispanoamericano Conde Ansúrez.

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DESPRENDIBLE DE AUTORIZACIÓN

SÍ autorizo _____ NO autorizo _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Nombre y firma de los padres
de familia y/o acudientes

Nombre y firma del estudiante

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HOW

The Effect of Teachers' Age on Their Beliefs about Action Research: Implications for Second Language Education

El Efecto de la Edad de los Docentes en sus Creencias sobre la Investigación-Acción: Implicaciones para la Educación de una Segunda Lengua

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University of Gonabad, Iran

Abstract

Despite the growing body of studies on action research (AR) in second/foreign language (L2) education, little is known about teachers' beliefs about AR among different age groups. Hence, this study investigates whether L2 teachers' beliefs about AR vary by considering teachers' age. The Inventory on Teachers' Beliefs about Action Research (ITBAR) is a specifically designed questionnaire to investigate the matter and was distributed to 157 Iranian ELT teachers. Then 120 teachers were randomly divided into three age groups, namely starters (20–34 years), middle-aged (35–49 years), and seniors (50+). A one-way ANOVA test was used to test whether the difference among the groups was significant. The findings showed that teachers can experience age effects in the demanding teaching profession. According to the data, younger teachers had the highest mean scores for their beliefs about AR in comparison to their middle-aged and senior colleagues. This might be attributed to the different perspectives of these teachers toward professional development, the role of pre-service teacher programs, and the familiarity of senior teachers with the limitations of conducting AR in real classroom contexts. It is then suggested that designing collaborative AR projects between beginning and senior teachers and institutional support might lead to more fruitful and positive results.

Keywords: action research, ITBAR questionnaire, professional development, teachers' age, teachers' beliefs

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Resumen

A pesar del creciente cuerpo de estudios sobre investigación-acción (IA) en la educación de una segunda lengua/lengua extranjera (L2), se sabe poco acerca de las creencias de los docentes sobre AR entre diferentes grupos de edad. Por lo tanto, este estudio tiene como objetivo investigar si las creencias de los profesores de L2 sobre IA varían según la edad de los profesores. El Inventario de Creencias de los Docentes sobre la Investigación-Acción (ITBAR) se distribuyó a 157 docentes iraníes de enseñanza del idioma inglés. Luego, 120 de ellos se dividieron aleatoriamente en tres grupos de edad, a saber, principiantes (20 a 34 años), de mediana edad (35 a 49 años) y mayores (50+). Para observar si la diferencia entre los grupos era significativa, se utilizó una prueba de ANOVA de una vía. Los hallazgos mostraron que los docentes pueden experimentar los efectos de la edad en la exigente profesión de la enseñanza. Según los datos, los docentes más jóvenes obtuvieron las puntuaciones medias más altas con respecto a sus creencias sobre la IA en comparación con sus colegas de mediana edad y mayores. Esto podría atribuirse a las diferentes perspectivas de estos docentes hacia el desarrollo profesional, el papel de los programas de docentes en formación y la familiaridad de los docentes experimentados con las limitaciones de realizar IA en contextos reales de aula. Entonces se sugiere que el diseño de proyectos de IA colaborativos entre profesores principiantes y senior y el apoyo institucional puedan conducir a resultados más fructíferos y positivos.

Palabras clave: investigación-acción, ITBAR, desarrollo profesional, edad de los docentes, creencias de los docentes

Introduction

Studying teachers' beliefs, as a well-established aspect of teacher cognition (Borg, 2019), has been considered important in the field of second/foreign language (L2) teacher education. This importance arises from the fact that previous research has shown the strong effect of teachers' beliefs on their classroom practices (e.g., Farrell & Ives, 2015; Kuzborska, 2011; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004), and the important role these beliefs play in influencing teachers' behaviors, actions, and interactions in the classroom (Borg, 2006). However, the main reason for studying L2 teachers' beliefs, according to Borg (2015), is that "they provide insight into the psychological context for teaching and teacher learning which can inform the design of initiatives which encourage teachers to learn, change or behave in particular ways" (p. 501).

Following such an important reason, teachers' beliefs about action research (AR) in L2 have recently attracted the attention of researchers as these beliefs directly affect conducting AR in the L2 classroom context and influence how teachers approach the task of doing AR. This is because these beliefs "shape teachers' perception, analysis and interpretation of what is happening in their classrooms during the AR process" (Rahmani Doqaruni et al., 2021, p. 429). It has also been proposed that making teachers aware of their beliefs about doing research, such as AR, results in more teacher research engagement (Borg, 2007). In this way, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the relationship between teachers'

beliefs and doing AR in L2 education (e.g., Atay, 2006, 2008; Mehrani, 2017; Rahmani Doqaruni et al., 2017; Rainey, 2000; Wyatt, 2011).

Even though teachers' beliefs affect conducting AR, the role of different factors in shaping these beliefs in L2 teacher education has not been appropriately investigated. This is an important issue as the beliefs are multi-dimensional; various sources are involved in their formation. As Soodmand Afshar and Ghasemi (2017, p. 175) point out "so many factors such as teachers' age, experience, family traditions, etc., can be effective in shaping their beliefs". One way to gain insight into L2 teachers' beliefs about AR is to see whether their beliefs are influenced by different factors, such as their age. In this order of ideas, the present study's main purpose is to find out whether teachers' beliefs about AR are influenced by their age.

By identifying the matches or mismatches in teachers' beliefs about AR concerning their age, it is hoped to better understand junior and senior teachers' beliefs about AR. Consequently, this understanding helps teacher trainers, in-service teachers, and prospective teachers deal with such beliefs more efficiently. Moreover, as the present study aims to find out teachers' beliefs about AR from different age groups, it provides an opportunity to examine the changes that might have happened in their beliefs over time.

Research Questions

To shed more light on teachers' beliefs about AR in L2 education, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Are L2 teachers' beliefs about AR affected by their age?
2. What might be the reasons for the possible existence of such an effect?

Literature Review

Action Research in Second Language Education

Although definitions of AR vary, there are some typical features associated with it, which are summarized by Burns (1999, p. 30) as follows:

1. AR is contextual, small-scale, and localized – it identifies and investigates problems within a specific situation.
2. It is evaluative and reflective as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.

3. It is participatory as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners, and researchers.
4. Changes in practice are based on the collection of information or data which provides the impetus for change.

Wallace (1998) also sums up the differences between AR and other more traditional types of research. He states that *AR* "is very focused on individual or small-group professional practice and is not so concerned with making general statements. It is therefore more 'user-friendly' in that it may make little or no use of statistical techniques" (p. 18). Unlike ordinary research, which may investigate theoretical issues and topics considered important by scholars in the field, AR typically focuses on questions that emerge from a teacher's immediate classroom situation (Crookes, 1993); unlike participatory AR, which emphasizes learner participation in identifying the topic to be researched, AR is often teacher defined and directed (Auerbach, 1994).

More recent approaches to AR in L2 have emphasized its contribution to an individual teacher's professional self-development rather than its potential to initiate large-scale reform (Campbell & Tovar, 2006; Chou, 2011; Poon, 2008). In addition, AR has been oriented toward various purposes of teacher education in the field of second language teaching such as the following: it can help L2 teachers,

- Recognize the importance of learning how to seek answers to their questions (Tedick & Walker, 1995),
- Address and find solutions to problems in a specific teaching or learning situation (Hadley, 2003), develop personal theories about L2 learning (Crookes, 1997),
- Provide a vehicle for reducing gaps between academic research findings and practical classroom applications (Sayer, 2005), and
- Acquaint teachers with research skills and enhance their knowledge of conducting research (Crookes & Chandler, 2001).

Thus, since the issue of teacher development has become central to the field of L2 teacher education (Edge, 2005; Richards & Farrell, 2005), AR has gained its reputation as a reliable tool to this end.

Teachers' Beliefs about Action Research

The relationship between teachers' beliefs and AR has been an issue of interest in L2 education in the last two decades. Rainey's (2000) study was one of the first attempts that reported the findings of an international investigation about the opinions of English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers from ten different countries concerning AR. She found that

the beliefs of teachers who knew about AR were more under the primary type of AR, i.e., AR for professional self-development, as they believed that AR could tackle an issue in their classrooms or enhance their teaching practices. Atay (2006) developed a collaborative AR model to help pre- and in-service EFL teachers use research in their classroom contexts. The results showed that changes in beliefs about AR were of considerable importance to those teachers. In another study, Atay (2008) conducted a training program with EFL teachers in Turkey. The data showed that teachers generally considered AR useful and mentioned that the AR process positively affected their beliefs.

In the context of Iran, Mehrani (2017) considered the advantages and disadvantages of AR by considering the Iranian EFL teachers' perspectives. Despite some challenges in conducting AR such as time limitations, lack of specialized knowledge of AR, administrative restrictions, and lack of collaboration, teachers in his study believed that AR has the potential to broaden their understanding of language education, provide them with a framework for reflecting on their practice, empower them to play more important roles in educational systems, and heighten their awareness of students' needs. In another study from Iran, Dehghan and Sahragard (2015) found that most Iranian teachers believe that AR is a kind of professional activity that should be carried out by expert researchers and not by typical teachers. Rahmani Doqaruni et al. (2017) also examined Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about AR. Their findings showed that most of the teachers considered AR the same as observation, could distinguish between AR and conventional research, preferred collaborative AR, and, interestingly, did not view AR as a tool for professional development.

Teachers' Age

Teachers' age has been of considerable importance to researchers in the teacher education field as it has been proposed that teachers are likely to face different needs and go through different experiences at different times in their careers (Lavigne, 2014). To get insight into teachers' experiences as they move through different developmental stages during their careers, different frameworks have been developed which are roughly based on teachers' ages. Two well-known frameworks of this type are Huberman's (1995) teacher life cycle stages and Steffy and Wolfe's (2001) teacher career life cycle. According to Huberman (1995), teachers go through different phases called novice, mid-career, and late-career. The novice phase (one to three years) is characterized by the novice teachers' struggle for survival in the new context. Then, the mid-career phase (four to six years) is characterized by stabilization, experimentation, and taking stock. The late-career phase encompasses serenity and disengagement, as teachers either find job satisfaction and become content or do not find job satisfaction and become disengaged.

Steffy and Wolfe (2001) also suggested a six-phase career life cycle continuum. According to their framework, teachers move from an initial novice phase which includes their first teaching experiences as pre-service students to an apprenticeship phase characterized by planning and delivering instruction to students. The following professional and expert phases are characterized by enhancing self-confidence as teachers and achieving high professional standards, respectively. Teachers then pass through the distinguished phase of their careers as they begin to influence education at city, state, and even national levels. The last phase is called the emeritus phase and is marked by a lifelong achievement in the profession.

Many studies have investigated teachers' ages regarding these stages with interesting findings. For example, collecting data from 1143 English teachers, Day et al. (2006) found that teachers develop commitment and efficacy in their first years of the teaching profession. However, teachers are challenged by balancing work and life in the central years of their careers. Moreover, some teachers begin to show detachment signs and lose their motivation during this phase. In addition, it was revealed that the final years of the teaching profession result in a significant difference in the motivation of primary and secondary school teachers, with the former retaining it and the latter losing it.

Considering the three different work stages in the teachers' career, Borman and Dowling's (2008) meta-analysis study showed that the number of teachers who drop out at the beginning of their career is high, decreases during their mid-career, and increases again as teachers reach their retirement. Farrell (2014) reported the findings of a case study that involved reflections of three mid-career ESL college teachers in Canada. The teacher reflection group was asked to analyze and reflect on their work, inside and outside the classroom. It was found that the three mid-career teachers had negative attitudes toward school administration but had positive feelings toward their interactions with other teachers. They also pointed out that being around students was the most satisfying and rewarding part of their professional career. The findings further revealed that "two of the main factors that contributed to the three teachers reaching a [mid]career plateau of sorts were a recognition of the front-loaded nature of teaching and a lack of advancement, and longevity" (Farrell, 2014, p. 513).

As reviewing the literature shows, teachers' age is important in teacher education studies as it affects teachers' beliefs at different times in their careers. Despite such an important consideration, the effect of teachers' age on their beliefs about AR has not been investigated in previous literature. Thus, the present study aims to fill the gap by studying whether teachers' beliefs about AR are influenced by their age.

Methodology

The present study is quantitative, and the data are gathered through a survey. The following sections provide more information about the questionnaire and data-gathering process.

Instrument

The present study used the Inventory on Teachers' Beliefs about Action Research (ITBAR), which has recently been developed and validated to find out L2 teachers' beliefs about AR (for details on its development and validation see Rahmani Doqaruni et al., 2021). The ITBAR consists of 21 items, categorized under five main factors (see the Appendix). The first factor is named *Teacher Empowerment* because its six items refer to issues related to equipping teachers. The second factor is named *Practical Issues* because this 4-item factor measures teachers' beliefs about the effect of AR on their classroom practice. The third factor is named *Professional Development* as its three items reflect teachers' views about how they could develop their profession. The fourth factor is named *Institutional Culture;* its four items deal with the institutions' roles in encouraging teachers to do AR. The fifth factor is called *Research Engagement* because its four items consider teachers' views about research.

Participants and Data Collection Procedure

The target sample of the present study consisted of practicing EFL teachers at different private ELT institutes in Mashhad, northeastern Iran. The ITBAR was only distributed to teachers who stated that they knew about AR and were already familiar with this concept. Before administering the survey, the purpose and nature of the study were briefly explained, and all participants received information about the voluntary nature of the study with anonymity assured. The participants were encouraged to ask questions about the items of the ITBAR in case they did not understand their meaning or needed further explanation. The average time for completing the questionnaire was 15 minutes.

The original number of participants in the present study was 157 teachers. However, 120 randomly selected instruments were used for data analysis by considering the appointed age groups (see next section). In terms of gender, 73 of the respondents were female (61%) and 47 were male (39%). All the participants had academic education and their main major was teaching English as a foreign language (93%). Concerning the participants' ELT qualification, 103 had Bachelor's (86%), 11 had Master's (9%), and 6 had professional ELT certificates (5%).

Age Categorization

As this study is about teachers' beliefs about AR across different career stages, a comparison of three successive age groups of the teachers was made based on Van der Heijden's (2006) division of career stages, namely starters (20–34 years), middle-aged (35–49 years), and seniors (50+). The reason for choosing this framework over other existing ones

is that it makes categorization easier and results in groupings that are easier to understand and discuss.

Results

Table 1 shows the mean scores of three age groups. According to the results, teachers in the starter group (20–34 years) had the highest mean scores for their beliefs about AR (M=183.10, SD=17.762). Middle-aged teachers (35–49 years) were second in this respect (M=178.33, SD=23.540), and the last group was senior teachers (M=175.50, SD=21.868).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics*

N		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
20-34	40	183.10	17.762	2.808	177.42	188.78	146	216
35-49	40	178.33	23.540	3.722	170.80	185.85	109	216
50+	40	175.50	21.868	3.458	168.51	182.49	138	213
Total	120	178.98	21.252	1.940	175.13	182.82	109	216

A one-way ANOVA test was run to test whether the difference among the groups was significant. As Table 2 shows, there was a statistically significant difference in teachers' beliefs about AR for their age, F (2, 117) = 3.941, p=.021.

Table 2. *One-way ANOVA*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3541.550	2	1770.775	3.941	.021
Within Groups	52564.375	117	449.268		
Total	56105.925	119			

As Table 3 shows, the LSD (least significant difference) post hoc test indicates that the mean difference between the starter group and senior teachers is statistically significant. The *p* value for the LSD post hoc test is .03.

Table 3. *LSD Post Hoc Test*

		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
20-34	35-49	-5.653	3.565	.216	-15.35	4.21
	50+	-10.425	3.565	.034	-19.41	-.56
35-49	20-34	5.653	3.565	.216	-4.21	15.35
	50+	-3.176	3.565	.421	-12.87	5.39
50+	20-34	10.425	3.565	.034	.56	19.41
	35-49	3.176	3.565	.421	-5.39	12.87

Discussion

According to the data, younger teachers had the highest mean scores for their beliefs about AR in comparison to their middle-aged and senior colleagues. Moreover, the follow-up post hoc test showed that the significant difference among the groups lies between starters and seniors. Thus, the findings underscore the notion that teachers can experience age effects in the demanding teaching profession. This might be attributed to the different perspectives among the teacher groups toward professional development. In other words, beginning teachers consider professional development as an intrinsic motivator to increase their self-efficacy and, at the same time, as an extrinsic tool to build their careers (Guglielmi et al., 2016). However, as older teachers approach their retirement, professional development loses its attractiveness. In this way, AR, as a reliable tool for professional development (Atay, 2006, 2008; Chou, 2011), seems to have more positive effects on young teachers' beliefs.

Meanwhile, the role of pre-service teacher programs should be acknowledged. The introduction and practice of AR are increasingly becoming an indispensable component of initial teacher education programs worldwide (Dassa & Nichols, 2020; Phillips & Carr, 2010; Volk, 2009). This is because AR helps teachers reflect on their teaching practices and evaluate their beliefs, which are essential professional development ingredients (Schon, 1983). In this way, AR enables beginning teachers to adopt more reflective and analytical approaches in dealing with educational challenges, especially when they have difficulty in dealing with the gaps between theory and practice (Clarke & Fournillier, 2012; Crawford-Garrett et al., 2015).

In addition, it has been suggested that AR helps pre-service teachers to acknowledge a more reflective approach to teaching (Kosnik & Beck, 2000), guides their practice in the future (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), equips them to solve their daily challenges and issues

(Hatch et al., 2007), and helps them to become inquiry-oriented in their teaching (Aras, 2020; Moran, 2007). As Mitchell et al. (2009) point out, "research becomes a tool beginning teachers can use to continuously inform and improve practice, engage ongoing expertise development and not something student teachers read about in college and promptly forget when entering the world of teaching" (p. 349). The increasing adoption of AR in pre-service teacher education means that younger teachers are more aware of AR as a pedagogical tool for professional development. Ginns et al. (2001) suggested that pre-service teacher programs are relevant in developing and shaping student teachers' understandings of AR. In their own words, "requiring students to engage in action research, in particular, in the final year of pre-service programs, could play an important role in developing their awareness and understanding of, and immersion in, the culture of action research" (Ginns et al., 2001, p. 114). Consequently, this awareness has resulted in more profound effects on their beliefs about AR contrasting their older colleagues in the present study.

While many studies emphasize the benefits of engaging student teachers with AR in initial teacher education programs (e.g., Burns, 2009; Lattimer, 2012; Phillips & Carr, 2010; Price & Valli, 2005; Ulvik, 2014), some others question the practicality of AR due to various limitations in real classroom contexts. For instance, many previous studies have found lack of time as a major obstacle to conducting research by teachers in the L2 classroom context (e.g., Allison & Carey, 2007; Atay, 2006; Barkhuizen, 2009; Borg, 2007, 2008, 2009; Burns et al., 2016). According to Rahmani Doqaruni et al. (2018),

Although time is more of a structural factor, which will not in and of itself guarantee that high standards of professional development will be fulfilled, reviewing the related literature shows that there has not been provision made for time within the workload of teachers to accommodate the necessary ingredients for conducting AR (p. 53).

Yet other factors which affect teachers' beliefs negatively concerning doing AR include lack of specialized knowledge about AR (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2009; Mehrani, 2014; Rahmani Doqaruni et al., 2019), lack of support by colleagues (e.g., Burns & Rochsantiningsih, 2006; Rahmani Doqaruni et al., 2019) and educational institutions (e.g., Mehrani, 2017), and priority of teaching over doing research (e.g., Allison & Carey, 2007; Barkhuizen, 2009; Rahmani Doqaruni et al., 2019). As senior teachers are more familiar with these problems and limitations due to longer stay in the profession, they have raised negative beliefs and attitudes toward AR. This insight corresponds to the results of the present study.

Implications

Concerning the findings, collaborative AR projects between beginning and senior teachers might lead to more fruitful and positive results. It is believed that AR not only encourages teachers to reflect on their practice and helps them connect theory and practice,

but also has the power to "link pre-service and in-service teaching" (Kitchen & Stevens, 2008, p. 8). In this way, the enthusiasm and knowledge of beginning teachers about AR and the familiarity of older teachers with the challenges of conducting AR in classroom contexts can be allied so that AR can benefit both groups of teachers. In other words, student teachers need to know that teaching can be a better experience in collaboration with experienced colleagues, and success is largely determined by collaborating with expert teachers (Mitchell et al., 2009). Instead of doing AR in isolation in their classrooms, collaborative AR provides opportunities for teachers to "open [a] communicative space" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 578) as it encourages them to talk about their classroom experiences.

In this way, the previous research has found positive results between pre- and in-service teacher AR collaboration not only in L2 education but in the general field of teacher education. For example, Atay (2006) used a collaborative AR model to make L2 pre-service teachers familiar with research in real classroom contexts and to help in-service teachers make a relationship between research and teaching. The results showed that both groups benefited from conducting the collaborative AR as it provided them with a framework to systematically observe, evaluate, and reflect on their teaching practices in the classroom. More interestingly, the results also revealed that collaborative AR projects caused teachers to change their beliefs about AR.

Rock and Levin's (2002) study showed that collaborative AR projects help pre-service teachers better understand the curriculum, themselves, and their students, teaching, and roles. The authors also showed that pre- and in-service teachers in their study "expressed that the collaborative action research process revealed to them the importance of focused inquiry, reflection, analysis, collaboration, and thoughtful actions for their professional development as teachers" (p. 19). Yet, another study by Levin and Rock (2003) revealed that both pre-service and experienced in-service teachers, paired in collaborative AR projects, gained appreciation for and a greater understanding of collaboration as they worked together. Both the pre-service and in-service teachers pointed out that their engagement in collaborative action research provided them with "more opportunities to work together, due to the projects they designed; Reasons to understand their partner's pedagogical beliefs; Occasions to learn to communicate more effectively; [and] Time for building relationships before the student teaching semester" (Levin & Rock, 2003, p. 144).

Yet another way to improve teachers' beliefs about AR can be institutional support by offering different kinds of incentives to teachers. However, previous research has found that one of the reasons that discourage teachers from doing research is how educational institutions treat them. For example, in Iran, Mehrani (2014) contends that teachers are not appreciated for doing research or even participating in conferences by their schools. Burns (1999) also points out that "institutional circumstances and conditions in many schools make it very difficult for teachers to carry out any form of classroom research" (pp. 45-46). This

highlights the need for institutional support in different teaching contexts worldwide because encouraging teachers to be research-engaged and have positive beliefs about AR without dealing with such important issues seems difficult, if not impossible. In this way, Borg and Sánchez (2015) believe, this realization that teacher research needs to be supported is important and represents a step forward from the rather simplistic belief that once teachers have been told about the benefits of teacher research, they will then without hesitation proceed to engage fully in it (p. 6).

Conclusion

The results of the present study showed that teachers' beliefs about AR are related to their age. More specifically, the data showed that younger teachers are more likely to be driven toward the positive effects of AR on their beliefs in comparison to their senior colleagues. This might be attributed to the different perspectives that teachers may have about professional development and the role that current pre-service teacher programs play in familiarizing teachers with AR. In this way, it may be more efficient to focus on the professional development opportunities through teaching AR processes to both groups of teachers in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs in L2 education. It is also suggested that designing collaborative AR projects between beginning and senior teachers and providing institutional support by offering different incentives might improve teachers' beliefs about AR.

Furthermore, teachers' awareness of their beliefs should be integrated into the structure of L2 pre-service and in-service teacher training programs. These programs are responsible for providing opportunities for junior and senior teachers to examine their beliefs as they largely affect their practices. As Mehrpour and Moghaddam (2018) point out, "being made aware of their potential, teachers can improve their practices and align them to their own belief system to become effective teachers" (p. 41). Nevertheless, many L2 teachers are not aware of the importance of their beliefs in shaping their classroom practices (Farrell, 2008). Making teacher candidates and in-service teachers aware of their beliefs about AR may be beneficial for developing reflective practices as AR encourages reflection through intentional and rigorous examination of teacher practices in the L2 classroom context (Mann & Walsh, 2017; Sato & Chen, 2019).

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Appendix: Inventory on Teachers' Beliefs about Action Research (ITBAR)

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. AR helps teachers to form a better understanding of the contextual constraints which leads to their emerging role as agents of change						
2. AR Encourages teachers to rethink about their teaching, their students, and the values of their work and thus change the status quo correspondingly						
3. AR helps teachers to become more aware of their autonomy in the educational system						
4. AR reinforces good teachers' qualities needed to teach such as being more open, more patient, and more flexible						
5. AR gives teachers a break in their routines to renew their energy and enthusiasm for teaching						
6. AR helps teachers to reflect on the aims and values implicit in their teaching and students' learning						
7. AR encourages reflection through the intentional and rigorous examination of teacher practices in the classroom						
8. AR is a useful tool for teachers to improve their classroom practice						
9. AR empowers teachers to develop a pedagogical theory and explore it in practice						
10. AR enables teachers to become more aware of their students' needs and thus be able to adapt their lessons correspondingly						

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
11. AR is facilitated if the time for doing AR is built into teachers' workloads in their institutions						
12. AR is facilitated if teachers have access to AR books and journals in their institutions						
13. AR is facilitated if management provides opportunities such as organizing workshops or giving teachers support to attend conferences						
14. AR is facilitated if the institution atmosphere makes teachers feel that doing AR is an important part of their job						
15. AR has positive effects on teachers' perspectives on research						
16. AR makes teachers feel motivated to read professional journals and publications						
17. AR acquaints teachers with the concept of research and enhances their knowledge of conducting research						
18. AR makes teachers feel motivated to disseminate their research through publishing articles or participating in conferences						
19. AR empowers teachers as the creators of knowledge and not just the holders of such knowledge						
20. AR has a profound impact on teachers' professional development						
21. AR helps teachers to be more thoughtful and purposeful about their teaching						

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Critical Perspectives in English Language Teaching, What is Coming?

Perspectivas Críticas en la Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés, ¿Qué Viene?

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Abstract

This reflective article examines the emerging tendencies in critical perspectives within English Language Teaching (ELT). The article begins by providing a brief historical overview of ELT's critical pedagogies and discussing its perspectives in the post-pandemic era. It highlights the need for critical approaches that address power dynamics, social inequalities, and ideological influences. In addition, new trends imply integrating cultural aspects that favor students' identity and culture, and more dynamic bilingual practices to promote inclusive, socially just, multilingual, and transformative language learning environments. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of ongoing reflection, professional development, and collaboration among ELT practitioners to incorporate critical perspectives effectively in the classroom.

Keywords: critical perspectives, cultural integration, English Language Teaching (ELT), identity, inclusive language learning, multilingualism, social justice

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Resumen

Este artículo reflexivo examina las tendencias emergentes en las perspectivas críticas dentro del campo de la Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés (ELT, por sus siglas en inglés). El artículo comienza proporcionando un breve panorama histórico de las pedagogías críticas en ELT y sus perspectivas en la era post pandémica. Se resalta la necesidad de enfoques críticos que abordan las dinámicas de poder, las desigualdades sociales y las influencias ideológicas. Además, nuevas tendencias implican la integración de aspectos culturales que favorecen la identidad y cultura propias de los estudiantes, así como prácticas bilingües más dinámicas con el fin de promover entornos de aprendizaje de idiomas más inclusivos, socialmente justos, multilingües y transformadores. El artículo concluye dando énfasis a la importancia de la reflexión continua, el desarrollo profesional y la colaboración entre los profesionales de ELT para incorporar perspectivas críticas en el aula de manera efectiva.

Palabras clave: Perspectivas críticas, integración cultural, la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa, identidad, aprendizaje inclusivo de idiomas, multilingüismo, justicia social

Introduction

Language teachers should move beyond grammar lessons and culture and make their lessons more relevant to society (Liddicoat, 2020, p.23).

English Language Teaching (ELT) is a dynamic field involving English teaching and learning as an additional language in diverse regions worldwide (Usma et al., 2018). Traditionally, ELT has focused primarily on language learning, vocabulary aspects, grammar instruction, and communicative competence (López Henao & Velasquez Hoyos, 2022). However, over the years, there has been a growing recognition of the need for critical perspectives in ELT to address the inherent power dynamics, social injustices, and inequalities that are often perpetuated through language education; particularly in ELT (Herrera Pineda & Ortiz Ruiz, 2018).

Accordingly, critical perspectives in ELT invite educators and students to challenge the traditional approaches to language teaching and highlight the social, cultural, and political dimensions of language learning (Benesh, 2001). It seeks to explore how language and power intersect and aims to empower students to critically analyze and question dominant ideologies and discourses (Echeverri Sucerquia et al., 2014). Having this in mind, scholars, educators, and practitioners must critically examine the underlying power dynamics, social inequalities, and ideological influences that shape language teaching and learning processes (Fenton-Smith, 2014).

The inclusion of critical perspectives has been a predominant aspect in ELT scenarios. This inclusion has been characterized by the implementation of community-based approaches such as Task-Based Instruction (TBI), Problem-Based Learning (PBL), and Project-Based Learning (Ministry of National Education, 2016). These approaches enable English language

educators to adapt their teaching practices to students' needs and continually evolve in response to shifting educational landscapes, cultural contexts, and emerging pedagogical theories (Sharkey & Clavijo Olarte, 2012). Therefore, knowing and reflecting upon new trends in critical perspectives in ELT becomes imperative to propose teaching practices that update and improve the existing ones.

Consequently, this article aims to reflect and delve into emerging tendencies within critical perspectives in ELT, shedding light on emergent approaches, theoretical frameworks, and practical approaches. Through an overview of these new tendencies, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussions and debates surrounding critical pedagogy in ELT. Through a comprehensive review of the current literature, this reflective article intends to provide ELT educators and researchers with valuable insights about the emerging tendencies within critical perspectives. By highlighting these new directions, we hope to inspire further research, foster critical reflection, and ultimately contribute to the enhancement of ELT practices that promote social justice and inclusivity.

Historical Overview of Critical Pedagogy in ELT

To reflect and understand what Critical Perspectives are, it is paramount to define what Critical Pedagogy (CP) is and to trace its origins according to visionaries and studies on the area, as well as historical phenomena that gave rise to this educational philosophy.

According to Kincheloe (2008), theoreticians have provided myriad definitions of CP. He also states that it is sometimes a term difficult to define in a few words. However, scholars agree that it goes beyond simply meeting content by students and educators. The author explains that CP centers on the teaching and learning contexts. It involves the social, political, and economic school contexts, usually including social phenomena such as marginalization, students' cultural experiences, and even the influence of educators' practices and teaching approaches on learning. Thus, CP places learning in real-life social problems experienced by the stakeholders, so that students are aware of them. This is a view of CP as known today, and it is the result of developed ideas by Paulo Freire (Porfilio & Ford, 2015; Smith & Seal, 2021) in his 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the Frankfurt School, and Henry Giroux (Malott, 2011), among others.

CP originated as an alternative system opposing conservative manners of education. In such a system, instruction was given to reassert that power was entitled to some higher elites. This is supported by Cho (2013) when she implies that the conventional paradigm of education tolerates "discrimination and inequality" (p. 16). Defining CP implies a different approach to teaching, one that debunks the power models of traditional education, where learning was unidirectional, i.e., from teacher to student. The core of such an approach is

embraced by all practitioners who adopt it as an alternative method in response to alternative systems. For instance, Boronski (2021) proposes that CP be a quest for a fairer society.

The implementation of CP has also been explored in the field of ELT. There may seem to be some degree of antagonism between CP philosophy and its role in ELT. This is because, according to López-Gopar (2019), the scarce studies on this construct are found mainly in the dominant cultures that speak English as a mother tongue, without considering other scenarios where the language is taught or spoken. However, the author's work compiles the experiences of ELT educators and pre-service teachers who have opposed social injustice and discrimination, and such opposition is in some way to act and think critically. López-Gopar also implies that implementing CP in ELT in other contexts different from English-speaking countries means redefining the term. This is because non-English speaking countries have other problems and social issues, so CP meanings or preconceptions vary.

In this sense, the term "Global South/s" (Makoni et al., 2022)—referring to regions where injustice, discrimination, and inequality prevail, including also certain ones from the Global North—underscores the necessity of adopting a critical perspective on societal issues (Bonilla Medina & Finardi, 2022; Makoni et al., 2022). Additionally, including this educational philosophy in those settings is pivotal since it will permit their inhabitants a more democratic and just education. In this way, the impact of language lessons will move beyond the classroom and language itself, making it more relevant to society.

Some other earlier studies of CP in ELT have been conducted mainly in adult education (Johnston, 2003). This situation calls for implementing CP in primary and secondary education because younger generations need to develop critical thinking, empathy for others, recognition and appreciation of their culture, and civic citizenship, among other social actions.

Critical Pedagogy in the Post-Pandemic Era

Academic events such as symposia, research articles, and reports of teaching experiences have lately been questioning pedagogy in the post-pandemic era. This is partly because, during the COVID-19 confinement period, educators and students developed more technological skills; the benefits, especially on teacher-student feedback of those tools, were recognized and valued (Myers & Stratton, 2021). These advantages are also pivotal in ELT and the implementation of CP in this area, especially in rural schools (Liang & Cao, 2022). Nowadays, educators and people have more access to technological devices (Cahyono et al., 2023). Thus, as the authors assert, students and educators can rely on a wider variety of resources after the pandemic, and therefore, their technological literacy is increased.

As stated above, the pandemic era led institutions to use technology to impart lessons, as a result, educators and students learned to use specialized resources in their practices. Hence, Critical Perspectives in ELT in the post-pandemic era imply utilizing these resources. In a case study conducted by Todea et al. (2022), the authors found that educators are more willing to incorporate technology in their lessons after the pandemic. They also conclude that such implementation can draw positive results for educators and students since it benefits those with different learning styles. Some online resources promote cooperative and autonomous learning requiring educators to redefine and reflect on their practices, especially regarding their use of technology (Gruber et al., 2023). All these aspects provide strategies to detach ELT from traditional English language teaching, which is one of the primary goals of critical perspectives.

It is impossible to deny that the COVID-19 pandemic brought some social changes. Countries like Colombia, Cuba, The USA, and Myanmar experienced a social outbreak connected to COVID-19 consequences and social disparities (Infobae, 2021). Education was not strange to this situation, particularly, in the English class, as shown in Bonilla Medina and Quintero Polo's (2022) study. The authors mention that, in the post-pandemic era, critical perspectives in ELT have gained even greater significance. As the world emerges from a global crisis, reevaluating and challenging traditional approaches to language education become crucial.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, critical perspectives have proven essential for changing the realities and consequences that flourished during this period. In the post-pandemic era, educators and students have seen the need to promote a more socially just pedagogy that addresses students' diverse needs and experiences (Park & Yi, 2022). It is not just technology that students need, but a concrete application of political and educational proposals to overcome systemic inequalities that were more evident in the pandemic (Bonilla Medina & Quintero Polo, 2022). Moreover, Teaching English in the post-pandemic era challenges English language educators to reexamine language policies, materials, and assessment practices to ensure that they reflect a more equitable and inclusive approach to language education (O'Boyle & Samanhudi, 2023). Ultimately, ELT critical perspectives in the post-pandemic era play a vital role in transforming language classrooms into spaces that foster empathy, critical consciousness, and social transformation.

The Teaching of Cultural Aspects Favoring Students' Identity and Culture

ELT's new tendencies address the crucial role of teaching cultural aspects that favor students' identities, as this fosters a sense of belonging and empowers diverse communities within educational settings (Dasli, 2012). When educators incorporate students' cultural

backgrounds into the curriculum, they offer students opportunities to explore and appreciate their heritage, traditions, and values (Porfilio & Ford, 2015). Historically, many English language educators have favored Anglo-American teaching methods; this practice has perpetuated discriminatory language practices (Guerrero-Nieto, 2020). Therefore, incorporating students' cultures to foster greater inclusivity in the language classroom is essential today.

In this regard, by implementing critical perspectives in ELT, educators and students recognize the importance of cultural diversity and ensure that students' unique perspectives are valued and celebrated while learning other languages and cultures. When students see themselves and their cultural identities reflected in the learning materials, they feel validated and encouraged to engage actively in their education (García, 2004). Moreover, teaching cultural aspects helps students develop a deeper understanding, respect, and resignification of their culture and the new one. This recent tendency to value students' identity and culture would foster empathy, tolerance, and global citizenship without forgetting students' roots and ancestry. The goal is not to prevent students from learning about foreign cultures but to strike a balance between teaching their culture and exposing them to others.

Following previous ideas, language is not isolated, but part of a culture (Bonilla Medina, 2012). This assertion has become stronger during the last decades. Thus, English language classes must focus on real situations related to students' contexts. Authors such as Arismendi (2022), Torres-Casierra (2021), and Granados-Beltrán (2016) explain the importance of developing critical interculturality in ELT classes. In this sense, ELT's new trends advocate including students' culture and identity to facilitate learning and understanding of other languages like English (López-Gopar, 2019).

ELT scenarios have perpetuated methodological approaches that lead to ideas of power and domination (López-Gopar & Sughrua, 2014). This has affected how English language students perceive their mother tongue; the majority try to reach native-like proficiency to avoid discrimination, exclusion, or segregation just for having an accent (Darder et al., 2024; Holliday, 2016).

That is why critical perspectives on ELT constitute a new standpoint in the reconceptualization of ELT as a more inclusive, ethical, and critical way of seeing the English language without erasing any trace of students' mother language (Helot et al., 2022). According to Norton and Toohey (2004), critical perspectives in language learning focus on "local situations, problems, and issues, and see responsiveness to the particularities […] [and] resist totalizing discourses about critical teaching, subjects, and strategies for progressive action" (p. 2). In other words, critical perspectives enable English language students and educators to value both cultures, their own and the foreign ones.

By integrating diverse cultural and critical perspectives, educational institutions can create inclusive environments that empower students to re-signify their identities and contribute meaningfully to a multicultural society. Dasli (2012, cited in Liddicoat, 2020) asserts that:

> Language learning must serve as an engagement, through language and cultures, in coming to understand linguistically and culturally diverse others. The aim is to come to an understanding for oneself rather than to come to a specific point of view about culturally contextual values, practices, etc. (p. 3)

Expressly, ELT opens the doors to a more multi-perspectival view of languages and cultures (Darder et al., 2024). This idea means that language learning should go beyond simply learning linguistic skills and alternately provide means to actively engage with various cultures and people who do not share the same language and culture (Arismendi, 2022). The primary goal of ELT today is not to adopt a specific approach or methodology that leads to assuming one single cultural perspective or to judge the values and practices of others based on their cultural context (Granados-Beltran, 2022). Instead, the emphasis is on using language as a tool for personal growth and understanding of oneself and others. Through language learning, individuals broaden their horizons, gain insights into diverse perspectives, and construct a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity, encouraging students to develop their understanding rather than conforming to preconceived notions or stereotypes (Dasli,2012). These notions and stereotypes have been created due to the perpetuation of cascade models that conceive English as a powerful language (Walsh, 2010; Usma et al., 2018; Velásquez-Hoyos & Martínez-Burgos, 2023). With the inclusion of critical perspectives in ELT, English language educators can gradually change these preconceptions.

The Inclusion of More Dynamic Bilingual Practices

Critical perspectives in ELT offer a wide range of approaches and methodologies that seek to include students' needs and participatory approaches and engage their voices. That is why talking about one methodology that suits students' needs is unusual today in ELT. Instead, the claim is to include more dynamic practices, which combine elements of different approaches and explore the construction and design of context-sensitive methodologies more aligned to students' contexts (González, 2007). Thus, we, as English language educators, propose incorporating features of approaches that advocate for the development of social justice, dialogue, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness. In this line, we suggest exploring and adapting features of Community-Based Approaches such as Task-Based Instruction (TBI), Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Learning, and translanguaging.

To begin with, TBI, PBL, and Project-Based Learning substantially impact community-based projects within ELT contexts. These pedagogical approaches offer valuable opportunities for students to apply their language skills in authentic, real-world contexts,

promoting meaningful engagement and active learning (Coronado-Rodríguez et al., 2022; Bolaños Saenz et al., 2018; Ministry of National Education, 2016). On the one hand, TBI focuses on task completion, allowing students to develop their language proficiency while actively participating in tasks that simulate real-life situations (Velásquez-Hoyos, 2023). On the other hand, PBL takes it a step further by presenting students with authentic problems or challenges to solve collaboratively, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and language use in a meaningful context (Comber, 2018). Similarly, Project-Based Learning engages students in longer-term projects requiring research, planning, and final product presentation; this approach connects language learning with community-based initiatives (Rojas & Rueda Varon, 2019).

These approaches empower students to take ownership of their learning, develop relevant skills, and impact their communities positively (Bolaños Saenz et al., 2018). By implementing these approaches, in which language students apply their language skills in authentic community contexts, they gain a deeper understanding of cultural nuances and become active contributors to society. Ultimately, TBI, PBL, and Project-Based Learning enhance language development and foster civic engagement, cultural sensitivity, and social responsibility. These aspects align with critical perspectives.

Translanguaging is also a dynamic pedagogical approach that contributes to students' foreign language development, without banning their mother language. Translanguaging in an English language class has emerged as a powerful pedagogical approach that recognizes and values students' diverse linguistic repertoires (Ortega, 2019). It encourages students to draw upon their range of language resources, including their mother languages, to facilitate language learning and meaning-making (García, 2009). Jonsson (2013) points out that students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds are flexible; they often adapt their language choices according to their needs. Therefore, translanguaging breaks down the artificial barriers among languages, allowing students to make connections, transfer knowledge, and bridge gaps between languages and cultures (Arias, 2016). In class, translanguaging encourages students to use their first language as a scaffold for understanding and expressing ideas in English. It promotes language fluidity and empowers students by validating their linguistic identities and honoring their multilingualism. Hence, this approach embraces critical perspectives as educators create inclusive learning environments that foster creativity, critical thinking, and deeper engagement with the English language, acknowledging the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Complementarily, Monroy Ramirez and Bastidas (2023) express that translanguaging acknowledges and values students' diverse cultural backgrounds. It encourages them to share their cultural perspectives, traditions, and unique linguistic features, enticing a deeper appreciation and understanding of multiculturalism within the classroom. Similarly, García

and Wei (2014) conceive learning two languages as a unique linguistic repertoire to create meaning.

Based on these assertions, translanguaging helps students feel comfortable demonstrating their knowledge and understanding in the classroom because they can have no linguistic limitations. As a result, students present a better subject performance as they increase their language skills in both linguistic codes. Accordingly, translanguaging is constituted as an approach that facilitates the implementation of more dynamic practices in ELT as it validates students' culture and linguistic repertoire in their mother tongue.

Finally, we would like to propose other alternatives aligned with the ideas of critical perspectives; those also foster more inclusive and dynamic bilingual practices. Apart from the mentioned approaches, we recommend incorporating ideas from decolonial theory. This theory advocates for including diverse voices and perspectives, challenges the dominance of native-speaker norms, and critiques the mere focus on Western-centric content. For instance, Álvarez Valencia and Valencia (2023) highlight the importance of decolonizing ELT education. These authors propose including Cultural Semiotic Resources (CSR) that validate students' culture and identity. They also advocate for incorporating multimodal and multisensory texts into the classroom. They argue that "embodied meaning-making practices through arts, music, and visuals create a more just and equitable learning environment" (p. 230). Furthermore, they stress the value of integrating performances in language classes, allowing students from various cultural backgrounds to express their identities and cultures through translingual elements.

Similarly, Fandiño-Parra (2021) suggests various strategies for this process, such as creating educational materials that address local and sociopolitical contexts, reworking teacher training programs to foster independent knowledge creation, and pursuing research that better serves the needs of local communities. Including decolonial theory and the strategies proposed by previous authors allows educators to transform English language education shifting the focus from a single, external standard to a more inclusive approach.

New trends in critical perspectives in ELT suggest incorporating glocally informed teaching (Hauerwas et al., 2021), which balances global English language norms with local contexts and needs. This approach respects local cultures while preparing students for effective communication globally. Additionally, critical perspectives should emphasize contextualized language teaching that involves adapting materials and methods. Such adaptation must fit students' cultural, social, and economic contexts, and make language teaching more relevant and effective (Huang et al., 2014). Critical perspectives and new tendencies in ELT promote anti-bias education recognizing and addressing biases in teaching materials and practices. The main intention is to transform ELT into a more equitable learning environment by questioning stereotypes and fostering critical thinking about prejudice and discrimination.

At last, critical perspectives encourage critical literacy and constant reflection. The former entices students and educators to analyze and question the texts they encounter understanding how language shapes and is shaped by social contexts. Language learning involves more than just grammatical accuracy; it is also about interpreting and critiquing the content and its implications. The latter continuously invites educators to reflect on their practices and their impact on students. If educators are conscious and reflect on their biases, they are more able to make informed and equitable decisions in their teaching practice.

Critical Perspectives and Multilingualism

It is impossible to talk about critical perspectives without mentioning multilingualism since this approach intends to challenge language power dynamics and offers a more multilingual perspective in the teaching of languages. This is particularly relevant in a country like Colombia, where linguistic diversity is a significant aspect of the social landscape (Duque Salazar et al., 2024). Thus, pre-service and in-service language teachers must receive adequate preparation to navigate the multilingualism and linguistic diversity that the modern world faces today. Therefore, integrating critical perspectives into English language teaching is crucial for supporting multilingualism.

In various geographical areas, including Europe, Japan, North America, and Latin America, some educators continue to use a monoglossic teaching approach that opposes multilingualism. Van Avermaet et al. (2018) state that "most education systems in the world still educate children through one dominant language and continue to hold on to the belief that this is the best way towards social integration" (p. 3). Consequently, this method of instruction through a single dominant language has somehow caused students to detach from their native or heritage languages.

O'Regan (2021) asserts that the dominance of English is evident in international politics, the economy, and higher education. The academic success of educators and researchers relies mainly on their proficiency in the English language. This phenomenon has persisted even when educators have claimed other views more open to including "localized superdiverse translingual practices" (p. 182).

O'Regan (2021) points out that the Global South and Global North are now addressing their language practices. The author also adds that cultural and linguistic diversification in both contexts has inspired universities to move towards multilingualism making it crucial to implement critical perspectives in education.

Another proposal related to critical perspectives and multilingualism is presented in the work of Mary et al. (2021). The authors suggest transcultural mediation to develop a multilingual curriculum that supports students' linguistic diversity, promotes communication

and facilitates conflict resolution. Their approach aims to build inclusive language classrooms that address the needs and rights of culturally diverse groups, ensuring appropriate resources and fair treatment. In other words, to achieve multilingualism, implementing approaches such as critical perspectives and transcultural mediation is essential to foster the proper development of cultural aspects in the language classroom.

Conclusions

This article is to reflect on new ELT tendencies concerning critical perspectives. The authors reviewed in this reflection paper suggest that critical perspectives be focused on the students' identities and culture. They must also promote dynamic bilingual practices on the part of educators. This approach will contextualize English language teaching as it promotes critical thinking about students' context and situated problems (Arismendi, 2022; Dasli, 2012). Consequently, the impact of class instruction will be reflected in the community.

We also state that there is a need to detach from traditional teaching that sets aside critical thinking skills. Without implying that such an approach is useless, as Bastidas (2022) recognizes, it must be complemented with components that enhance autonomy and problem-solving skills. Bastidas also proposes combining methods; we hereby add that such implementation includes critical components of social justice and power.

Critical perspectives in ELT must go hand in hand with the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), especially in the post-pandemic era. Such technologies had to be implemented as a strategy during instruction in the recent COVID-19 emergency. As a result, the advantages of that implementation were valued by students and educators. According to Todea et al. (2022) and Liang and Cao (2022), several educators worldwide are more willing to incorporate technology in their lessons. Therefore, further studies should be based on a deep reflection on incorporating critical perspectives and ICTs in ELT to encourage the use of the English language beyond schools. However, as mentioned by Bonilla Medina and Quintero Polo (2022), students not only need technology. They also need a concrete application of critical, political, and educational proposals that seek to overcome systemic inequalities more evident during the pandemic. In this sense, we invite educators and researchers to continue exploring critical perspectives in the English class to make students aware of their possibilities when more empowered by their social realities.

As pointed out by Bonilla Medina and Quintero Polo (2022) and Liddicoat (2020), we as English language educators need to constantly rethink our teaching practices not only to teach grammar, vocabulary, and culture lessons but also to make them more relevant to society. That is the main goal of implementing critical perspectives in ELT in which students

get empowered by social problems making them aware of inequalities, social disparities, and cultural diversities.

Finally, this reflection suggests that critical perspectives enable educators to combine a variety of ELT methodologies that suit students' realities. Therefore, there is a need to adapt and design context-sensible methodologies (González, 2007) that take elements of approaches such as TBI, PBL, Project-Based Learning, Translanguaging, decolonial theory, glocally informed teaching, and contextualized language teaching. The purpose must underline the role of community-based initiatives that affect students' culture and identity; also, the purpose must make them feel like protagonists of their learning process.

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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.

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HOW Journal is an academic publication led by ASOCOPI, the Colombian Association of Teachers of English. The journal is indexed in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Latindex, Redalyc, SciELO Colombia, and Publindex-Minciencias..

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Conference Presentations

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Unpublished Master's Thesis

Ochoa, M. (2004). *Meaning negotiation in EFL project work: How students express themselves and interact with others* [Unpublished master's dissertation]. Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.

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Cabrales Vargas, M., & Cáceres Cabrales, J. A. (2013). La dinámica del currículo y la evolución de la autonomía en el aprendizaje del inglés [The dynamics of curriculum and the evolution of autonomy in learning English as a foreign language]. Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura, *18*(1), 45-60.

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