



UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO



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# ESTUDIOS EN LENGUAS MODERNAS:

DOCENCIA, INVESTIGACIÓN, TRADUCCIÓN

# **Estudios en lenguas modernas: docencia, investigación, traducción**

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## PRÓLOGO

El campo de las lenguas adicionales a la materna es, en nuestro país, un área cuya profesionalización es relativamente reciente. Sin embargo, también es un área de creciente consolidación tanto en la docencia como en la investigación. Sea que se trabaja desde perspectivas lingüísticas, educativas o mixtas, las experiencias pedagógicas y de pesquisa continúan avanzando en profundidad y complejidad. Los coordinadores de la presente obra, *Estudios en Lenguas Modernas: Docencia, Investigación, Traducción*, nos congratulamos en presentar una cuidadosa selección de \_\_\_ trabajos por autores de \_\_\_ universidades distintas. Todos ellos fueron arbitrados por pares externos a las universidades de adscripción de los autores siguiendo procedimientos rigurosos, y representan el estado de la investigación actual en las diversas subáreas de nuestro campo disciplinar.

La primera sección de esta obra, *Enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas*, recoge nueve trabajos articulados en torno a los fenómenos de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de idiomas. Sus temáticas son variadas, pero algunos ejes comunes incluyen la alfabetización académica y el aprendizaje basado en tareas (Task-Based Learning). En su conjunto, ofrecen una panorámica del trabajo actual en las temáticas por excelencia del campo de la enseñanza de lenguas.

El trabajo que abre la sección es *Introducing thematic progression analysis in the EFL academic writing class*, de la autoría de Reyna López Blé. Constituye un ejemplo de una aplicación innovadora de la lingüística a la enseñanza de la redacción académica en lengua inglesa. Esta temática, enmarcada en los estudios de alfabetización académica, cobra cada vez mayor interés entre docentes e investigadores. La autora reporta los resultados de una intervención didáctica basada en una herramienta de análisis de discurso de la Lingüística Sistémico-Funcional (LSF), el análisis de progresión temática, la cual le permitió elevar la calidad de las redacciones en inglés de un grupo de estudiantes universitarios. Otro aspecto innovador de esta intervención es el uso combinado de análisis lingüísticos, entrevistas, protocolos de pensamiento en voz alta y observaciones de clase para documentar la intervención y sus efectos. Estamos seguros de que será de mucho provecho para los docentes alumnos interesados en la alfabetización académica y el análisis del discurso.

Otro trabajo enfocado en la alfabetización académica es *Apropiación de la textualidad en la universidad: una aproximación desde la literacidad académica*. En él, María Teresa Calderón, María Teresa Flores, Juan Manuel Hernández y Armando Ortiz elucidan de manera coherente y clara la problemática de la apropiación de los modos de leer y escribir propios de las comunidades científicas, así como las distintas alternativas teórico-pedagógicas que se han propuesto para atenderla. Este artículo constituye una excelente introducción a la temática y es altamente recomendable para quienes se inician en ella.

Gisela Domínguez, Andrés Arias y Eleazar Morales presentan una sólida propuesta pedagógica en el trabajo titulado *Proposal for integrating project work in a college-level English as a Foreign Language class*. Fundamentan su propuesta en el aprendizaje basado en tareas (TBL por sus siglas en inglés), un abordaje para la enseñanza de lenguas que fue ampliamente popular en la última década del siglo pasado. Como bien apuntan los autores,

resurge el interés en el TBL como herramienta didáctica y como filosofía de enseñanza. El capítulo resultará enriquecedor para todos los interesados en este enfoque pedagógico.

El capítulo *Language learning strategies employed by university students to learn English* de los autores Cliserio Cruz y Jairo Guerrero examina una temática ampliamente estudiada: las estrategias de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Haciendo uso de métodos cualitativos y de la conocida taxonomía de Rebecca Oxford, los autores identificaron y clasificaron las estrategias usadas por un grupo de estudiantes universitarios de inglés. El capítulo será útil para investigadores noveles que se interesen por la investigación de estrategias y por acercarse a los métodos cualitativos usados para abordarlas.

*Attitudes: English vs. other subjects. An exploratory case study in Telesecundaria* es un valioso e innovador capítulo de la autoría de Liliana Campos, Olga Lidia Sánchez y Gloria Reyes. Las autoras apuntan, correctamente, que la investigación sobre la enseñanza del inglés en la telesecundarias mexicanas es prácticamente inexistente. Al mismo tiempo, señalan con claridad la problemática de la falta de preparación didáctica y de dominio del inglés por parte de los profesores encargados de enseñar esta materia. Haciendo uso de métodos cualitativos cuasi-etnográficos, las autoras detectan actitudes tanto favorables como desfavorables hacia el inglés, su enseñanza y su aprendizaje. Por todo ello, el capítulo constituye un esfuerzo loable que inaugura una línea de investigación prometedora respecto del inglés en este contexto.

En *¿Enseñando con imágenes, un vocabulario eficaz?* Alicia Rendón, Elia González y Mabel Jiménez presentan resultados preliminares de una investigación encaminada a determinar la eficacia de la enseñanza de vocabulario basada en imágenes. Los hallazgos preliminares indican que los estudiantes prefieren el uso de imágenes para la enseñanza por sobre la mera presentación auditiva de la palabra. La presentación de este resultado viene precedida por una ilustrativa discusión de los pormenores metodológicos y algunos hallazgos empíricos relativos al uso de imágenes en la enseñanza de vocabulario.

Esteban Zárate articula un interesante ensayo en *El enfoque basado en tareas y el PNIEB*. En él, el autor discute con claridad y precisión los fundamentos epistémicos y metodológicos de los documentos de política lingüística que norman la enseñanza del inglés en la educación básica en nuestro país. A partir de la determinación de los conceptos “prácticas sociales del lenguaje” y “competencias específicas” como ejes rectores de tal enseñanza, Esteban Zárate propone el uso del enfoque de aprendizaje basado en tareas (TBL por sus siglas en inglés, de gran tradición en nuestra área a partir de los trabajos de Prabhu y Willis) como metodología adecuada para aterrizar en el aula las directrices del PNIEB. Este capítulo resulta provechoso para investigadores, docentes y estudiantes interesados en conocer mejor los fundamentos pedagógicos y didácticos del PNIEB.

El capítulo *¿Cómo llegar a ser maestros creativos?*, de la autoría de Claudia Durán, Adriana Padilla y Alicia Rendón, es un ensayo sobre la creatividad y los factores que, en principio, podrían definir a un profesor de lenguas como poseedor de tal característica. Felizmente, las autoras toman una distancia clara del uso no fundamentado de juegos didácticos, que suele tomarse equivocadamente como señal inequívoca de la creatividad del docente de idiomas. A partir de un marco teórico bien construido, las autoras desarrollan una propuesta interesante y digna de ser considerada por todos los docentes de lenguas.

*Estudiantes no especialistas de francés, su sentido de autoeficacia para aprender el idioma* es un interesante y valioso reporte de investigación empírica de la autoría de Rosario Reyes y Nelly García. Los estudios de autoeficacia para el aprendizaje de lenguas constituyen una línea de investigación aún incipiente pero con una creciente producción en



México. Como resultado de este estudio bien diseñado y riguroso, las autoras encuentran diferencias en el sentido y las fuentes de autoeficacia de los estudiantes de su muestra (aprendientes universitarios de francés) en función de su nivel y de la habilidad lingüística focalizada. La lectura se destaca como la habilidad para la cual los estudiantes se sienten más eficaces y que les ocasiona menos estrés. Ello probablemente se deba a las semejanzas entre el español y el francés, más evidentes en la lengua escrita que en la oral.

La siguiente sección, *Evaluación del aprendizaje de lenguas*, recoge dos aportes sobre esta siempre interesante, actual y controversial temática. Ambos tienen en común el ser exploraciones empíricas de perspectivas alternativas y el hacer oír las voces de los docentes como interlocutores válidos en la conversación sobre la evaluación. El primero de ellos es *Exploring alternative assessment and evaluation methods for enhancing EFL students' learning*, escrito por Cecilio López y Luz Edith Herrera. Los autores utilizaron entrevistas y análisis cualitativos para indagar las percepciones de profesores en servicio sobre la evaluación. Encuentran que los profesores realizan algunas prácticas de evaluación alternativa, pero necesitan profundizar sus conocimientos al respecto.

La segunda contribución de esta sección se titula *Teachers' perceptions about the English standardized tests used at a BA in English*, por Daniela Jerónimo y Olga Lidia Sánchez. De manera similar al trabajo anterior, las autoras utilizaron métodos cualitativos para indagar las percepciones de profesores en servicio, solo que su trabajo se enfoca en una forma tradicional de evaluación: los exámenes estandarizados. Los hallazgos arrojan puntos de vista encontrados, ya que algunos profesores creen en la utilidad de los exámenes estandarizados en tanto que otros la niegan. El trabajo recoge las sugerencias de algunos profesores para llevar a cabo evaluaciones alternativas.

La tercera sección, *Formación de profesores de lenguas*, compila siete capítulos que exponen investigaciones basadas en experiencias con planes o programas de estudios, con la formación o el desarrollo profesional de profesores de lenguas, y con estudiantes nativos y no nativos en formación docente. El primero de los capítulos que componen esta sección, *Analyzing the effects of EFL teachers' continuing professional development on their practice*, por Cecilio López y Claudia Buenfil, muestra, desde un enfoque cualitativo y dando voz a los profesores en servicio participantes, la efectividad de cursos de entrenamiento como una forma de desarrollo profesional, tema que va adquiriendo más relevancia con el paso de los años. Basados en los resultados de este estudio, los autores dan algunas sugerencias para garantizar la satisfacción de quienes deseen continuar su desarrollo profesional a través de cursos de capacitación o actualización.

Enrique Vez y Andrea Velázquez presentan en el segundo capítulo, *Former immigrant students' perspectives vs their subsequent experience at the BA in English language*, los resultados de una investigación realizada con estudiantes que han recibido educación inicial en Estados Unidos de Norteamérica y que en la actualidad se encuentran en formación como futuros profesores del inglés en una universidad mexicana. Los resultados de este estudio comparan las expectativas y la experiencia de estos estudiantes en un programa de licenciatura. De igual manera, muestran las fortalezas que tienen los estudiantes desde su propia perspectiva (i.e. nivel de inglés), así como los problemas que enfrentan como inmigrantes durante su preparación (i.e. choque cultural). Vez y Velázquez nos permiten ver la realidad que vivieron los participantes en esta experiencia, lo cual puede ser de gran interés y utilidad para profesores y académicos de un programa de licenciatura en lengua inglesa, en un contexto similar.

El capítulo *Una mirada a la práctica docente: experiencias de un plan de estudios*, presenta una investigación descriptiva-mixta elaborada por Hiroe Minami Doi, María Guadalupe Garza y Eleazar Morales. Los autores realizaron un análisis para determinar la congruencia o alineación curricular entre lo estipulado en el plan de estudios y lo realizado dentro del aula. El objetivo era observar algunas posturas teóricas y la implementación de éstas en el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa. Esta experiencia compartida por los autores será de interés para las instituciones, autoridades y profesores en proceso de implementación y/o evaluación de (nuevos) programas de estudios en el área de lenguas.

El siguiente capítulo de esta sección, *Challenges faced by non-native EFL student teachers from the UV English BA programme during their practicum*, de la autoría de Stephany Cortés y Luz Edith Herrera, invita a la reflexión sobre los retos que enfrentan los estudiantes al realizar sus prácticas docentes, como parte de su programa de estudios. El capítulo presenta resultados preliminares de un estudio que está en proceso; sin embargo, a través de la lectura, se pueden visualizar algunos de los problemas que se les presentan a los participantes y las razones que ellos atribuyen a dichos problemas, principalmente en relación con la organización y manejo de clase, así como con su nivel de inglés y como éste afecta su enseñanza. Esta información será de provecho para estudiantes y profesores de programas de docencia del inglés, quienes enfrentan problemas similares.

El quinto capítulo corresponde a la investigación presentada por Leticia Estudillo y Sara Merino: *Student- teachers experiences on project based learning in a syllabus design course*. En este estudio, a través de reflexiones escritas, los participantes externaron su experiencia en el proceso de generación de programas enfocados en el Aprendizaje basado en proyectos (PBL por sus siglas en inglés) y en el proceso de construcción de su identidad como maestros de inglés durante la implementación de sus programas. De acuerdo con los autores, el estudio prueba que PBL es un método efectivo que, además, permite reducir los niveles de frustración de los participantes, ya que el método se puede aplicar en un contexto real. Este trabajo representa un buen referente sobre el uso del método para los profesores en servicio y para quienes están inmersos en la preparación de futuros profesores, principalmente en nuestro contexto mexicano.

*Análisis del dispositivo de formación del docente de inglés en la UAEMéx* es un trabajo cuyo objetivo fue generar e implementar un plan de estudios en una universidad mexicana. Se presentan los hallazgos centrales de una primera parte de la investigación doctoral realizada por María Estela Estrada. La autora expone, con una visión holística, elementos curriculares centrales, así como un sustento teórico-metodológico del proceso educativo y del modelo reflexivo, basados en competencias, que corresponden al plan de estudios de la licenciatura: temas esenciales para la comprensión de la investigación. Los resultados que se presentan en este capítulo invitan a la reflexión respecto a los aspectos que deben ser considerados en la implementación y evaluación de planes de estudios.

En el último capítulo de esta sección, *Collective accompaniment for reflective practice with TESOL teachers in Mexico*, Patricia Marie Houde y Kenneth Geoffrey Richter discuten los resultados de una investigación novedosa e interesante que enfatiza la importancia y utilidad de la reflexión colaborativa para profesores principiantes, con el apoyo de un modelo de acompañamiento colectivo (CAM por sus siglas en inglés). Basados en los resultados de la investigación, los autores declaran que el uso del modelo que proponen da pie y favorece el proceso de reflexión que los profesores hacen respecto a su quehacer docente, permitiéndoles estar más conscientes de su práctica en el salón de clase. Este capítulo es de utilidad tanto para profesores en formación como en servicio que

deseen iniciarse en la tarea reflexiva o implementar otro método práctico de reflexión colaborativa con fines de mejora de su profesión docente.

Esta obra cierra con la sección de **Traducción** que se conforma de dos capítulos sobre la temática. En el primero, *La Importancia de las Tic's en la enseñanza de la traducción*, los autores José Cortez y Noriko Estefania Santos ponen especial énfasis en el uso de las memorias de traducción como una herramienta de gran utilidad para estudiantes de una licenciatura en traducción. En el estudio, los autores realizan una exploración sobre softwares de traducción que los estudiantes utilizan y los beneficios de éstos en el proceso de traducción. Los resultados indican que un porcentaje muy bajo de los participantes hace uso de alguna herramienta de apoyo para la traducción; además, tienen poca oportunidad de utilizarlas. Los participantes y los autores sugieren que se considere en su plan de estudios un mayor número y variedad de materias en las que se utilicen estas herramienta tecnológicas durante la licenciatura.

El segundo y último capítulo de esta sección tiene un enfoque en la interpretación del lenguaje de señas mexicano. En su investigación, *Percepción pública de la identidad sorda en Guanajuato en las palabras de intérpretes de LMS*, Rodrigo Saucedo y Krisztina Zimányi realizaron entrevistas semi-estructuradas con intérpretes del lenguaje de señas en el estado de Guanajuato, con el fin de conocer la percepción que éstos tienen de su trabajo en la sociedad. La importancia de este estudio estriba en la necesidad de favorecer a la comunidad sorda del estado, y que se amplíe a todo el país, ya que, en palabras de los autores, existen carencias en el conocimiento de la comunidad sorda que no permiten una comunicación efectiva entre dicha comunidad y las personas que no tienen esta discapacidad.

Nos congratulamos en entregar esta obra, producto del trabajo colectivo de más de una docena de investigadores en las distintas áreas de nuestro campo disciplinar. Estamos seguro de que resultará provechosa a toda la comunidad

Los Coordinadores

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## **SECCIÓN I: ENSEÑANZA-APRENDIZAJE DE LENGUAS**

# INTRODUCING THEMATIC PROGRESSION ANALYSIS IN THE EFL ACADEMIC WRITING CLASS

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## ABSTRACT

Writing an academic text such as a research report is one of the most problematic tasks students face at university level. Furthermore, the complexity of this endeavor is increased when students have to produce this genre in English as a second/foreign language. In fact, learning how to write in a second language is one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning (Hyland, 2003). Hence, non-native speaking students experience a number of difficulties even if they have studied English and academic writing in English in their native countries (Hinkel, 2004). The present study explored the difficulties encountered by a group of 15 BA in English students when writing research reports. Most importantly, the purpose of this research was to design and implement a pedagogical proposal to tackle these academic writing difficulties. A Qualitative Research approach was adopted for this study. From the variety of qualitative methodologies, Action Research (AR) was selected. At the initial stage, student text analysis, think-aloud protocols and field notes were employed to inform the action plan. For the evaluation of the pedagogical implementation, class observations, student text analysis and semi-structured interviews were used. The data gathered at the initial stage showed that students lacked knowledge and practice on how to connect their ideas and to organize them in a logical sequence. Based on these preliminary findings, a Functional Grammar approach was adopted and the action plan incorporated notions such as given-new, information structure, theme-rheme and thematic progression. The findings of this study suggest that Thematic Progression analysis can be a valuable tool to help students compose and edit more effectively and improve their academic writing skills. Moreover, the innovation of the pedagogical implementation seemed to have had a positive impact on students' motivation and sense of preparedness for further academic writing experiences.

**Keywords:** academic writing, higher education, thematic progression analysis

## INTRODUCTION

In Mexico, every year, thousands of undergraduate students are faced with the imminent and overwhelming task of writing a research report in order to obtain their BA degree. Unfortunately, many of these students possess limited previous experience in producing this kind of text. Furthermore, previous research has shown that academic writing instruction is highly neglected in our country and, as a consequence, students' academic writing when they reach higher education is very problematic. The situation is even more complicated when students are required to write their research report in a foreign language such as English. This scenario poses a number of challenges not only for the student, but

also for the academic writing instructor, who normally has to deal with a group of students with almost no experience in producing a text of this length and nature and who are, at the same time, in the process of learning a foreign language. In fact, “learning how to write in a second language is one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning” (Richards, 2003, p. 13, in Hyland, 2003), and complying with the specific conventions of academic texts in English doubles the possibilities for a troublesome writing class.

In light of this panorama, the present action research (AR) explored a group of 15 Mexican undergraduate students writing their research reports in English. For this, it was necessary to look into students’ writing context, products and needs in order to identify their most notable problems. The data gathered from the initial stage of this research showed that students lacked knowledge and practice on how to connect their ideas and to organize them in a logical sequence or progression. The most common signs of such problems were lack of given-new organization of ideas and problematic theme-rheme progressions. Based on these first findings and on a revision of the literature dealing with similar situations, a Functional Grammar approach was adopted to design an action plan that offered a suitable solution for the identified academic writing hurdles students were facing, and thus help them improve their academic writing skills. The function of writing in this context was considered a key factor, since “functions are the means for achieving the ends (or purpose) of writing” (Hyland, 2003, p. 6) and this view, known as current-traditional rhetoric or a *functional approach*, “is influential where L2 students are being prepared for academic writing or college or university” (Idem).

The study was carried out at a public university in the state of Veracruz, Mexico. This university offers a BA in English Language whose students are required to carry out research and to write a report paper on it in order to obtain their degree. For this reason, the terminal area of this program includes two core subjects that are aimed at carrying out the research itself and writing the research report: “*Experiencia recepcional*” and “*Seminario de redacción para el trabajo recepcional*”, respectively. In the latter, students with different research interests receive guidance and start writing their final paper in English. Students are expected to have produced at least 75% of their final paper by the end of the semester and they lose all opportunities to graduate from the BA if they fail to complete their report papers satisfactorily, no matter if they have passed all the other subjects on the syllabus. For this reason, these subjects are crucial and decisive for students’ academic success. In particular, “*Seminario de redacción para el trabajo recepcional*” plays a very important role as it is a workshop where students’ final product is the written evidence of their research work. It is within the framework of this course that the study was carried out.

As stated previously, 15 students who were beginning to write their final papers in the context of this class were the main participants of this study. All of them had previous knowledge and practice of academic writing in English since the curriculum of this BA includes a course called “*Lectura y redacción de textos académicos en inglés*”, which is

taught prior to “Seminario” as part of the disciplinary area. A co-teacher and an external teacher also enriched this research with their participation as observers.

## **RATIONALE**

Writing stands as one of the most basic learnt abilities and plays a wide array of key roles in our daily performances. The contexts in which writing takes place are varied and increasingly complex and “the diverse backgrounds and needs of those wishing to learn it, all push the study of writing into wider frameworks of analysis and understanding” (Hyland, 2002, p. 1). This way, writing has become a vast field, approached from different perspectives, and its study has led to the proliferation of research on different types of writers, different writing processes, products, purposes, etc. For instance, “writing has been a central topic in applied linguistics for over half a century and remains an area of lively intellectual research and debate” (Hyland, 2002, p.1). Nevertheless, the task of researching writing is a complex, inexhaustible enterprise since

...its complex, multifaceted nature seems constantly to evade adequate description and explanation, and many forms of enquiry have been summoned to help clarify both how writing works and how it should best be taught. (Hyland, 2002, p. 1).

Writing in the educational context, for example, has gained more and more attention in recent years, especially in the higher education context (Kroll, 1990; Lillis, 2001). What is more, with a growing ESL population getting access to college, ESL writing workshops, courses, teacher-training programs and materials have also been developed and have promoted research on the nature of ESL written products and ESL writing pedagogy (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Hyland, 2002; Hinkel, 2004). As a result of this interest in the field of ESL writing instruction in higher education, a number of studies have emerged, pointing out that non-native speaking students experience a great number of difficulties in their studies at the university level, in spite of having studied English and academic writing in English in their native countries (Hinkel, 2004, p. 4).

At the public university where this study was carried out, students’ initial drafts of their final papers were considerably short texts (since students were at the outset of their paper production), language errors were scarce, and register was formal to a certain degree, though vocabulary related to their specific research topic was sometimes imprecise and some ideas were inaccurate. These last two features made it evident that students’ topic knowledge was limited and that they had probably consulted very few, if any, bibliographical resources on their research area. However, even though information in the texts was not substantial, it was possible to perform further analysis of the organization and the sequence of ideas, as well as the connectedness between them. In this respect, the organization of ideas within paragraphs did not allow for an adequate flow of information. In general, these texts included ideas that were not interrelated, a very limited

number of connectors and sequence markers, as well as omission of important information that could have provided a bridge between unrelated or poorly related ideas. As students' compositions were increasingly lengthier, they continued to struggle with establishing relationships between ideas and building a coherent text. Students did not achieve to connect their ideas, nor produce a logical sequence or progression. The lack of connectedness was also present between paragraphs, which compromised unity and coherence of the overall text. This proved that students' writing problems were of a different nature than simply a lack of information of their research topics. Hence, students' most important difficulties in EFL academic writing were identified as being related to coherence and the structural component of texts.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Becoming a writer is a process full of complexities and challenges, but it is also important to recognize that "becoming a writing teacher is not less complex" (Kroll, 1990, p. 1). However, being a second language writing teacher is even a more complicated endeavor since a wider range of factors is encountered, and the competencies required from the teacher and her choice of pedagogical methodology might be more complex, too. In this respect, Kroll (1990) posits that:

For those engaged in teaching writing to second language learners, what is needed is both a firm grounding in the theoretical issues of L1 and L2 writing and an understanding of a broad range of pedagogical issues that shape classroom writing instruction.

(Kroll, 1990, p. 2)

For the present research, it was important to consider that these students were not only dealing with academic writing, but also with learning English as a foreign language. That is why, a revision of the existing literature was performed based on a consideration of the varied factors interacting in this context.

### *The Systemic Functional Perspective*

The literature dealing with problems similar to the ones found in this context (according to the initial research findings) included notions and concepts from Systemic Functional Linguistics, which treats texts as discourse, mainly from the subfield of Functional Grammar. These same concepts were incorporated in the present research as the basis for the design of the action plan, not only because they have been used in a variety of research, both empirical and theoretical, dealing with student writing (Connor & Farmer, 1991; Lovejoy, 1998; Alonso & McCabe, 1998; Downing, 2001; Mojica, 2006; Wang, 2007; Abid & Ridha, 2008; Ahmed, 2010; Shieh & Lin, 2011; Ghasemi, 2013; Fatimah & Yunus, 2014, to name a few), but most importantly, because they allow approaching texts beyond their surface errors, and they focus on their deep structure, that is, "features of texts that



extend across sentence boundaries” (Witte & Faigley, 1981, p. 189), which is the area of concern in this study.

Another reason why the discourse theory was chosen to approach student writing in this research is that, according to Witte and Faigley (1981), “empirical research at the college level has for the most part taken two approaches: examining errors and syntactic features”; however, “neither the error approach nor the syntactic approach has been entirely satisfactory” (Witte & Faigley, 1981, p. 189). What is more, according to Hyland (2009) “there is little evidence that syntactic complexity or grammatical accuracy are the principal features of writing development or the best measures of good writing” (Hyland, 2009, p. 192). That is why the implementation of this action plan incorporated notions of these theories, namely theme-rheme, given-new organisation of discourse and thematic progression.

#### *Information structure: given-new*

One of the basic contributions by the Prague school deals with the ways in which clauses are structured to represent the writer’s assumptions about what is known (*given*) or *new* to the reader (e.g. Firbas, 1968). Theoretical and empirical works on student writing analysis and writing instruction have made use of this *given-new relationship* in order to describe the organization of information in a logical, sequential manner, allowing a text to build meaning across sentences, paragraphs, etc. (Bruce, 1988; Connor & Farmer, 1991; Lovejoy, 1998; Hinkel, 2004; Wang, 2007; Abid & Ridha, 2008; Goodson, 2013). The notion of the given-new information structure of a text is one of the fundamental topics of Systemic Functional Linguistics, mainly the Functional Grammar approach, and is the basis for the construction of coherence and cohesion in a text. In this sense, we generally expect writers to present old information first as a context for new. In his study, Lovejoy (1998) discovered that “inexperienced writers place information new to their readers in thematic position where readers do not expect it” (Lovejoy, 1998, p. 3), which avoids efficient communication of ideas. Also, their readers do not easily understand the progression of ideas because the flow of given and new information in their sentences is not adequately controlled. For this reason, the writer needs to make sure that the reader knows the information being introduced, either from experience, or from the same text, so that ideas are communicated effectively and the purpose of the text is achieved. According to Wang (2007, p. 167), “the problem of a brand new Theme is extremely common in the work of inexperienced writers, who put new information in Theme position”, that is, at the beginning of a clause. Given and new information in a text are intricately related and sometimes equivalent to Theme and Rheme.

#### *Theme and Rheme*

Theme, for Halliday (1994), is the “point of departure; it is that with which the clause is concerned” (1994, p. 37). He describes Theme as a function where a special status is assigned to one part of the clause” (Halliday, 1994). In English, Theme is realised by what

is placed in initial position within the clause and this initial position gives the Theme a 'special status' within the clause. Lovejoy (1998) provides a useful definition of the term. The Theme "typically occurs at the beginning of a clause; it is therefore the point of departure in the verbal exchange or as Halliday puts it, "what I am talking about." It provides the setting for the remainder of the sentence: the Rheme. (p.4)

For its part, the Rheme constitutes the information the writer wants to provide about the Theme; "it is information the writer wants the reader to attend to for the moment as newly introduced into the argument" (Lovejoy, 1998, p. 4). Rheme is everything that is not Theme: it is the part of the clause where the Theme is developed (Halliday, 1994, p. 37). A message structure in English is comprised of a Theme plus a Rheme. There is an order to the structure: Theme comes first, followed by Rheme,

For Paltridge (2006), Theme and Rheme contribute to the "focus and flow of information in a text" (p. 128); he further advises that "an understanding of this is important, especially for the writing of successful student texts" (p.129). This is echoed by Wang's (2007, p. 165) statement that "students write better papers when they develop an ability to use Theme and Rheme more effectively in their writings".

According to, Alonso and McCabe (1998, p. 3), the notion of Theme-Rheme is "highly useful in the comprehension and production of texts". Consequently, it can be a very helpful tool of instruction and evaluation at the level of discourse in student writing (Alonso & MacCabe, 1998). Lovejoy (1998) confirms that "the distinction between given and new corresponds essentially with the theme-rheme distinction" (p.4). Alonso and MacCabe (1998) also noticed that in subject-verb-object (SVO) languages such as English "formal categories such as *Theme*, *Topic*, *Grammatical Subject* and *Given (recoverable) information* usually come together" (Alonso & MacCabe, 1998, p. 4) at the beginning of the clause.

### *Thematic Progression*

Thematic Progression refers to the relationship between themes and rhemes in a text, which form particular patterns or progressions of information. For Daněš (1974), "the organization of information in texts is determined by the progression in the ordering of themes and their rhemes (in Downing, 2011, p. 6). In this respect, Wang (2007) adds that "the flow of information in a sentence from Theme to Rheme is crucial in achieving communicative effectiveness in a message." (p. 168).

Bloor and Bloor (1995) offered a comprehensive typology of thematic progressions, but also other authors have provided definitions of each pattern:

1. *The Constant Theme Pattern* (also called *Theme reiteration*). Theme 1 is picked up and repeated at the beginning of the next clause(s), signaling that each clause will have something to say about that theme (Paltridge, 2012, p. 131);

2. *The Linear Theme Pattern*. In this type, the rheme of one clause is taken up as the theme of the subsequent clause (Bloor & Bloor, 1995, p. 90);

3. *The Split Rheme Pattern*. This pattern occurs when the rheme of a clause has two (or more) components, each of which is taken in turn (Bloor & Bloor, 1995, p. 91);

4. *Derived themes*. This term is used to describe expressions in theme position which are cohesively linked in meaning, but not necessarily in form, to a topic which has been stated earlier in the text (Bloor & Bloor, 1995, p. 92). This type of progression is also known as “derived hypertheme”.

The way the basic types of Thematic Progressions are selected to be used is related to the genre that is being produced and the communicative purpose of the writer. In this respect, Downing (2001) suggests that becoming aware of the types of thematic progression can be important for language teaching pedagogy and that student compositions could be improved by the choice of thematic progressions.

A very important consideration here is that the same genres of text present similar thematic progression patterns (Zhang & Wang, 2001, in Shieh & Lin, 2011). For example, Fries (1983) pointed out that academic texts needed extended use of Linear Theme progression, “as the academic texts present complex arguments in which each successive ideas is an expansion of an idea in the previous sentence” (In Wang, 2007, p. 169). This also had a lot of significance in the present research, as participant students were dealing with specific genres of text, all related to academic writing. Thus, it seemed suitable to teach students how the thematic progressions typically worked in these genres.

### *Thematic Progression Analysis*

A particularly significant study for the present AR was the one carried out by Connor and Farmer in 1991, in which they introduced Topical Structure Analysis as a revision strategy in the ESL writing classroom. In that study, students were taught how to perform this kind of analysis on their own texts by means of drawing diagrams illustrating the underlying topical structure. According to the study’s results, students’ response to the activity was positive and improvement in their writing was noted “specifically in regard to clearer focus and better development of subtopics” (Connor & Farmer, 1991, p. 134). Moreover, these authors suggested that *topical structure analysis* (an analogous strategy to thematic progression analysis) works as a “check for coherence in ESL writing classrooms”. This assertion is highly relevant for the present research, since achieving text coherence is its main aim. Although Topical Structure and Thematic Progression Analysis might share some features, they are actually different techniques for text revision. What this AR essentially captured from Connor & Farmer’s study is the possibility of empowering students with a scientifically proven strategy to perform, themselves, a systematic revision of their own texts in an attempt to improve coherence.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What impact might the teaching of Thematic Progression Analysis have on EFL students' academic text coherence?

## **HYPOTHESIS**

Teaching students how to identify thematic progressions and how to carry out Thematic Progression Analysis could be beneficial to achieve coherence in their academic texts.

## **METHODOLOGY**

As teacher-researchers, we find in our classrooms the most valuable source of information for reflection, understanding and improvement of our practice. By means of observing and getting to know students' perceptions of the phenomena, products, environment and interactions developed in the classroom we can obtain rich insights into the nature of the teaching-learning processes taking place in our contexts.

For this reason, the research approach adopted in the present study was that of Qualitative Research, since it implies the exploration and understanding of a reality from the view of those involved in the context and since it is above all "a person-centred enterprise, it is therefore particularly appropriate to our work in the field of language teaching." (Richards, 2003, p. 8). Qualitative research also studies actors in their natural setting "rather than attempting to control contextual factors through the use of laboratories or other artificial environments" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 163). This characteristic of qualitative research suits teacher-researchers very well since it makes it possible for them to explore their actual classroom and school context.

From the variety of qualitative methodologies, Action Research (AR) was selected for the present inquiry because it suited the characteristics and the practical objectives of the study. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), Action Research is a "mode of inquiry undertaken by teachers and is more oriented to instructor and learner development than it is to theory building" (Mackey and Gass, 2005, p. 216). This kind of research is particularly appropriate for the educational context, since it not only explores a problem and describes it, but it also seeks and proposes a solution to such problem.

Action Research is a systematic process that involves specific stages or steps, one informing the next one, but at the same time it is an open process, leading to the possibility of carrying out successive(s) research cycle(s).

The research work here described made use of different data gathering methods along the AR process, as "different methods address different areas, and it is a good idea to triangulate approaches to data collection to achieve a more reliable and comprehensive picture." (Hyland, 2003, p. 60). At the initial research stage, student text analysis, think-aloud protocols and field notes were employed to inform the action plan. For the evaluation of the pedagogical plan implementation, class observations, student text analysis and

semi-structured interviews were used. These data generating methods are described below.

### *Text analysis*

For this study, the first and main source of data was the analysis of student texts. From the point of view of EFL student writing, Connor (1994) regards text analysis as a tool to describe and evaluate the quality of texts “both from the viewpoint of texts that learners produce as well as the kinds of texts they need to learn to produce” (p. 682). In this sense, the researcher can not only identify the characteristics of a writer’s product, but also determine how far or close this is from the target text. An important feature of this orientation is that the analysis goes “beyond the level of sentence grammar” (Connor, 1994, p. 682). These characteristics of text analysis made it a valuable resource to obtain information on student writing in this research. This was because it is the most direct method of assessing a student’s text and because the analysis of text can be performed at the level that best suits the purpose of the researcher, which in this case was the discourse level. The researcher carried out thematic progression analysis of students’ texts so as to find out whether students had built effective thematic patterns and if they had achieved coherence.

Text analysis was carried out in two stages during this research. First, it was used during the initial research in order to discover the nature of students’ writing and detect possible problems. Then, it was performed after the action plan implementation to find out whether this had had an impact on students’ writing, and if so, identify the kind of impact (positive or negative), as well as evaluate to what extent it had helped to improve their work.

### *Think-aloud protocols*

This data gathering method was used at the preliminary research stage of this inquiry because it is a well tried method of gaining valuable information about students’ cognitive processes, how they make decisions, and what considerations they take into account while engaged in writing. In brief, “think-aloud protocol collection and analysis can be a remarkably illuminating research methodology” (Hyland, 2002, p. 185).

Think-aloud protocols were performed during two sessions of the Seminario course when students were composing/editing the introduction of their final papers. Participants were writing and they were asked to verbalize their thinking in order to obtain information regarding their decisions, strategies and perceptions while engaged in writing. During this process, prompting from the researcher was necessary in order to help students express themselves.

### *Structured Class Observations*

In order to assess students' reactions towards the action plan, as well as the pertinence of materials and teaching strategies, Structured Class Observations (Burns, 2010) were performed by two teachers on several occasions during the implementation. Structured class observations were selected as a data collection method given that they allow researchers to focus on a broader range of aspects, such as themselves as teachers, students' responses and the suitability of contexts, etc (Hyland, 2003).

Each observer was given a class observation sheet (Appendix A) designed by the researcher, and was asked to check and report different aspects of the class such as teacher performance, student performance, types of interaction, perceived usefulness of materials, etc. These structured class observations represented a very useful resource to obtain information about the strengths and weaknesses of the action plan, as well as suggestions how to improve it.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

In order to triangulate the data obtained from the text analysis and the structured class observations, semi-structured interviews with students were carried out after the action plan implementation. This method was selected since in qualitative research interviews are a very popular technique to collect data in order to try to understand something from the subject's point of view and to unveil the meaning of their experiences (Kvale, 1996, p. 1).

A semi-structured interview was preferred over other types of interviews because it is "still structured and organised but also more open" (Burns, 2010, p. 75). This allowed me to prepare a set of topics I wanted to explore and use them during the interview as a guide (Appendix B). At the same time, this type of interview provided flexibility to adapt the sequence of questions or the use of prompting according to students' responses. In addition, the "conversational feel to this interview" (Burns, 2010, p. 75) allowed students to feel more comfortable and confident to talk about their experiences and perceptions in relation to the action plan.

## **FINDINGS**

Since the initial stage of this project, most of the students overtly expressed that, for them, quality writing meant that the text "can be understood" (TAP/David/12/02/15) and that their ultimate goal was to write a coherent text. For Witte and Faigley (1981), writing quality could be defined as "the 'fit' of a particular text to its context" (p. 199) which involves the purpose of the writer, the discourse medium, and the potential audience and their knowledge of the subject. Coincidentally, this is related to the concept of coherence, as "coherence conditions (...) allow a text to be understood in a real-world setting" (Witte & Faigley, 1981, p. 199). Hence, in part, the quality of a text can be judged by its coherence, that is, the extent to which a text is understood and is adequate for a particular purpose, context and audience.

Unfortunately, coherence is often ignored in writing curricula. In fact, students who participated in this project reported that this was the first time they had been presented with Thematic progression analysis in their classes as a strategy to improve coherence in texts. What is more, participants considered this kind of analysis as a novel practice because, as inexperienced writers, they tend to revise at the lexical level only, often overlooking the discourse level.

Furthermore, the notion of given and new information and how discourse flow is developed through interactions between Themes and Rhemes was of particular interest for the participants in this study. During the interviews after the intervention, students referred to aspects of the structural component of texts (information and thematic structure) as one of the most interesting and useful class contents. Other participants went further to mention more specific features of thematic progressions and how they used this notion:

“For example, I remember a lot the split-rheme progression, how information could split into other sentences. And as I wrote I said “no, this doesn’t match anymore with the previous idea”; and with that progression I realized that it can change, that it doesn’t have to be always lineal and lineal. I liked that part very much.”

(SSI/Paulina/05/05/15)

There is a clear link between students’ desire to build coherent texts and their preference for strategies addressing both information structure and thematic structure of texts. This link is confirmed by the fact that “coherence conditions govern the information structure of a text.” (Witte & Faigley, 1981, p. 202), that is to say, old and new information relationships and their patterns of interaction are important features of coherence in a text. Consequently, participants’ positive views of information and thematic structures to analyse their texts after the implementation can be interpreted as an attempt to achieve coherence.

Post-implementation analysis of student texts revealed a much more complex reality. First, it was found that given-new information structure might have influenced the choice of logical sequence of broader extents of texts like paragraphs and sections (in this case a deductive organization of information that responds to the given-new structure). This finding led the researcher to notice that two types of coherence could be identified in students’ papers: global and local coherence. At the global level, texts seemed to follow a logical sequence, for instance, when looking at subheadings. It was possible to verify that the flow of information was from general to specific (given-new) and when looking at the topic sentences in paragraphs, it was possible to see that each one provided new details and specifications, contributing to the development of the topic. This corresponds to the idea that the movement of one paragraph to the next must be logical and smooth.

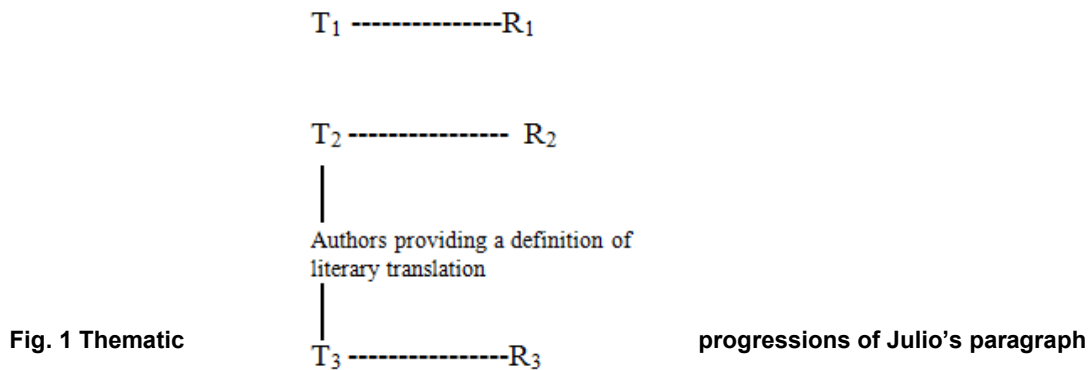
However, this “logical” organization was sometimes not achieved or it was partially achieved at the level of ideas within paragraphs (the local coherence). Text analysis revealed that within their paragraphs students sometimes included information that did not

relate to their main theme or that belonged to a different paragraph. The following extract, retrieved from a student’s literature review, is an example of this phenomenon:

“In general, literary translation is considered to be the most challenging form of translation. Goethe (year) considers literary translation as “one of the most important and dignified enterprises in the general commerce of the world” (in Othmani 2010, p. 16). Lander (year) defines literary translation in terms of uniqueness and creativity...”

(STA03/Julio/20/05/15)

In this extract, it is possible to observe that the idea in the first sentence is not developed in the rest of the paragraph, so information flow is blocked. Moreover, because of its location, this sentence is supposed to be the topic sentence of the paragraph; however, it is not supported by any of the subsequent sentences, which means it needs to be replaced or this idea should be developed in an independent paragraph. Using Thematic progression analysis, the relationship between ideas in this paragraph could be depicted as follows:



In figure 1, we can confirm that the first sentence is totally disconnected from the rest of the information, since neither the theme nor the rheme are linked to subsequent themes and rhemes in the paragraph. Possibly, T<sub>2</sub> and T<sub>3</sub> follow a derived hyperthematic progression, in which Themes are not directly interrelated, but they belong to a higher category that encompasses them (hypernym). However, the link developed in this hyperthematic progression might seem weak since the ideas are not further advanced and as a consequence they contribute very little to the topic, which is also not very clear. It seems that the writer’s purpose here was to enumerate features of literary translation that emphasize its importance and its degree of difficulty in comparison with other types of translation, but the organization of ideas, the low connectedness between them and the poorly developed rhemes do not contribute to the intended purpose.

In a second example, we can also see that the progression is weak and unbalanced towards the end of the paragraph, since the concluding sentence makes an inference that does not seem to be directly related to previous information, so it fails to build a coherent progression:



“EFL teachers need to consider that classroom management is an essential skill that unless you have it as an innate quality, you will need to learn it. In addition, Harmer (2007) points out that effective teachers see classroom management as a separate aspect of their skill. In other words, teachers will be able to carry out procedures to make the activity successful.”

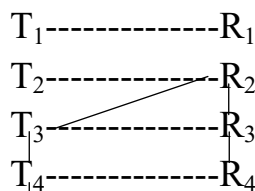


Figure 2 Thematic Progression of Gaby's paragraph

In figure 2, we can see how the concluding sentence is actually following a constant theme pattern, like the previous ones, which allows to build a certain degree of flow; however, the rheme (R<sub>4</sub>) does not allow the information to be either unfolded or confirmed, because it refers to an aspect that had not been clearly identified as an equivalent for “classroom management”.

As seen in the previous examples from the micro level of text, students had a tendency to omit a progression pattern or the progression they built was weak, making their text incoherent and/or hard to follow. Regarding this, in the semi-structured interviews, most students expressed that the intervention had provided them with significant information and practice but that they were also conscious that they needed to work more on this aspects. Consequently, they showed interest in pursuing more courses related to Systemic Functional Linguistics, especially Thematic Progression Analysis.

In sum, participants appear to have gained awareness on the underlying structure of texts and, in general, students' texts showed a better flow of information and connectedness at the macro level. Nevertheless, ideas inside paragraphs, the micro level, still needed stronger and more significant interrelationships to create a constant flow of information and finally build meaning. The most common problems were brand new Theme (introducing a completely new element without previous reference), empty Rheme (idea that is not developed and does not actually say anything) and isolated Theme-Rheme pairings (a totally disconnected idea). So, it is possible to say that students who participated in this action research might have taken the first step to constructing more efficient texts, that is the global coherence, but they are still in the process of attaining the second step, the local coherence.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study here described was carried out to identify undergraduate students' main AW problem(s), to design and implement an action plan for instruction (based on the problems identified) and to evaluate the effect of this implementation on students' AW skills. As a result of the review of literature, a text-based writing instruction was adopted to design the action plan. This action plan included some elements of systemic functional approaches to writing, such as Halliday's Functional Grammar (1985) and its structural components. The findings obtained from the data analysis show that the action plan implemented had an impact on students' awareness of the information structure of their written products while they were trying to compose coherent texts. However, this was achieved mostly at the macro level of texts, while the local coherence still needs to be improved.

### *Implications*

The findings of this study suggest, in the first place, that the teaching of structural elements of texts might be beneficial to the development of some student academic writing skills, such as the logical organization of texts at the level of paragraphs and sections. Nevertheless, the evidence also indicates that establishing logical relationships at the interior of paragraphs, that is, thematic progressions built among clauses and sentences inside paragraphs, represents a greater challenge for student writers, and hence suggests that this aspect should be treated in more depth and most preferably along with other features of Functional Grammar such as cohesive devices. A possible pedagogical implication of this is that theme-rheme, given-new and thematic progressions might work well as an initial step in writing instruction. This way, students can start practicing them and applying them earlier and take better advantage of these concepts to improve their AW skills, and, possibly achieve both global and local coherence.

### *Limitations*

One of the most important limitations of the present inquiry was that, due to the nature of the course, specific micro-genres of academic writing such as literature review or methodology chapters could not be approached individually and their specific characteristics and demands were treated superficially during the implementation. Another limitation of the study is that a more in-depth exploration into students' very different degrees of background knowledge and previous experience in L1 and L2 academic writing could not be performed because it was out of the scope of the research. Nevertheless, these factors greatly affected students' composition competences in L2 and thus represent a very interesting field of study in this area.

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# APROPIACIÓN DE LA TEXTUALIDAD EN LA UNIVERSIDAD: UNA APROXIMACIÓN DESDE LA LITERACIDAD ACADÉMICA

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## RESUMEN

En contextos internacionales, donde el inglés es una lengua extranjera para estudiantes que hablan otro idioma, los programas de literacidad académica se han diseñado con los principios y conceptos enmarcados en Inglés para Propósitos Académicos (EAP por sus siglas en inglés). Por lo anterior, resulta relevante elucidar los principios, las teorías y los enfoques que enmarcan el desarrollo de la literacidad académica, tales como el constructivismo social, Inglés Para Propósitos Específicos (ESP por sus siglas en inglés), el Análisis de Género y la Cultura Institucional. En este ensayo argumentativo el tema a discutir es a qué dificultades se enfrentan los estudiantes para apropiarse del conocimiento a través del aprendizaje del discurso y la escritura académica. Esto lo haremos con base en la perspectiva de la Literacidad Académica, es decir, desde las prácticas discursivas, lingüísticas, cognitivas y retóricas propias de la educación superior, que implican leer, escribir, hablar y pensar conforme al campo de las comunidades y las disciplinas académicas (Hernández, 2016). Consideramos que es tarea de las universidades brindar a los estudiantes los medios para apropiarse de la textualidad de su campo disciplinar en el proceso educativo, debido a que en la educación superior los estudiantes universitarios tienen problemas para escribir y exponer sus ideas mediante el uso de la intertextualidad. Además, esta problemática se acentúa cuando un estudiante incursiona en la redacción académica en lengua extranjera, por ejemplo, en inglés dado que los procesos de literacidad son los mismos tanto para lengua materna como para lengua extranjera. En consecuencia, discutiremos las vicisitudes implicadas en el proceso de aprender y apropiarse del oficio de escribir en la universidad, tanto en español como en inglés como lengua extranjera. La escritura académica es una actividad fundamental para encauzar el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico y creativo del estudiante universitario, lo cual implica, a su vez, la apropiación del conocimiento científico y humanista.

**Palabras clave:** educación superior, lengua extranjera, lengua materna, literacidad académica, teoría de género, textualidad.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

La finalidad de este trabajo es analizar algunas de las vicisitudes implicadas en el proceso de aprender y apropiarse del oficio de escribir en la universidad, tanto en lengua materna

como en inglés como segunda lengua y/o lengua extranjera. Para guiar nuestro análisis, abordaremos las cuestiones problemáticas que giran en torno a las dificultades de los estudiantes universitarios para apropiarse del conocimiento a través del aprendizaje del discurso y la escritura académica, cuestiones que han cobrado vigencia con la internacionalización de la educación superior y el papel del inglés como lengua franca para comunicar la investigación. Actualmente los cursos de Inglés para Propósitos Académicos (EAP por sus siglas en inglés) se imparten también a hablantes nativos del idioma, debido a los patrones lingüísticos y las especificidades de cada disciplina que se aprenden en la vida académica. En nuestros contextos de educación superior el tema de la apropiación de la textualidad disciplinar en español no es algo que demande la atención de los agentes –autoridades, docentes y estudiantes– debido a que escribir no es, en la mayoría de las disciplinas, una práctica social para el aprendizaje.

En los siguientes apartados delimitaremos, en primer lugar, la perspectiva de la Literacidad Académica, sus alcances y algunos temas controversiales; en seguida, abordaremos el concepto de textualidad y los problemas educativos y socioculturales relativos a su apropiación en el campo universitario y, por último, presentaremos algunos principios teóricos y las aproximaciones pedagógicas del Análisis de Género y su relación con la apropiación del lenguaje de las ciencias y de las humanidades.

## **LITERACIDAD ACADÉMICA: SU CONCEPTUACIÓN**

De acuerdo con Ken Hyland (2006:21), la Literacidad Académica es una extensión de los modelos de estudio de las Nuevas Literacidades aplicados a contextos académicos. La Literacidad Académica es un elemento integral de producción de significados, en el cual las prácticas académicas toman lugar y éstas coadyuvan a la construcción de identidades de los estudiantes universitarios. En este sentido, Hernández (2016:19) define a la Literacidad Académica como prácticas discursivas, lingüísticas, cognitivas y retóricas propias de la educación superior, que implican leer, escribir, hablar y pensar conforme al campo de las comunidades y de las disciplinas académicas.

Estas definiciones resultan relevantes porque desvelan las características del discurso académico. De acuerdo con Lillis y Turner (2001), Street (2015), Lea (1998) y Bourdieu ([1982] 2008; [1989] 2013), la gran mayoría de estudiantes de educación superior proviene de familias donde la vida académica es ajena a su realidad social y, por ende, el trabajo intelectual, científico o humanístico no forma parte de su curso de vida. Esta acotación vuelve importante el enfoque de la Literacidad Académica porque para estos estudiantes enfrentarse a prácticas discursivas universitarias implica adentrarse en un campo desconocido, razón por la cual, los códigos lingüísticos académicos pueden resultarles difíciles de comprender y, en consecuencia, ser obturadores de su formación profesional.

Algunos especialistas en Literacidad Académica (Hyland, 2006; Hernández, 2016; Lillis, 2003; Lea, 1998; Street, 2015; Kiili, Mäkinen y Coiro, 2013; Clarence y

Mckenna, 2017) señalan la importancia de superar, por una parte, la práctica conservadora y tradicional del estudio de las habilidades lingüísticas, esto es, hablar, escribir, leer y escuchar, y por otra, la de la socialización académica, la cual objetiva el contexto sociocultural de las comunidades de práctica como si éstas fueran monolíticas, homogéneas e inamovibles. Escribir en la universidad implica el estudio y reforzamiento de habilidades lingüísticas, así como concienciar al estudiante de las prácticas discursivas predominantes en su campo disciplinar; se trata de delimitar las formas en las que la lengua es utilizada en contextos académicos particulares (Bourdieu, [1982] 2008; [1989] 2013). Dicho de otro modo, el enfoque de la Literacidad Académica enfatiza la articulación de la lengua con el contexto en el que se utiliza y, además, considera importante avizorar las relaciones de poder, inequitativas y asimétricas, inmanentes en los contextos académicos.

En lugar de tomar la lengua como un objeto, distanciada de los usos de los estudiantes y los académicos, la Literacidad es conceptualizada como algo que las personas hacen. En este sentido, Lea y Street (1998) la conceptúan como un verbo, resultado de la interacción social. Debido a que la Literacidad es un elemento integral del contexto académico, es importante destacar la heterogeneidad disciplinar como característica de la educación superior. En otras palabras, en la universidad existen prácticas discursivas múltiples, propias de cada campo disciplinar, lo cual genera la construcción de nuevas identidades y modos de apropiarse de géneros discursivos.

La apropiación de géneros y de conocimientos se da en un campo tenso por las relaciones de fuerza inmanentes en toda relación humana. Los enfoques de Literacidad Académica subrayan que los estudiantes y los académicos utilizan la lengua de diversas formas, determinadas por las prácticas institucionalizadas y las relaciones de poder; esto sugiere la idea de que algunas Literacidades Académicas se vuelven más dominantes. La complejidad y el prestigio de ciertas Literacidades Académicas se convierten en mecanismos de exclusión de estudiantes, dificultando su acceso a un campo académico dado. De hecho, el ingreso a un campo académico supone un cambio cultural y una construcción de identidad con la finalidad de formar parte de una comunidad disciplinar. Se trata de trascender la cultura heredada, donde el discurso es un elemento tangible de la nueva identidad a adoptar.

Por otra parte, en la construcción de nuevas identidades, la perspectiva de la Literacidad Académica delimita el estatuto tanto del docente como el del estudiante. El estudiante es conceptualizado como una persona que pretende aprender y apropiarse de los discursos y las prácticas de una comunidad disciplinar y, el docente, puede ser un profesional que facilita u, en su caso, obtura la apropiación de un discurso académico y el camino a ingresar a esa comunidad. En este sentido, el docente como profesional de una disciplina encauza al estudiante a involucrarse con las prácticas y discursos de la comunidad académica y, además, censura a aquellas que no corresponden al estatuto de su comunidad de adscripción. Es por eso que el docente es un agente pedagógico que



inculca una serie de sentidos respecto al prestigio y legitimidad de su disciplina (Bourdieu, [1984] 2009).

Aunque los enfoques de Literacidad Académica ofrecen la posibilidad de pensar en el contexto para explicar las experiencias académicas de los estudiantes, ésta carece de una clara pedagogía (Hyland, 2006; Lea y Street, 1998; Lillis y Turner, 2001). Dicho de otra manera, los especialistas en la Literacidad Académica fundamentan su quehacer en su experiencia profesional y en lo que funciona mejor en el aula (Krashen, 1982), y de una pedagogía que quizá pueda desvelarse mediante el análisis del currículum oculto (Giroux, [1983] 2004). Este es un tema controversial que cuestiona el alcance educativo de la Literacidad Académica.

Un enfoque que fundamenta a la Literacidad Académica es el constructivismo social, esto es, la forma en la que el sujeto comprende el mundo (Berger y Luckmann, [1967] 2008:40-41). Esta comprensión se da gracias a las categorías constitutivas de los esquemas de apreciación, determinadas histórica y socialmente. Desde esta perspectiva, la comprensión del mundo siempre está mediada por sistemas de creencias. Los académicos no son ajenos a estos fenómenos, pero ellos sí construyen sistemas de pensamiento capaces de suscitar modos convencionales de instaurar acuerdos en una comunidad de práctica.

En suma, la perspectiva de la Literacidad Académica define el uso de la lengua como algo que se da en la interacción social, es decir, en el campo de la intersubjetividad. Las prácticas discursivas implican la idea de que las actividades lingüísticas forman parte de la vida académica cotidiana, por lo cual, el aprendizaje y la apropiación del conocimiento se dan mediante el uso de la lengua puesta en acción.

## **APROPIACIÓN DE LA TEXTUALIDAD ACADÉMICA**

Antes de explicar los temas circundantes a la apropiación de la textualidad académica, es importante realizar una aproximación conceptual. La textualidad es entendida como el conjunto de características distintivas de un texto<sup>1</sup>. En este sentido, es pertinente considerar la definición de Beaugrande y Dressler (1997), quienes definen textualidad a partir de la conjugación de ocho criterios, estándares o normas ligadas entre sí: cohesión, coherencia, intencionalidad, informatividad, situacionalidad, aceptabilidad, efectividad y propiedad. En la redacción de un texto estas normas confluyen, razón por la cual los criterios deben analizarse en conjunto porque la expresión de cada una depende de la producción de las demás (Hernández, 2013:18). En suma, el texto es el resultado de un proceso comunicativo dependiente tanto de los aspectos lingüísticos como del proceso de producción.

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<sup>1</sup> Texto es el material comunicativo, algo que se hace en el proceso de interacción entre participantes en un evento comunicativo dado. Texto es el producto semiótico de esa interacción.

De acuerdo con esta definición, pensamos que la textualidad es inherente a los discursos sociales de las comunidades de práctica y de la construcción de identidades académicas. La comunicación, la textualidad y el texto son elementos secuenciales de la cultura académica, a partir de los cuales se obtienen repertorios lingüísticos y retóricos, se construyen sentidos y, al socializarse a partir del texto, comunican el conocimiento disponible.

En los enfoques de Literacidad Académica y en los temas de apropiación de la textualidad, el énfasis está centrado en la redacción de unidades textuales y en los elementos contextuales. El aprendizaje de habilidades lingüísticas y de habilidades sociales, el tema de los estándares de textualidad y la construcción de identidades mediante la adscripción a las comunidades de práctica dan cuenta de la complejidad de la apropiación de la textualidad en el campo académico.

Sin embargo, ya que el estudio de las Literacidades sólo explora algunos problemas socioculturales relativos a la apropiación de la textualidad en el campo académico, también habrá que interrogar las condiciones de posibilidad para que un estudiante universitario logre incorporarse a un campo específico o, en caso contrario, fracase y se quede al margen o excluido del mundo intelectual.

¿Qué hace que los estudiantes universitarios tengan problemas para redactar en el campo académico? A simple vista, la respuesta estaría en que los estudiantes universitarios no han aprendido los estilos de redacción de las ciencias y de las humanidades, o que no saben expresar sus ideas por escrito o, simplemente, carecen de recursos discursivos para redactar unidades textuales. Sin embargo, en México y otros países, los estudiantes universitarios han pasado por al menos doce años aprendiendo la lengua oficial de su país antes de ingresar a la universidad y se responsabiliza a la educación básica y media del fracaso escolar de los estudiantes universitarios.

Cabe destacar que los estudiantes universitarios han cursado el sistema educativo mexicano, el cual, en la opinión de algunos especialistas, no tiende a fomentar el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico, sino la repetición mecánica de contenidos de aprendizaje<sup>2</sup> (Hernández, 2016; Ferreiro, 2001); este tipo de educación es uno de los aspectos básicos en la formación de los estudiantes, el cual, de acuerdo con Carlos Ornelas ([1995] 2003:163), fomenta la construcción de perfiles profesionales cada vez más estandarizados y favorece en los alumnos patrones rígidos con faltas de preocupaciones sociales, éticas y de construcción de conocimiento. Además, en otros niveles académicos, la alfabetización se da mediante un proceso monológico y no dialógico, esto es, sin reconocer ni reconocerse en la mirada y la escucha del otro<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> La lectura y la escritura son prácticas en doble sentido, pero si no hay una comprensión lectora es difícil que se pueda escribir expresando en palabras propias lo que se lee.

<sup>3</sup> Alfabetizar es enseñar simplemente a decodificar el alfabeto a los adultos analfabetos para leer y escribir de manera aislada. Es una actividad que se lleva a cabo mecánicamente, en donde no hay significado ni contexto y, en consecuencia, el lector no entiende ni puede interpretar lo que lee porque es algo que está fuera de su realidad (Hernández, 2016: 21-22).

(Gunawardena, 2017; Lillis, 2011; Londoño, 2015; Montes y López, 2017). En este sentido es que se considera que una vez que el alumno está cursando una licenciatura es porque está alfabetizado, pero alfabetización y literacidad son dos niveles del lenguaje necesarios para apropiarse del conocimiento, entendiendo a la alfabetización como el peldaño de la literacidad para la decodificación de signos que conllevan a la lectura y la escritura de manera aislada. La literacidad, como segundo nivel, va más allá de una simple decodificación de signos en solitario que se da en contextos sociales e institucionales específicos, como la universidad o el trabajo, es decir, es un aprendizaje situado y altamente contextualizado.

Por lo tanto, estamos hablando de prácticas sociales mediadas que implican que los estudiantes sean eficaces o competentes en las diversas situaciones o contextos sociales en las que los géneros textuales están en proceso de construcción, adaptación, evolución y cambio que dotan a las comunidades de práctica de una identidad de la cual los estudiantes deben apropiarse, mediante el aprendizaje de los patrones discursivos y las especificidades de los géneros disciplinares. De acuerdo con Lemke y García (1997), Wellington y Osborne (2001) y Fang (2005), los estudiantes deben conocer las pautas discursivas, utilizadas en el lenguaje científico para comunicar la producción de conocimiento, de manera que éste no sea una barrera para que los estudiantes aprendan. Es en esta parte donde se ancla el siguiente tema sobre análisis de género que se utiliza para la enseñanza de la Literacidad Académica y la apropiación de la textualidad.

## **ANÁLISIS DE GÉNERO Y SUS ENFOQUES PARA LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA LITERACIDAD ACADÉMICA**

La cultura académica en la educación superior y la producción constante de conocimiento conllevan a especificidades textuales y variantes lingüísticas complejas acordes a cada disciplina y género textual. Por ejemplo, para hacer una definición se pueden usar diferentes patrones sintácticos y términos léxicos determinados por el tipo de género, ya sea un artículo de investigación, una monografía, una revisión de literatura o un libro de texto. Antes de continuar, conviene resaltar que el Análisis de Género surgió por el interés de entender esas especificidades, las cuales han sido el objeto de estudio y de enseñanza de la Literacidad Académica y de EAP a través de tres enfoques: Inglés para Propósitos Específicos (ESP por sus siglas en inglés), la Lingüística Sistémica Funcional (SFL por sus siglas en inglés) y la Nueva Retórica Americana (Bathia, 2015).

Cada una de estas corrientes teóricas ha aportado amplias definiciones de Análisis de Género que incluyen sus funciones y características. Con base en las tres corrientes y acorde con los temas expuestos anteriormente, definimos el Análisis de Género como una práctica social situada y contextualizada que permite investigar la interacción entre el texto y su contexto y que incluye comunidades de práctica, relaciones de poder y la intertextualidad (Bhatia, 2015; Dudley-Evans, 1998). Los tres enfoques para el análisis de género no son excluyentes, al contrario, se complementan entre sí. Un breve y necesario recorrido por las características más prominentes de cada uno de estos enfoques y sus

aplicaciones es útil. En las siguientes líneas, abordaremos cada una de ellas en orden cronológico.

La SFL de Halliday (1975) sentó las bases para el desarrollo de la Teoría de Género y, en particular, de la escuela de Sydney. Él clasificó al género como una categoría analizada lingüísticamente, que surge de las interacciones sociales cotidianas y que provee un marco experimentado, hecho y determinado socialmente, con base en el cual, el género se asocia a un tipo de evento comunicativo particular. Lo anterior ubica a cada quien, en este caso a los estudiantes, en el marco mental correcto y, si el género es familiar, hay un sentido de seguridad; si no lo es, entonces, genera confusión y ansiedad. Para que haya una interacción exitosa, los participantes de un género deben compartir la comprensión del mismo, es decir, los estudiantes de una disciplina común se pueden comunicar mejor por el hecho de compartir los conceptos y pautas discursivas de su campo de conocimiento.

La SFL define género con base en criterios lingüísticos internos que agrupan textos con características formales similares. Los géneros escritos y hablados pueden ser, narrativos, argumentativos y explicativos, entre otros, los cuales están compuestos por etapas y pueden generar macrogéneros. Por ejemplo, un género simple como un procedimiento puede derivarse en una receta, un reporte de laboratorio o un manual de instrucciones. Estas clasificaciones divergen en el uso del léxico, la gramática, la sintaxis y la semántica. Por lo que esta corriente teórica considera necesario enfocar la enseñanza en las especificidades particulares de las disciplinas y ubicar a la lengua en el centro de la adquisición del conocimiento, utilizando el metalenguaje de la Gramática Sistémica Funcional (Halliday, 1994). Por ejemplo, un manual de instrucciones puede usar imperativos; una explicación utiliza conjunciones y/o marcadores de secuencia. Al respecto, cabe mencionar que en Australia se ha generado una pedagogía basada en la concienciación del género (*genre awareness*) para alumnos en riesgo de fracaso escolar (Macken-Horarik, 2002).

En segundo término, la corriente de ESP desarrolla una propuesta sobre Análisis de Género que surgió a partir de intenciones meramente pedagógicas para el desarrollo de materiales didácticos para hablantes no nativos de inglés (Coffey, 1984). Se sabe que ESP se caracteriza por su conexión con la cultura disciplinar y las contribuciones hechas por Swales (1990), Flowerdew y Peacock (2001), Swales y Lindenmann (2002), Johns (2002), Hyland y Tse (2007), Cheng (2011, 2015), Kuteeva (2013) y Bhatia (2015), han estrechado más esa conexión con sus contribuciones a la Teoría de Género. Este enfoque define género como un tipo de evento comunicativo con un propósito identificable por una comunidad; también reconoce al género como una categoría para producir diferentes tipos de conocimiento (Bhatia, 2015; Swales, 1990).

La aplicación pedagógica de género en ESP hace énfasis en la enseñanza de la estructura esquemática, conformada por etapas que se desarrollan en movimientos y pasos. El orden puede variar entre diferentes géneros; los movimientos pueden ser

opcionales, repetitivos, o incluso, contener otros géneros. Esto confirma el principio pedagógico básico del enfoque de género en ESP, el cual es guiar a los estudiantes a analizar los géneros académicos o profesionales. La aplicación principal del Análisis de Género se utiliza actualmente en cursos de redacción en EAP (Gillet, 2011; Üstünel y Kaplan, 2015). Algunos de los estudios que combinan ESP y Análisis de Género son los trabajos de Putra y Tang (2016), cuyo objetivo fue encontrar la estructura en las explicaciones científicas y la aplicación de esa estructura en la redacción académica. Los estudios de caso de Cheng (2011) y Kuteeva (2013) exploran a los estudiantes de manera individual dentro de un ambiente de instrucción de Análisis de Género y su aplicación a la redacción. Estos ejemplos y muchos otros han tenido el objetivo de desarrollar la literacidad disciplinar exigida a estudiantes universitarios, a través del diseño y la puesta en marcha de programas académicos en ambientes donde el inglés es segunda lengua o lengua extranjera.

Por otra parte, la Nueva Retórica Americana, iniciada por Miller en 1994, define a los géneros como fluidos y dinámicos y los conceptúa como formas de acción social, centrados en las acciones mismas de la forma en la que los usuarios expertos explotan los géneros para propósitos sociales y, también, de la manera en la que se crean y evolucionan. Esto ha llevado a tomar en cuenta un sentido más amplio de género para incluir el contexto institucional e ideológico que posiciona e influye en el individuo. La Nueva Retórica es pragmática y sugiere que la metodología para el Análisis de Género debe ser etnográfica más que lingüística y enfocada en las actitudes, los valores, las creencias y los patrones, es decir, en la cultura. Una característica importante de esta escuela es el énfasis en la intertextualidad y en la forma en la que un género es parte de un conjunto o sistema de géneros, los cuales interactúan con otros miembros del conjunto o del sistema.

En cuanto a su aplicación pedagógica, en la Nueva Retórica no se identifica una pedagogía clara porque los expertos de esta corriente no creen que en el salón de clases se les puede ayudar a los estudiantes a usar los géneros para propósitos propios. Un ejemplo del uso pragmático de la Nueva Retórica Americana es el estudio que Carrasco y Kent (2010) llevaron a cabo en México con estudiantes de posgrado en actividades de laboratorio. Los estudiantes más avanzados enseñaban a los novatos a comprender artículos especializados escritos en inglés, así como la aplicación de técnicas y metodologías que describían dichos artículos. La enseñanza de las literacidades era parcial porque los artículos de investigación eran redactados por el docente investigador. En Estados Unidos, la Nueva Retórica ha influido en varios contextos pedagógicos, como en los programas de redacción académica, en los cuales, el énfasis se pone en la creatividad individual y en la concienciación de los géneros.

En este sentido es importante señalar que la escritura académica ha sido el objetivo final de las Literacidades Académicas y del Análisis de Género. Éstos y la concienciación de género (*genre awareness*) son principios que se están utilizando para que los estudiantes conozcan las herramientas prototípicas del discurso que una

comunidad de práctica tiene establecido como canon para la generación y divulgación del conocimiento (Halliday, 1994). Por otro lado, la enseñanza de Literacidad Académica en la universidad carece de una pedagogía *per se*. En México, por ejemplo, se dan cursos de lectura y redacción basados en la enseñanza de gramática y de comprensión de lectura. No obstante, existen algunos casos en instituciones de educación superior, donde se ha promovido el desarrollo de la escritura académica en español: en la Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana se imparte un Taller de Literacidad Académica que es obligatorio para todos los estudiantes de ese campus (Hernández, 2016) y el Área de Escritura Académica, el cual es un proyecto de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala, ha implementado una pedagogía de la lectura y la escritura fundamentada en el Análisis de Género, encauzada hacia el ámbito de la alfabetización académica y disciplinar, pero cuyos cursos curriculares se circunscriben a la Licenciatura de la Enseñanza de Lenguas de esa universidad (Castro, 2017). También se reportan resultados de investigaciones sobre literacidad en tres instituciones de educación superior en México, los cuales brindan una visión general de las prácticas de escritura en programas de formación a nivel licenciatura en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera, pero sin brindar información precisa de las instituciones donde se realizaron dichas investigaciones ya que utilizan seudónimos para referirse a las tres universidades; cabe subrayar que los resultados indican la ausencia del uso del género y del conocimiento disciplinar en los programas analizados (Perales-Escudero, 2010).

En Estados Unidos, como se mencionó anteriormente, se dan cursos de redacción conocidos como *Writing Across the Curriculum* (WAC); en Inglaterra, Australia y Asia los programas de EAP varían ampliamente y la mayoría se sustenta en los principios de la Teoría de Género, específicamente en la SFL. Autores como Cope y Kalantzis (1993:14) e English (2011) justifican una pedagogía basada en el estudio de género porque “los géneros son vistos como procesos sociales que moldean los textos en forma particular para lograr objetivos” (English, 2011:72). Además, enfatizan que la enseñanza de la literacidad a través de los géneros textuales es una forma de “empoderar a los estudiantes ayudándolos a entender los contextos políticos, sociales y culturales en la que los géneros se producen” (English, 2011:72).

En conclusión, la relación de la Teoría de Género con la enseñanza de la Literacidad Académica es intrínseca debido a que se recurre al análisis textual de las especificidades y las variaciones lingüísticas de los textos que una comunidad académica produce. En general, e independientemente de la perspectiva desde la cual se realice, siempre que se hace análisis de texto se hace Análisis de Género. Dicho de otra manera, se producen cosas con la intención de comunicar significados (English, 2016, 68). Consideramos que una pedagogía efectiva para la enseñanza de la Literacidad Académica debe ser guiada de manera clara y servir de andamiaje a los estudiantes de manera efectiva. En este sentido, al estudiante se le debe enseñar la forma en la que están contruidos los textos, la intencionalidad, los aspectos lingüísticos y la ideología a la cual pertenecen. Pero, para hacerlo, los maestros deben ser conscientes de lo que van a enseñar. Con base en esto, Halliday propuso el trabajo en conjunto entre el lingüista y el

docente para forjar la enseñanza transdisciplinaria y, de este modo, que ambos especialistas avizoraran los mismos problemas desde diferentes puntos de vista. Esto representa un reto en todos los niveles debido al *ethos* y a la *praxis* profesional ya que es muy difícil conjuntar criterios de enseñanza cuando no hay una concepción de lengua, su uso y su importancia en la construcción del conocimiento y la apropiación de la textualidad académica.

## REFLEXIONES FINALES

Como fue referido en los temas anteriores, para saber el modo en el que se construye el conocimiento es necesario contar con habilidades especializadas en lectura, escritura y razonamiento disciplinar porque la relación entre el lenguaje científico y la construcción del conocimiento es esencial (Rainey, 2017). Por lo anterior, la apropiación de la textualidad ha sido ampliamente abordado y, por ende, es un tema vigente, pero no es un problema resuelto. La apropiación de la textualidad es una competencia lingüística que no se puede aprender antes del ingreso del estudiante a la educación superior debido a que es en este espacio donde se genera conocimiento, donde se investiga y donde las literacidades académicas<sup>4</sup> se convierten en prácticas sociales altamente contextualizadas.

Por este motivo, como lo planteamos al inicio del documento, nos adherimos a lo planteado por Halliday (1994) en cuanto a que es tarea de la universidad proporcionar los medios para que los estudiantes se apropien de las pautas discursivas existentes en los géneros académicos. Esto puede realizarse a través de la enseñanza de la textualidad en español o en la lengua extranjera que el alumno necesite, conforme a sus demandas académicas y disciplinares mediante programas o cursos de Literacidad Académica o de Propósitos Académicos. Es controversial pensar que la mera exposición a una multiplicidad de géneros promueva la comprensión de los mismos. Resulta importante que al estudiante se le enseñe las particularidades de los géneros y el tipo de discurso escrito utilizado por su campo disciplinar. Queremos resaltar que la enseñanza de la Literacidad Académica es una preocupación legítima en todos los ambientes de la educación superior a nivel mundial, al reconocer el déficit que los estudiantes tienen tanto en su lengua materna como en una segunda lengua o lengua extranjera, para apropiarse del conocimiento.

Por último, el estudio de la apropiación de la textualidad académica nos lleva a reconocer las deficiencias de los estudiantes universitarios al ingresar a campos de estudio disciplinar que son desconocidos para ellos, porque esto los enfrenta a situaciones complejas de adaptación, no sólo académica, sino social y cultural. Para los estudiantes es un reto apropiarse del conocimiento de su disciplina, por lo que para lograrlo tendrían que ser guiados por el docente disciplinar y el docente de la lengua

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<sup>4</sup> Utilizamos el plural para referirnos a un conjunto de habilidades cognitivas y no sólo al desarrollo de una habilidad lingüística, por ejemplo, hablar.

extranjera para formarse en su campo. Se espera que esto potencie su capacidad creativa para plasmar en textos su pensamiento crítico.

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# PROPOSAL FOR INTEGRATING PROJECT WORK IN AN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS, AT A HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL

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## ABSTRACT

These days in the field of education, there is evidence of a renewed interest in Task-based Language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Researchers (Affandi & Sukyadi, 2016; Bullent & Stoller, 2005; Nunan, 2004) agree that this renewed interest is reflected in the use of project work as project work requires the completion of many tasks from the learners. Project work offers students many advantages not only the ones related to the development of language skills but also cognitive, social and attitudinal skills (Thomas, 2000). The aim of this pedagogical proposal is to determine the extent to which the implementation of project work is suitable at a university level in a Mexican context, as well as to shed light on the issues related to its implementation considering that there is scarce literature about project work at university level in Mexico. The pedagogical proposal presented in this paper follows the framework proposed by Stoller (1997); it is a semi-structured project work as both teachers and students will make relevant decisions regarding the steps to be followed during its implementation (Stoller, 1997). This proposal is to be implemented with young university students in the Southeast of Mexico whose language level is at A1 according to the Common European Framework. Implementing project work at the university level could set challenges for teachers, on one hand, as they must know the methodology of project work very well to help learners maximise their learning opportunities this approach offers. On the other hand, it provides opportunities for students to display their strong abilities and develop the weak ones.

**Key words:** Task, task-based learning, project work

## INTRODUCTION

Kumaravadivelu (2006) claims that there is a “renewed interest in Task-based language teaching” (p. 64). To talk about project work implies talking about task-based learning as it requires, from students, to carry out many tasks and be able to solve problems or develop products (Moss & Duzer, 1998).

Beckett (2002) defines project work as an activity that might take several weeks to be completed and it also involves a variety of both people and cooperative tasks such

as “developing a research plan and questions, and implementing the plan through empirical or document research that includes collecting, analyzing, and reporting data orally and/or in writing” (Beckett, 2002, p.54).

Project Work has many advantages for language learning. However, it has been implemented and researched almost exclusively at elementary levels. The review of the literature yielded evidence of the few project work research studies at university levels: in Japan (Fujjoka, 2012); in Indonesia (Affandi & Sukyadi, 2016); in Thailand (Simpson, 2011; Poonon, 2011) and in Vietnam (Loi, 2017).

It can be safely said that project work research at university level is very limited. In Mexico, implementation and research studies about this approach is scarce (Ramirez, 2013). Therefore, the aim of this proposal is to study the suitability of integrating project work in an English as a foreign language class at a Mexican university; to discuss relevant issues regarding its implementation and contribute to the body of literature of project work in the Mexican context.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

One of our main interests in incorporating Project Work in our teaching practice is to offer a new mode in the teaching process with the intention of motivating students since we have observed that sometimes they do not seem to be interested enough in class. We believe this attitude may be caused by different reasons: the familiarity with both the format of the activities in the textbook, as well as with their teachers' methodology, and last but not least the low level of challenge of some of the tasks. Bearing in mind their age, all the potential they have when it comes to the use of technology, their capacity to do different things at the same time: listening to music, chatting, downloading information, etc., we feel compelled to give them more challenging activities, the hands-on type, which demand from them more active and more responsible roles, in terms of thinking and doing. Hopefully this will lead both parts to a sense of achievement. As Williams (1997) puts it:

If we want learners to become absorbed in the tasks we set, it is important to provide an appropriate challenge, as well as helping the learners to develop strategies to meet these challenges. This means finding language learning tasks which are sufficiently difficult to provide a challenge, but are not too difficult for students to be demotivated. It also means encouraging a sense of wanting to grapple with challenges, of feeling that one can go one step further, rather than the feeling of having reached one's limits (p.75).

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

Project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional model that is based on the constructivist approach to learning, which entails the construction of knowledge with multiple perspectives, within a social activity, and allows for self-awareness of learning and

knowing while being context dependent (Duffy & Cunningham, as cited in Tamim & Grant, 2013).

Regarding the defining features of PBL, literature indicates that PBL organizes learning around projects which can be defined as complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve students in designing, problem solving, decision making, or investigative activities; it offer students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time; and culminate in realistic products or presentations (Jones, Rasmussen, & Moffitt; Thomas, Mergendoller, & Michaelson, as cited in Thomas, 2000).

Project-based learning is defined as “an instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop” (Moss & Duzer, 1998, p.1). It may be said that to talk about Project Work implies talking about task-based learning and teaching, as project work consists on the integration of multiple learning tasks to attain specific language outcomes; Nunan (2004) and Estaire and Zanon (1994) align with this view since they state that in carrying out tasks, learners are given the opportunity of planning and monitoring their own learning, which lead to construct knowledge and to enrich their existing schemata. For researchers (e.g. Hedge, 1993; Sheppard & Stoller, 1997; Fried-Booth, 2002; Nunan, 2004; Bullent & Stoller, 2005; Scrivener, 2005; Affandi & Sukyadi, 2016; Barrot, 2013 ; Giri,2016) Project work has many advantages for language learners: it fosters an authentic integration of skills and mirrors real-life tasks; it is both process and product oriented ; while carrying out the tasks, students focus on fluency as well as on accuracy; it relies on the student’s collaboration rather than on competition since learners are engaged in cooperative tasks; it is centered on the learner. For his part Thomas (2000) calls for future research on the effects of PBL on domains such as “life skills” or “process skills” which include metacognitive skills, social skills, multiple intelligence and dispositions and attitudes associated with independent learning.

## **CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS**

The setting for this pedagogical proposal is an EFL class, at a public university in the southeast of Mexico. It is important to mention that this is a Basic English course of a BA in Modern Languages. The level of English of the students is A1 and by the end of the course they are supposed to reach A2 level (Common European Framework). That is, they are at the threshold of the B2 level. The class meets 3 times a week; each class period lasts 2 hours, during a semester. The participants are young adults, whose age ranges from 18 to 20 years old.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Project work has been implemented and researched mainly at elementary and secondary levels; however, the increasing interest of ELT professionals at higher education level is evident. Blackwell, Drake and Morgan (2014) acknowledge that while progressive K-12

schools have begun using PBL as an effective instructional model, higher education has been much slower in adopting project-based learning. Despite the potential of this pedagogical method, there seems to be a lack of PBL implementation and investigation in Mexico (Ramirez, 2013). Therefore, the aim of this pedagogical proposal is to emphasize the possibility of introducing Project work in a higher education context.

### *Empirical evidence*

There are some studies that illustrate the implementation of Project work in higher education contexts.

Fujjoka (2012) implemented Project work in an EFL class for engineering students in a Japanese university. The conclusion he reached included several relevant aspects: Project Work provided students with opportunities to generate language for discussions and presentations; students experienced the benefits of engaging in problem-solving and team-building, necessary traits in their field of duty. They showed their artistic and technical creativity in designing the end product of the Project. In brief, this academic experience proved Project Work fosters not only the use of language (English) but also autonomy, responsibility, and creativity. Similar results were reported by Grant (2017) Mamakou and Grigoriadou (2010), and Loi (2017) whose studies indicated that students' motivation, autonomous and active learning as well as academic socialization were raised through PBL.

Affandi and Sukyadi (2016) investigated the effectiveness of both Project-based learning (PjBL) and problem-based learning (PBL) with 78 participants at the tertiary level, in Indonesia. Tertiary education refers to post-secondary education. It is important to mention that PjBL and PBL imply working on projects and tasks.

The findings revealed that (1) both methods PjBL and PBL were able to improve students' writing achievements; (2) students perceived both methods as interesting since they offered a new mode in the teaching process; (3) Both methods enabled them to be more explorative as well as to develop their critical thinking.

For their part, Simpson (2011) and Poonpon (2011) investigated Project Work focusing on the four skills, with 30 students and 47 students in Thai universities in both cases; finding that students' language skills were enhanced through Project-based activities.

Irawati (2015) applied a cultural Project work to develop students' ability in academic writing, with 20 college students. Her study revealed that the students became more independent and critical since they had to do their own references search to generate writing ideas.



Types of project work differ from each other in the degree to which the teacher and students decide on the nature and sequencing of the project-related activities, as demonstrated by three types proposed by Henry (1994): “Structured projects are determined, specified and organized by the teacher in terms of topic, materials, methodology, and presentation; unstructured projects are defined largely by students themselves; and semi-structured projects are defined and organized in part by the teacher and in part by the students” (as cited in Stoller, 1997, p.110).

Stoller (1997) explains that projects can be linked to real-world concerns; projects can be related to simulated real-world issues or they can be also tied to students’ interests with or without real-world significance.

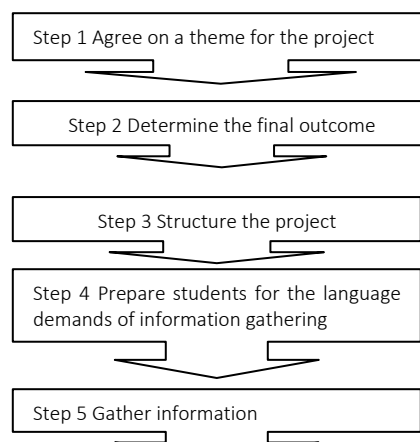
The following definition seems to describe best the project work learners will carry out in this proposal.

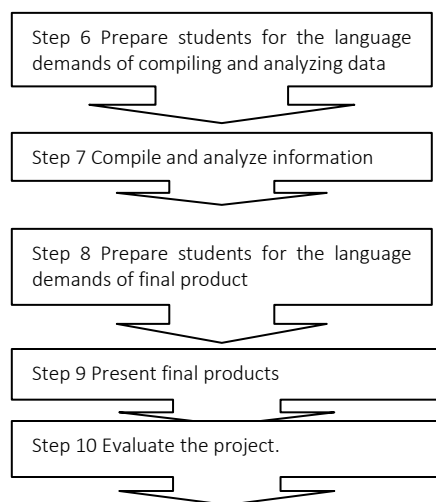
A project is defined as a long-term (several weeks) activity that involves a variety of individual or cooperative tasks such as developing a research plan and questions, and implementing the plan through empirical or document research that includes collecting, analyzing, and reporting data orally and/or in writing (Beckett, 2002, p. 54).

In this pedagogical proposal, the role of the members play within the group is fundamental. Tanner, Chatman and Allen (2003) claim that to foster positive interdependence among group members during a team project, teachers can assign randomly or strategically, specific roles within groups. The roles considered in this proposal are the following: a) facilitator, b) recorder, c) reporter, and d) time keeper. Furthermore, depending on the nature of the tasks and of the final products of the project, other roles may emerge, for example: speakers, role players, PPP designers, amid others.

### *Project Work Organization*

The Project Work will be organized following the framework proposed by Stoller (1997, p.112). This framework comprises ten steps:





Bülent (2005) recommends taking into considerations some important factors before planning a project, such as the benefits in terms of language, content, study skills, real-life skills, etc., and to answer questions like how it fits the objectives of the programme, if it is best integrated into an existing instructional unit or by creating one, among others.

Having considered these issues, it can be said that the benefits and knowledge the students are expected to gain are several: research skills, social skills, and real-life skills. Regarding the content and the learning objectives, this project fits the learners' study programme, since it is based on a unit of the course book; this will allow them to work on the new language input, and at the same time, to recycle some language items studied in previous units, as needed to complete the tasks the project comprises; this includes grammar (countable/uncountable), vocabulary (food), as well as the communicative skills.

## PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

In this section the pedagogical sequence we propose will be explained, step by step, providing some examples to illustrate the tasks that will be carried out by the students, as well as some teaching activities.

### *Step1 Students and instructor agree on a theme for the project*

The purpose of this first lesson is to raise students' awareness about eating healthy as one mean to avoid obesity, as well as prepare them with vocabulary related to this concept.

- a) Teacher will ask the class to look at a picture, from a previous unit, to introduce the concept, *obesity*. The teacher will try to elicit the word, since it is much more likely that the students will come up with the word fat, s/he will write the word on the board in order to work on a net word, in pairs or groups. The answers may vary. The teacher

will ask students to write their answers to work on spelling and pronunciation, at the same to make sure that the whole class has the same vocabulary.

- b) Once the net word activity will be finished, the teacher will bring students' attention to problems, causes and finally to solutions.

S/he will hand out copies of two articles from a local newspaper, (facebook, twitter, etc.) about one of the causes of the increase of obese children: junk food, and what is more important, the measures the Health Secretary (Secretaria de Salud) has taken to limit the sale of this kind of food. In this case, it is called "Escuelas Saludables" (Healthy Schools). Since the articles are in Spanish, the students will not have any problems comprehending the information, so they will be given some questions to apply the lexis they will have learnt in activity a), and at the same time become aware of the magnitude of the problem in their context. At this stage the teacher will have the opportunity to lead them to the theme of the project.

1. - Write some examples of junk food mentioned in the articles.
2. - What is the main purpose of the program "Healthy Schools"?
3. - Does this program include schools of all levels of education?
4. - Is this program respected by the schools? If not, what do you suggest?
- 5.-Did you know about the seriousness of obesity? What is your opinion about it?

With the last two questions, the teacher can introduce the *driving question*: Does anybody care about what university students eat on this campus?

To know who cares about the quality of food this university community is eating, they will have to carry out a research. The title could be something like: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away, what about three tacos a day". This number is taken from one of the advertisement in the cafeteria: "If you buy three tacos, you get a free beverage". Once the students carry out this research, they will feel confident enough to answer:

- a) Who keeps watch on quality of food that is sold on this campus?
- b) Are students on this campus eating healthy, so they can keep the doctor away now and in the future?

At the end of the class, the class will be organized in groups, at random, to avoid territoriality. This can be done by asking them to pick a piece of paper with a number on it, which will be their team number.

## *2. Students and instructor determines the final outcome of the project*

The teacher will elicit from the class ideas about the final product for the research. If the students do not have ideas to share, then s/he will suggest: a poster, class newspaper, wall paper, or bulletin board display, a PowerPoint Presentation, they will have to decide.

The teacher must be emphatic about two facts: 1) it is not necessary to produce something expensive, they tend to think that the more they invest the better their work will be, and 2) what they will have to invest are effort and time.

Next, the teacher will explain to the class that in the final outcome, they will have to show evidence of the information and the results the investigation yields; so they can include pictures of the cafeteria, and the food stands, including the combi (a van that parks in the parking lot, where food is also sold), as well as their advertisements; a survey report, and a report of the interview with the president of the students' body in this campus. They may also include pictures of students answering the questionnaires, as well as of the interview with the students' body president, provided they agree.

### *3. Students and instructor structure the project*

The teacher will start the class with the following questions, the questions below, eliciting ideas from students and guiding them when necessary, in order to answer at least the first two questions.

- a) What information is needed to know who keeps watch on the quality of food this university community is offered?
- b) Where and how can we find relevant or pertinent information?
- c) How will we gather, compile and analyze the information?

The answers may be like this:

- a) They have to find out if they need a permit from the university authorities to run the cafeteria, and who gives this permit, under what conditions, and if there is any kind of supervision. The people who know about this issue are the ones responsible for the cafeteria, the food stands, and the president of the students' body of the División Académica de Educación y Artes (DAEA). The person that may be the most helpful is the last one, since the students know him/her quite well, it is highly likely he will agree on giving this information, besides it is part of his duties. We cannot leave out the students' opinions, since this will be first-hand information, about the food they eat.
- b) Taking into account that the president of the students' body may not speak English, the interview must be in Spanish. In the case of the students, they may choose another technique, the questionnaire. They will have to keep in mind that not all of them study English so they will have to decide who to include in their sample. One suggestion would be to choose a number of students and at random distribute or apply the questionnaire, in case they do not like the idea of having to do two versions, then they can include in the research only the languages students.

Question c) will be left for next class. Once the students know what information they will search for, who their informants will be, and the techniques available, they will have time to discuss in their teams to decide about how they will collect the information and who will be

in charge of the different tasks, not to forget to set deadlines for each task. Alan and Stoller (2005) suggest that determining the proper balance between teacher guidance and learner autonomy is a crucial element of project planning. This indicates that learners may feel more engaged in their work when both their language needs are addressed and they are given the opportunity to make choices.

#### *Step 4 Instructor prepares students for the language demands of information gathering*

In this step what students need to work on will be on how to conduct a survey, and to hold an interview.

To begin with this stage, the teacher will ask students to review unit six of the coursebook and see if it has some of the language they need, the topic is food.

They will get a questionnaire which will be used as an example to analyze its sections and characteristics:

- a) an introduction, stating the objective, or purpose of the questionnaire,
- b) the instructions, like Tick ( ) or cross out(x) only one answer,
- c) the characteristics of the questions: close type, with some options, but only one answer, this will avoid ambiguity when analyzing it,
- d) the number of questions, it is not a good idea to have many questions, maximum 10.

They will be free to adapt some of the questions, since the topic is eating healthy. Working with this questionnaire, the students will see examples using countable and uncountable nouns in both the questions, and the options.

About the interview, the students may think that the only thing they have to do is go and ask the questions; keeping this in mind, the teacher will pose questions like: to conduct an interview, do I go to the person ask the questions and that's it? Or are there some actions to be taken prior to, during and after the interview? The purpose of these questions is to get to the next information.

Pre: it is necessary to ask for an appointment, permission to record the conversation, to take pictures, and prepare the questions.

While: they have to introduce themselves, state the purpose of the interview, kindly reminding his/her he agreed on recording the interview, and taking pictures, if that is the case; at the end of the interview it is necessary to thank the interviewees.

Post: it is necessary to report the information. This may be more demanding, in terms of language. To make this task less difficult, the teacher will show them that it is possible to write the answers in 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular: Examples:

- a) The interviewee may not know who gives the permit to run the cafeteria.
- b) S/he may not know about the program “Escuelas saludables”, etc.

The designing of the questions for the interview may not be that difficult in terms of language since this will be in Spanish, but they need to be careful with the content of the questions.

The role of the teacher is to remind them to ask only pertinent questions, to the point: the permit, the conditions to run a cafeteria, the supervision, the quality of the food, the healthy schools, etc.

The teacher will provide an example of a tapescript, showing the conversation gambits, giving feedback, following the conversation, such as: well, anyway, really, of course, so, yeah, ok, etc. and fillers like er, um, hum. They need to decide who will hold the interview, and they will also need to do role play, practice the conversation, recording it several times; this will help them to feel less nervous when the time of the real interview comes, as well as to anticipate problems, about recording, for example, the volume. Something positive is that most of them have fairly well-equipped cell phones, and the digital cameras, the quality of the recording should not be a problem.

#### *Step 5 Students gather information*

At this point, that they have the questionnaires, the interview and have had enough practice, they will go out on their own to carry out the different tasks. This stage may take a little longer than the others, since in the case of the interview as well as giving out the questionnaires there are other people involved, so not everything is in their hands. The teacher will not be there to solve the problems, like refusing to answer the questionnaire, having to explain any of the questions, etc. They will have to sort problems out themselves.

The students who may not have any problems with their task are the ones in charge of taking the pictures of the food stands, cafeteria, and the van (combi).

#### *Step 6 Instructor prepares students for the language demands of compiling and analyzing data*

Having gathered the information, in this case, having taken the pictures carried out the interview, given out the questionnaires, now their next challenge is to compile, evaluate, and synthesize the relevant information.

They will have to decide if they need all the pictures, for example, or if they need to report all the information they will have gathered, or just the most relevant ideas, etc.

The teacher can take advantage of this activity, to recycle and expand the conversation gambits. This time, the expressions will be to agree/disagree, to suggest, to add, etc., in other words to negotiate the meaning and relevance of gathered data (“I see your point, but...” “Don’t you think...?” “What is your opinion about ...?” “What about ...?” “What do you think about ...?”).

The students may not have major problems to do the graphs. They can do it very rudimentary way (the number of answers divided by each total number of people in the survey, they will get a percentage), or certainly they can use a computer program. They may need more help with the vocabulary to report the information: the majority, a significant number, most students, a large number of students, half of the students, over half of the students, nearly half of, a third, few students, plus any of the percentage.

#### *Step 7 Compile and analyze information*

Having decided which information to use in the final product, now they will do the editing work, put all the pieces together, and organize the information. This may be the stage, where the teacher seems to disappear; very little help may be needed, or maybe none, since each team will make their own decisions based on how they have been planning their work. Hopefully, they will feel satisfied with the result, and experience this sense of achievement, but naturally, there is also the possibility of conflicts arising among team members if their inter and intra personal intelligences do not work that well, mainly their negotiating skills (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2010).

#### *Step 8 Instructor prepares students for the language demands of presentation of the final product*

They will decide if there is going to be a speaker per team, or only one speaker to welcome the audience and to briefly explain about the project, the language needed would be to welcome, how to give a turn to classmates, how to introduce an idea, how to conclude the presentation, etc. This will depend on the format they choose. The teacher can use the conversation tapescripts from the coursebook, present a video clip of somebody making a presentation to highlight the language items learners need to use in this stage.

#### *Step 9 Students present final Product*

It is recommended that the teacher uses a rubric, to help her to evaluate each presentation in an objective manner, thus the feedback the students get will be in the same terms, without the risk of getting distracted by the creativity a team may have displayed, disregarding the content, accuracy or linguistic aspect, for example. This would be of great help for students than just receiving general comments like “it was very good”, “ok”, but, without stating in terms of what. The criteria may include aspects like: research, content

accuracy, and presentation. We think students should get the rubric, in step 2 or 3, so they know beforehand how their work will be evaluated.

*Step10 Students evaluate the project*

This final stage is for students to reflect about what they learned during the process, in terms of language, content, skills, what they liked, did not like, what they would change, improve, the problems they faced, how they sorted them out, etc. There will be one final decision for them to make: what to do with that information, if they decide to send it to the authorities or ask their president to do it.

We think at this particular stage, they will have the freedom to speak in Spanish, if they need it, since the priority is to hear their voices to see if this experience has any resonance for them. To conclude they will write individually about this experience.

<b>Rubric to evaluate project outcome</b>				
	<b>Beginning 1</b>	<b>Acceptable 2</b>	<b>Good 3</b>	<b>Excellent 4</b>
<b>Research</b>	Uses only one source	Uses more than one source but not always successfully	Uses some of the sources available successfully	Uses all the sources available successfully, makes a great effort
<b>Information Accuracy</b>	There is more quantity than quality	Selects info related to the project but does not really answer the question	Selects info that is related to the project in a general way	Selects info that gives a clear answer to the driving question
<b>Presentation</b>	There is too much reading and <u>little creativity</u>	Explains info, but with too many details <u>with some creativity</u>	Transmits relevant info, but with some problems connecting ideas <u>and with some creativity</u>	Transmits main ideas in a logical and coherent way <u>and a lot of creativity</u>

*Example of the rubric that can be used in step 9*

<http://www.mdc.edu/sailearn/documents/4.1%20Rubric%20Workshop%20Handout-Mary%20Allen.pdf>

**CONCLUSION**

There are some adaptations we would like to make regarding the framework. First regarding the final product, we think the students should have different options, in terms of



format (power point presentation, role play, video recording, among others), provided that the content is the same, the driving question is answered and the objective is achieved. This would favor their creativity. Besides, we noticed that if more than one team choose the interview with the president of the students' body, it will not be practical to do it separately, at least not for him/her. In this case, we would suggest them to work together as one big team, once they will have done the task, they will go back to their teams and write the report. They will still have the opportunity to divide the work: pre, while and post actions, mentioned earlier in step four. Finally, the rubric, we believe it is not convenient to show them how they will be evaluated at the very beginning, in the first step, since they will be receiving a lot of information and they may underestimate its importance. We believe the third stage is an appropriate moment to show them the rubric for they will be about to start the designing stage.

It is important to mention that when we started choosing the expressions and conversation gambits (for step 4) we realized that we have been wasting this opportunity in class when we ask our students to work in pairs to interview each other. We could introduce these conversation gambits, and social skills by asking each other if they agree to answer some questions. This fact has solid value for their fluency development.

Implementing Project Work in our teaching could turn even more difficult for the teacher than for students, since our main role will be that of leading them throughout the process and to be a good guide we must know very well the methodology implications, which we do not know that well at this point. Besides, students are quite equipped in terms of technology, so in this area they will teach us. However, we are convinced that there are many benefits for both parts.

From the teacher's perspective, this approach seems quite suitable to get closer to the ideal class: "the learning group ideal sets the conditions for a process-oriented, task-based, inductive, collaborative, communicative English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 1994, p. 54). Concurrently, from the learners' perspective, it gives everybody the opportunity to display their strong abilities; by the same token Gardner (1983) strongly supports the use of Project Work based on learning as one approach to creating a learning environment that enhances each student's multiple intelligences (Gardner's Multiple Intelligences), for instance, by taking pictures for the visual, putting the survey information into numbers, for mathematical, making the interview for linguistic intelligence, and so forth.

On the whole, working under Project Work "learners are in fact at the center of the (teaching/learning) system, although this does not mean that they are alone" (Gremmo, 1998, p.147). In other words, learners are given the opportunity to take the control and the responsibility of the project, counting with the help of the teacher, as needed, during all the process of the project.

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# LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO LEARN ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

During the process of studying a degree there are many ways to get new techniques and strategies to develop and enhance the language learning process. Students' development of their own learning strategies may favor their academic performance inside and outside the school. This research attempts to shed light and study the learning strategies employed by five university students during their English learning process. The study utilized a qualitative approach in order to discover such strategies. For carrying this investigation out, five students from the BA in English, were interviewed in order to explore their perceptions in relation to the learning strategies they use. The participants were enrolled in an Advanced English group. As a result of the data analysis process, the findings emerged providing five categories, which include different types of strategies applied by the participant students. It is expected that this research might report useful and valuable data for the students who are trying to discover their ways of learning and for other actors in education to be aware of the impact learning strategies have on students' performance.

**Key words:** Learning, strategies, university, students, English, case study.

## INTRODUCTION

This research is based on the learning strategies used by a BA in English Language Advanced students. It is important to know and share the strategies students use during their leaning process owing to the fact that the strategies are a paramount tool for the teaching and learning process. During their studies, some students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL, hereafter) employ a diversity of strategies to learn the English language; some of them might be effective for the participants while others might not be relevant for their particular development. The following research attempts to show how these university students use their learning strategies in order to develop professionally and master the language. Furthermore, it aims to shed light on those strategies which were effective for them in order to discover the link between language learning strategies and effective language learning in this educational context.

Thus, the main objective of the hereby research is to discover what strategies five English students at University use to learn English. Furthermore, the inquiry attempts to

report how the participant students actually use the strategies in this particular context. In order to get valuable data, a qualitative approach was employed; by using this approach the characteristics and qualities students put into practice during their learning process might be understood. Moreover, the study intends to discover some advantages and disadvantages of using such strategies in the participants' setting. Nevertheless, the advantages are the ones which will be covered and reported due to time constraints. Further research might be required to keep a track of the disadvantages and their implications.

## **RATIONALE**

English language learners are interested in learning the language efficiently and for this reason they look for distinct ways to develop their learning strategies. It is necessary to take into consideration the individual concerns each student possesses in order to find out which strategies they employ. As students move on through their English levels, they find plenty of new and complex vocabulary to be learnt, for instance. Furthermore, they learn new grammar structures and with all this new vocabulary and grammar rules students might potentially make mistakes and forget many things they already know. During the English learning process, students might face some problems, hence the importance of shedding light on them and looking for suitable, new and efficient learning strategies, which may be the case of several contexts; in other words, other students in the same area of study who share learning commonalities. Language learning strategies are the ones students employ to facilitate their process of learning and help them further their education efficiently. In addition to that, strategies are tools that students have to utilize in their English classes and it is necessary for them to put them into practice in other scenarios, students prior knowledge and self-learning inside and outside the classroom; that is, pupils share their ideas to develop and identify their personal efficient learning skills, thus the importance of the hereby inquiry as it aims to discover such techniques students use.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research question was set in order to go in depth into the techniques that students use to learn the English language:

What strategies do the five university students use to learn English?

In addition to the main research question, a subsidiary one was intended to be answered to report valuable data related to the way students utilize their techniques to learn English. Why do students employ those strategies?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

*Strategies definition*

First and foremost, O' Malley & Chamot (1990) describes learning strategies as the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information. The strategies students apply during their learning process might influence language learning. Additionally, Oxford (1990, p.1) describes strategies "as steps taken by students to enhance their own learning". What is more, Oxford (1990) states that learning strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Appropriate language learning strategies may result in language proficiency and greater self-confidence.

Learning strategies, in this research, are those that students develop at any time during their learning language process. Students acquire them in different ways. Furthermore, by using different learning strategies, students may be able to develop their learning techniques for understanding a foreign language. Students may try and classify their learning strategies and apply them in particular situations according to their usefulness; by using them, students might consider themselves better language learners. The capacity to understand, process and apply previous knowledge is focused and applied on the learning strategies. A foreign language learner should be able to decide which strategies are better for their learning performance, look for more appropriate strategies and focus on the ones which are the most suitable for them.

### *English as a foreign language*

According to Oxford (1990, p.6) "a foreign language does not have immediate social and communicative functions within the community where it is learned; it is employed mostly to communicate elsewhere". The context of the hereby study is that of foreign language, since students mainly have contact with and practice the language in the classroom.

The central characteristics of foreign language learning lie in the amount and type of exposure to the language: there will be very little experience of the language outside the classroom, and encounters with the language will be through several hours of teaching in a school week (Cameron 2002). During foreign language learning students have no the necessity to develop a closer relation with the foreign language owing to the fact that there is no a need or duty to learn the language.

### *Oxford's taxonomy*

Oxford provides two types of learning strategies Direct Strategies and Indirect Strategies. Insofar as to have a clear idea of all these strategies, it is necessary to revise the literature on the hereby taxonomy, therefore it will be succinctly described in what follows.

**1. Direct strategies.** They are divided into three sets: memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. These three strategies have a different function during the learning process and have a different role during the mental process of

language learning, such strategies require a mental process of the language and this process has a different purpose for the learner.

According to Oxford (1990) Direct Strategies are the ones that directly involve the target language. In addition to this, Oxford claims that such strategies require mental processing of the language, but the three groups of direct strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensation) do this processing of information in a different way and manage strategies for different purposes. Direct strategies help the learner to store and retrieve the new information which is related to their learning process, in this case students may employ a mental process which is the main characteristic of direct strategies; consequently learners might perform better during their language acquisition process.

**1.1 Memory strategies.** They fall into four sets: Creating Mental Linkages, Applying Images and Sounds, Reviewing Well, and Employing Actions. These strategies are effective if you apply some of them simultaneously. Something that distinguishes Memory Strategies is that the learner has everything under control and in an orderly way. Learners can create mental linkages with sounds and images in order to remember something related to the English language. By using visual tools pupils might perform better during their learning processes, making relations between visual imagery, so that they can construct meaning of words. “Memory Strategies help learners store in memory the important things they hear or read in the new language, thus enlarging their knowledge base” (Oxford, 1990, p.58).

With this regard, Memory Strategies functions are focused on storing information so that students might use such information at any time they require it and, then, such strategy is useful either for comprehension or production. Considering those aspects of learning, students focus on key aspects by associating things, words, and schemas which are useful for them in their learning process. Memory strategies are based on memory aspects of the students, any student creates their own way to draw relationships based on audios, pictures, mimic, and so on. All in all, we can say that students who apply Memory Strategies are used to guessing and receiving information quickly.

**1.2 Cognitive strategies.** These strategies have an essential role during the learning process, this means that there are a lot of different ways to practice them: from repeating, practicing, analyzing and reasoning. The four sets of Cognitive Strategies are: practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output.

The first letter of each of these strategy sets combine to form the acronym PRAC, because “Cognitive strategies are PRACtical for language learning” (Oxford 1990, p. 43). There are some elements which are considered for the practical strategies, such elements are: repeating, practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, recombining, and practicing naturalistically. The strategies related to receiving and sending messages are: getting the idea quickly and using resources for receiving and sending messages. This means that students are able to get the main idea



and recognize the key points without reading the whole text, they just focus on the main words, and as a result they acquire a better understanding of the things they read. This strategy shows that students do not need to focus on every single word.

There are students who apply Analyzing and Reasoning Strategy; they apply an analytical technique which is focused on what they are learning; besides this is focused on processing the information and creating logical thinking. Often learners can use these strategies to understand the meaning of a new expression or to create a new expression (Oxford 1990, p. 46). One of the most useful strategies applied for the students is taking notes of the things they consider important for them in order to support their learning. In addition to this, students can summarize main ideas and study them, as well. Considering this, it is necessary that students get used to highlighting to focus and emphasize important facts they consider useful to study.

**1.3 Compensation strategies.** These Strategies are divided into two sets: Guessing Intelligently and Overcoming Limitations in Speaking and Writing. Students who are used to applying this strategy can employ what they know about the second language. In addition to this, Compensation Strategy allows students to form their own hypothesis at the time they are learning something new. This means, students might have a perception about a certain topic, besides learners can create linkages with their previous knowledge in order to acquire a better understanding about what they are learning. Linguistic clues are allowed to elicit the learning process of the students, so they can decide what is correct for them and what is not correct. Moreover, “compensation strategies are also useful for more expert language users, who occasionally do not know an expression, who fail to hear something clearly, or who are faced with a situation in which the meaning is only implicit or intentionally vague” (Oxford 1990, p. 90). Such strategies are intended to understand the new language, as well as to allow the learner to develop their own way of expression in the written and spoken way, and this is what might be called producing. Compensation strategies are called like this because they make up for the possible lack of vocabulary of the students; that is, compensation strategies may enable students to guess possible unknown words, which is helpful for their understanding of the English language.

**2. Indirect strategies.** On the other hand, indirect strategies are divided into three sets: Metacognitive Strategies, Affective Strategies and Social Strategies. According to Oxford (1990) indirect strategies are called like this because they support and manage the language learning without directly involving the target language, these strategies are applicable for the four language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Metacognitive strategies help the learner to control their cognition; in other words, they might somehow be conscious of their learning, as they intentionally plan and evaluate it. Affective strategies refer to the things that influence the learners during their learning process, and regulate their feelings, emotions, motivations and their attitudes. Social Strategies are related to the interaction between people in order to develop their language learning. “All these strategies are called ‘indirect’ because they support and manage language learning without (in many instances) directly involving the target language”

Oxford (1990, p. 135). These strategies are helpful in many language situations and can be applied in their four language skills.

### *Overview of studies on strategies*

Several studies have focused on learning strategies in the same setting this investigation has been carried out. It is important to generate a frame for the field in order to look at similarities, commonalities and differences in the university's research agenda. For instance, Cervantes & Rodriguez based their study on identifying which strategies are applied for English Language learners to learn vocabulary. This research reported that the strategies used by the students to learn vocabulary are influenced by the lyrics of songs; another aspect which influences students' vocabulary learning is the pressure of having a standardized exam.

Additionally, Cervantes & Rodríguez (2003) shed light on the factors that influence the learning process of the students, such as the fact that students are motivated by their teachers, students' personality, and the materials used by their teachers. Another aspect mentioned in this investigation is that students like to learn vocabulary simply out of curiosity. There has been more research carried out in the learning strategies field and in similar –not exactly the same- settings. Reyes (2012) explores the co-relation between the academic success and the learning strategies used by the English language learners. Reyes (2012) discovered that a better academic performance depends on the strategies that students applied during their whole learning process; in other words, his research attempted to show that students have to be aware of the strategies that best fit them in order to achieve a better English language learning performance.

All in all, it could be understood that there are some factors that may influence students' learning, such as social, economic, scholarly and personal affairs. Students are able to create their own atmosphere and habits which will help them to feel comfortable during their learning process and their strategies will be the ones which enhance a better academic performance.

### *Studies carried out in other contexts*

Several studies have been carried out in different contexts which are based on learning strategies as well. A brief review of the studies will be presented in this literature section. Cánovas's (2005) study emerged in order to know how English language learners develop learning strategies to acquire new vocabulary; the context of the study is the classroom. Through the commented study the author sheds light on the strategies and techniques that students use to learn more vocabulary of a second language. Furthermore, it is explained how techniques used by the teachers to teach the language inside the classroom might influence students' learning strategies. The research is focused on the qualitative

strategies employed by the students in order to acquire new vocabulary of English as a second language. In addition to this, the inquiry shows the different ways to help students to acquire such vocabulary. As a conclusion of the enquiry, the author wants to look for a relationship between the possible ways in which students acquire vocabulary in a second language.

What is more, Franzoni, Cervantes & Assar (2012) did research based on the different kinds of strategies that students use for their language learning, attempting to show and recommend new ways to teach a foreign language in order to provide the students with more efficient and practical learning strategies. This research was carried out at Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (Autonomous Technological Institute, in English) and the participants were students of engineering and social sciences. The commonalities of teaching and learning strategies were analyzed and discussed. As the research shows, there are similarities between the teaching strategies applied by the teachers and their influence among the students' learning strategies. The results of the study are an attempt to fill a gap in the learning strategies use data, helping students to perform better during their learning process and enhancing the teacher's teaching process as well.

This revision of literature was included owing to the fact that these studies have similarities with the hereby research. This may help the readers to achieve a better understanding of the learning strategies field, besides these previous investigations show a different overview from different university students in other settings.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter details about the present research design are presented; that is, a) the type of research employed, b) the data collection methods, c) the context in which the investigation was carried out, d) a description of the participants, e) the procedure, and finally f) the data analysis method. This information helps us to understand the findings of the study as well as to address the design of the inquiry.

### *Qualitative research approach*

The hereby research employed a qualitative approach to investigate the learning strategies students use to learn English due to the fact that it is focused on discovering their personal techniques to study as the most appropriate way for learning English. Furthermore, according to Woods (1999), qualitative research has the following main features: 1) focus on natural settings; 2) an interest in meanings, perspectives and understandings; 3) an emphasis on process; 4) inductive analysis and grounded theory. Indeed, Woods (1999) states that qualitative research is concerned with life as it is lived, things as they happen, situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment course of events. Using this qualitative method, the study can focus on the students' feelings. In addition to that, we may consider the perceptions they have about

the topic we are investigating. The researcher is the person who is going to look for the information based on the personal experiences of the interviewees. Real situations are the key experiences to get the desired results.

Moreover, Woods (1999 p, 4) states that “qualitative researchers do not start with a theory which they aim to test and prove or disprove, though there is no reason why they should not do that if they wished”. According to Holliday (2002), qualitative research helps us to understand human affairs; it is insufficient to rely on quantitative survey and statics for the purposes of this inquiry. The main purpose of employing a qualitative method in this research is to look for possible answers to discover the students’ perceptions of their learning strategies and shed light on the strategies that are important for them, as they can be useful for going in depth into the typical behavior of the pupils. Qualitative research is based on the behavior and the feelings of the student, for this reason, the hereby paper makes use of this approach in order to know exactly what students are looking to enhance their language learning experience. With regard to this, Creswell & Poth (1994, p. 15) defines the qualitative approach as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.”

It was decided to work using the qualitative approach due to the fact that the present inquiry is based on the main strategies of the students, for this reason there is a need to know the students’ perceptions and thoughts, the participants who took part in this research were five students of an Advanced English class, owing to their experience acquired during their six previous English courses, (Beginners, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, and Upper-Intermediate) the study can focus on the students who have more knowledge of the subject matter and they can share the techniques they used to learn and explain the reasons why they applied such strategies.

#### *Type of Research: Case Study*

Additionally, a case study, which is part of the qualitative paradigm, was implemented for the purposes of the inquiry. Creswell (2014) claims that case is bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a period of time. Furthermore, according to Gillham (2000), in a case study we understand human activities in the real world, studied in a specific context that exists here and now. For these reasons, a case study is suitable to identify student’s language learning strategies while they are studying advanced level and to explore their own techniques to learn English. The study aimed to develop an analysis taking into account their specific context in which students develop such techniques.

#### *Data collection method*

This study employed semi-structured interviews as the only data collection method due to the fact that the interviewer can ask any other questions in order to get more information as the conversation flows. As a result, the interviewer can follow a sequence based on the main questions of the interview, but at the same time he/she is able to ask some other questions breaking out the interview's sequence. As the interviewees answer the questions their answers can give a chance to ask something else related to the research question. Furthermore, the researcher can go in depth into the participants' responses and, in this way, they might be likely to share their perceptions. Therefore, Semi Structured interviews were employed as the main data collection method for their qualitative nature. Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, (1990) describe such interviews as those where the interviewer introduces the topic, and then guides the discussion by asking specific questions. Using this kind of interview, we might perceive people's thoughts and the way they explain their reasons without leading them.

Arsky & Knight (1999 p. 7) states that "Semi-structured interviews are the commonest in qualitative work, where there is a desire to hear what informants have to say on the topics and areas identified by the researcher. However, survey interviews may sometimes also have room for the interviewer to improvise questions to clarify or extend answers". A format for the questions was designed in order to make an easy and less complex interview. The questions were related to the students' learning process, making some questions in relation to their English level and how they use and develop their learning strategies.

### *Context*

This study was carried out at a public school in the southeast of Veracruz State, at a School of Languages. The participants are studying a BA in English Language, which lasts from three to five years; to earn their degree students have to get 318 credits. The School of Languages has a Resource Center, a Library, and a Self-access Center (CAAFI) which are in charge of favoring, facilitating and enhancing students' practice of the language and development of autonomy. These places count with extra materials to work with. Some of them are authentic materials, which are focused on grammar, listening, writing and speaking skills. Students are free to use them at any time they need it. In addition to this, students might put their strategies into practice and look for further information using computers, audio recorders, and videos. These spaces might bring more options for the students' learning process; students can choose from many different activities and tools to practice the language and develop more learning strategies on their own. Using these sources, students might be able to boost and enhance their less developed skills. The curriculum of the BA in English accounts for 318 credits and students have to cover them in a standard period of 10 semesters. Students acquire their credits at the time they approve their selected courses; this is the only way to acquire the number of credits during their time in the school.

### *Participants*

It is important to know that students have different outlooks about the BA, since the beginning of their University studies they have been learning English and for this reason learners have acquired different methods and strategies in their learning process. The learning acquisition of the participants can be better compared to the beginner students. It is necessary to focus on what they have done during their learning process because students have acquired more experience applying different learning strategies to learn English. Furthermore, it is necessary to know their academic performance from the beginning until the end of their English language acquisition process to share which are the strategies they believe make the learning of the English language easier.

The interviewees were taking the sixth and seventh semester in the B.A. The participants were given a nickname for the sake of anonymity: 1) Lian is from Xalapa. He has finished the six previous English courses and took English language certification exams before, (Exaver 1 and 2); 2) Alan is from Coatzacoalcos City, Veracruz. He does not have any English certification, but previously he took six English courses at Languages Center in Xalapa, Veracruz; 3) Bety is from Xalapa. She has Exaver 3 and TOEFL English certifications, the certifications were in Xalapa; 4) Ginger is from Villahermosa, Tabasco, and some years ago she took Exaver 3 in Xalapa, Veracruz; and 5) Susan is from Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico. Two years ago she took TOEFL certification at The Institute Languages School, in Xalapa, Veracruz.

### *Data analysis*

First and foremost, regarding the analysis of the data, the identified students' strategies were carefully compared within Oxford's taxonomy; it was decided to do in order to get into the students' answers and get a better understanding of the strategies applied by them during their whole language learning process. Therefore, Oxford's classification of learning strategies worked as a frame to explore and categorize students' ways of learning the foreign language.

## **FINDINGS**

In this section the findings of the study are reported. The emerging categories were developed in relation to what students stated and based on Oxford's Taxonomy After analyzing the interviews and checking students' responses, the following categories were identified: 1) Cognitive Strategies, which is one of the most common strategies students use; 2) Social Strategies, which are also employed by most of the participants according to the data analysis; 3) Metacognitive Strategies emerged regarding the students' comments; 4) Memory Strategies is the fourth strategy detected; 5) at the end of the findings Affective Strategies are shown, such strategies are not as used as the others according to the participants.

### *Cognitive strategies*

This category was consistently found in the data analysis. The five interviewed participants reported to have made use of the strategy in several occasions. Indeed, in Lian's words, the cognitive strategies are employed in situations inside the classroom taking notes of the things his teacher writes during the class.

*During the class I copy the things the teacher writes on the whiteboard.*

Lian stated that he employed this strategy while attending his English class and used this technique to store and record the information he had been seeing during the lesson. In addition to what he expressed, Alan succinctly stated that he solved a problem by means of the mentioned strategy:

*I started to listen to Eric Clapton and Guns' and Roses songs. I really liked their music but I was not happy because I could not understand the songs' lyrics, for this reason I remember I grabbed a dictionary and spent a year translating songs.*

He reported the use of this learning strategy in order to know what his favorite songs meant, for this reason he started to use the translation method, applying it with his favorite songs to discover their meaning.

Complementing the use of the Cognitive Strategies, the third participant Bety, stated that she is used to taking notes in order to acquire the meaning of some words she does not know, and then she studied such notes as well. With regard to her study habits, she says the following:

*There are many words that I do not understand, and it is easy for me taking notes and then study them.*

Bety considers that this is a good strategy to be applied in class. In addition to what Bety commented, Ginger not explicitly share that she applies Cognitive Strategy as well, but in her case, she is used to paying attention to her class and uses note taking; plus, she asks her teacher when she has queries about the class topics. She reports what she usually does to learn English:

*I just pay attention to the class, taking notes and asking to the teacher when I have doubts.*

Ginger uses this learning strategy to focus her attention in class, and then she writes the things she considers important to enforce her learning process. Note taking is one of the most popular strategies applied by learners, Ginger applies three strategies

inside the classroom to enhance her learning process, and such strategies are: paying attention to the class, taking notes and asking the teacher to solve her doubts.

Susan commented that during her learning process she applies the cognitive strategy through the practice of the exercises included in her English book.

*I practice with the activities of my book and make a list based on the vocabulary.*

In relation to the way she is used to studying, she commented that this strategy is used inside the classroom in order to study when she is attending her class. According to Wenden and Rubin (1987, p. 24) "In the case of memorization, attention is paid to the storage and retrieval process. The goal of these strategies is organization. Some mnemonic strategies learners were: finding some sort of association or grouping (phonetic, semantic, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, even olfactory or sensory), using one item to recall a number of others (called key word), using some sort of mechanical means to store the information (taking notes, writing out items with or without context)."

### *Social strategies*

This learning strategy was detected five times in the recorded interviews. Furthermore, it is important to state and consider that each participant has shared a different way in which they apply such strategy in their learning process. At the beginning, Lian, the first participant, shared the way he used this strategy. He commented that he is used to reading articles in English in order to practice reading comprehension. Indeed, it was reported that he prefers to put into practice reading articles and books in English.

*Well, I practice my reading comprehension by reading articles and books in English, for me it is better reading an article from an Anglophone country.*

In relation to this strategy, Lian prefers reading things written in English and get involved in the culture of an English speaking country. By this means, he is applying the Social Strategy in his learning process.

The second participant, Alan commented that he is used to watching interviews in English language, he applies such strategy in order to study outside the classroom, besides he considers this is useful to get familiar with English.

*The strategy I employ to study outside the classroom is watching interviews with books authors, or watching any kind of documentary, obviously I watch the programs are in English language.*



Alan considers it is useful to be involved in the English culture through the social news, and other sources which contain any kind of information that he is able to understand in order to keep practicing.

Bety shared that she has applied the use of social networks for studying; she has been putting into practice her language skills thorough social networks. Bety states that it is a way of studying and practicing the language at the same time.

*Another way I study English is by the social networks, I am a Twitter user, at the time I use this social network.*

We have to consider the way she studies and applies her learning. Bety uses social networks to share ideas with many people around the world, and this is a way to keep in contact with different people who might help her to improve her learning process. Social networks are useful and practical tools for learners who are getting learning English.

Ginger, who shared the same learning strategy, talked about the different strategies she has applied during her learning process. She was asked about the way she studies English. She argued that one way she studies the language is by talking to English native speakers.

*I practice my speaking skill with English native speakers.*

Talking to English native speakers encourages learners to keep practicing their speaking skills; at the same time, students practice they attempt to acquire more experience with native speakers of the English language.

Susan, who has shared her experience related to the Social Strategy, commented that one way to make language learning easier is to be familiar with people who speak English, suggested that it is necessary to be involved in the culture of the language you are learning.

*I would recommend to be familiarized with people who are English native speakers and to be involved in the culture of the language as well.*

The relationship and cooperation between learners and people who speak English is beneficial for the learning process, a result of this cooperation students get engaged into the culture, and they might feel comfortable to ask for help, and share their opinions and doubts of the language. That is something that most of students consider suitable to enforce their learning process. According to Oxford (1990, p. 144), "Language is a form of social behavior; it is communication, and communication occurs between and among people. Learning language thus involves other people, and appropriate social strategies are very important in this process".

Social Strategies are divided into three sets: Asking questions, Cooperating with Others, and Empathizing with Others. As a result of this, students who are engaged in social interactions can share and cooperate with one or more people in order to perform better. These strategies create an atmosphere where students provide and receive ideas, and reward themselves, and it also creates an interesting atmosphere to learn and practice the language.

### *Metacognitive strategies*

This learning strategy was mentioned by four participants, they have shared their own ways in which they put into practice such strategy. Metacognitive Strategies were mentioned the same number of times as Memory Strategies. Inside the classroom, Lian is used to paying attention; he considers that is a better way than trying to study outside inside the classroom in an autonomous way.

*It is better for me paying attention than trying to studying in an autonomous way inside the classroom.*

This way to apply such strategy is focused on what the student does in addition the things he considers useful to improve his learning process, he considers that it is better to pay attention than study without any person who guides and supports him in any way.

Alan, who has shared his way to apply Metacognitive Strategy, commented about the aspects that influence the language learning at university level, commented that he considers learning English easy at this school level, besides he thinks lack of time as an issue that affects the learning process.

*I do not consider difficult to learn English at this level. Another issue I consider is the lack of time.*

Metacognitive Strategies attempt to show that for efficient language learning, students have to organize their way to study; in this case, Alan considers that lack of time is something that is not beneficial for good language learning.

Ginger shared that she has realized the positive results that her leaning strategies has gave her, she claimed that now she is able to understand most videos in English.

*I have noticed about the positive results the learning strategies have given me. I can understand most of videos in English and this is a progress in my learning process.*

This participant is able to make a self-evaluation of her learning process; she has realized how much has learnt up to now. This has to do with Metacognitive Strategies,

where students are monitoring their learning and at the end they have the chance to notice their progress. Susan shared her way to apply Metacognitive in her language learning process. She considers that the most suitable strategy to learn vocabulary is to pay attention to her English class, and she considers any new thing that her teacher explains during the class useful.

*I pay attention during my English class, in order to not to lose something important.*

By applying this learning strategy, students can choose what they want to learn and how they want to learn, pupils have their own perceptions of their learning and they are able to create a schema to organize the way they arrange their learning.

### *Memory Strategies*

Memory Strategies are divided into four sets: creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action (Oxford, 1990). These kinds of strategies are often focused on the creation of mental linkages supported by imagery; in order to acquire an idea of the things you are learning about English. Lian reported that one way in which he studies English is by using audiovisual tools, besides he states that it is the best way to practice and study English.

*For me the most suitable way to study English is supported by audiovisual tools.*

Alan commented that he saw different products in a store which had their name on the label, by this way he learnt some new words in English. He commented that:

*You see a lot of words in English tagged on products and some others things such as cans of tuna, potatoes and so on, and by this way I learnt some new words.*

Alan created a relationship between the things he saw and the things which were labeled. Plus, Ginger shared that one way to study is making flash cards with vocabulary she does not know, she is used to sticking *Post-it* notes in her book in order to remember the new vocabulary she has learnt. Her use of flashcards relates to using imagery to support her learning.

*I am used to stick 'post it' with vocabulary on my book and another thing I use are vocabulary flashcards.*

Susan talked about her experience with Memory Strategies and the way she studies for her exams, she shared that one way to study is by learning new words which are included in the book, studying vocabulary and drawing relationships between the

words and things in order to remember them. This is one strategy she is used to employing to take her exams.

*I just focus on the new vocabulary, and I associate the new words with images which are easy to remember for me.*

The use of images in order to remember new words is one effective way which students might create a list of new words which will help them to acquire more vocabulary. In this case, Susan likes to create relationships between words and pictures to make it easier to learn the things or words she has to study for her exams. Oxford (1990, p. 61) argues that “the four strategies for applying images and sounds are useful for remembering new expressions that have been heard or read. These strategies include using imagery, semantic mapping, using key words, and representing sounds in memory”

#### *Affective strategies*

The last category of learning strategies is related to cooperating with others and creating relationships in order to get opportunities to put English into practice. Lian applies such strategy in his learning process. He is used to studying in quiet places, inside the school he likes studying at the Resource Center and CAAFI, this is because he does not like noisy places to study and he likes to stay and study in a quiet place and when he is at home, he opts to study in his living room or in his bedroom.

*I am used to studying in the Resources Center and in the CAAFI. When I am at home, I study in my living room or in my bedroom. I look for a quiet place to study; I do not like noisy places.*

Alan talked about the way he considers himself as a student, the question was focused on how students describe themselves, and clearly he answered in a positive way.

*I am trustful and I enjoy the learning process. I am comfortable with the course.*

This participant stated that he feels good with the way he is learning English. Considering that such strategy is about how students encourage themselves by different ways. Bety commented about the things that influence her learning process. She considers that motivation is something that has influence on her learning process.

*The things that influence me are the motivation to practice the language and to take advantage of everything the English language gives me.*

She claims that she is waiting for an opportunity to travel abroad and meet people from different places in order to practice English. According to Oxford (1990, p. 140), “the

term affective is referred to emotions, attitudes and values". She states that "it is impossible to overstate the importance of the affective factors influencing language learning". This kind of strategy is divided into three sets: Lowering your anxiety, self-encouragement, and emotional temperature level. Students who are used to applying this strategy are influenced by internal or external reasons which encourage them to keep acquiring a good performance or English level through their learning process. Affective Strategies are focused on students' perceptions and feelings.

Affective strategies are the ones who are focused on the students' feelings and other perceptions related with their emotional aspects. Oxford (1990, p. 165) states that "language learners often need to find ways to keep their spirits up and persevere as they try to understand or produce the new language".

All in all, having identified different kinds of strategies utilized by the English language learners at the School of Languages, the emerging categories from the data were presented according to Oxford's (1990) taxonomy: Cognitive Strategies, Social Strategies, Metacognitive Strategies, Memory Strategies and Affective Strategies. This might be valuable data which could help us to know and understand the different ways that students are used to studying English inside and outside the school.

## **CONCLUSION**

Students stated that their strategies have been supportive for them to enhance their language learning process. In addition to this, students have realized the positive results, which their strategies have brought with them. Regarding the positive results, students commented as well how they are used to managing such strategies and the factors that might influence them to keep using their strategies. It is necessary to remark that students manage their learning strategies, which may imply that they are the agents in charge of their development. The use of each strategy may vary depending on how well students are working.

Other aspects that this research found are the factors, such as motivation and the teacher's role, which might influence the learning strategies of the students. Such elements might be either positive or negative and they may influence significantly the language learning process of the students. For this reason, it may be relevant to identify and get to know which things affect the students' performance inside and outside the school by doing further research.

As a conclusion of the inquiry, it is suggested that professors be aware of the learning strategies that students use in their English classes. Learners' strategies have currently been influenced by several factors that help them to enhance their development; some of the factors that include students' techniques to study the language may be social interest such as social networks, TV series in its original language, music in English, among others. Additionally, affective situations such as motivation from their friends,

teachers, parents, and other people close to the student may have an impact on their language learning strategies. Teachers have to consider these factors in order to motivate students to keep developing and constructing distinct learning strategies.

After carrying out this investigation, we may infer that students are always looking for and trying with new learning strategies, owing to the fact that there are relevant elements, such as motivation and the role of teachers, which might influence them during their language acquisition process. Students acquire many learning strategies and some of them were acquired from their early childhood, while some others were developed at the university level. All in all, learners are used to changing and developing the learning strategies they use, as well as their exploration, and all actors in education should observe and understand this process for the sake of language learning.

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# ATTITUDES: ENGLISH VS OTHER SUBJECTS. AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY IN TELESECUNDARIA

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## ABSTRACT

Telesecundaria education plays an important role in the education system in the state of Veracruz. However, these schools have experienced through the years different situations which have hindered the teaching-learning process. One of the biggest problem is the lack of knowledge and preparation on behalf of the teachers. They are expected to be experts on Mathematics, Biology, Geography, Spanish, English, etc., Therefore, the purpose of this research was to know the teachers' attitudes when they teach the different subjects in the classroom in a public telesecundaria school in the state of Veracruz. The main aim was to identify the teachers attitudes towards the English class in contrast to their area of specialty as a result of their lack of knowledge in the area. Some online interviews were carried out for collecting the data to find out some important information regarding the teachers' CVs to have a better idea of what their area of specialization was. Also, some observations were carried out to see the teachers' attitudes from class to class. During this inquiry, six teachers were interviewed using a qualitative method. The findings showed that there seems to be different attitudes towards the English class, some positive and some negative depending on the teachers' professional development.

**Key words:** Attitudes, lack of knowledge, telesecundaria education, teachers' profile, roles of students and teachers.

## INTRODUCTION

Telesecundaria is a school modality of educational system in Mexico in which the teacher has access to a television and "teleclases". "Teleclases" are lessons related to the books' topics that can be watched on the television. One of the main purposes of telesecundaria schools is to provide secondary education to young people who live in rural communities where there is no access to general or technical schools. This modality emerged around 1960 to avoid people backwardness and as a kind of strategy to prevent people from immigrating to cities. At the beginning, Telesecundaria schools wanted to prepare students to do activities related to the environment they lived in. It is important to mention that at that time telesecundaria teachers did not need to be specialized in education. In addition, Telesecundaria has characteristics of full school attendance and long distance education because it combines the use of different electronic media (like television for watching classes) as well as students' attendance because there is a professor every day in the classroom.

Telesecundaria has experienced some changes along the years. Yet, a question emerges: Do telesecundarias work as they should? For example, some teachers seem to lack preparation for this kind of education; especially with some subjects such as English, Chemistry, and Mathematics, among others. Backhoff Escudero & Pérez Morán (2015) mention that Telesecundaria schools lack the necessary structures, e.g. the personnel are not enough to look after the different courses and grades. In addition, the principal tends to be a teacher as well, (p. 170).. Then, the teacher may need to be trained in their subject matter such as Biology, Chemistry, Engineering, etc in addition to some teaching skills. Another important issue emerges: What does a person need to become a telesecundaria teacher?

As a result, the telesecundaria teachers' training program has proposed different specializations to empower teachers with both, subject matter knowledge and some of the necessary teaching skills. For example: Mathematics, Spanish, Geography, History and also English as a foreign language, etcetera. What is expected is that when telesecundaria educators need to teach different subjects, and they are not specialized in them, it could be difficult for them, especially if it comes to attitude in class, is it positive? Negative? It might result in teachers teaching the subject they are specialized in, for example Spanish better than History.

With this paper, what is expected is to illustrate what happens with the English class in telesecundaria schools considering all the situations discussed previously. For example, if the teacher is an English language graduated what attitude and behavior they might take in the English class. Also, to see whether they change this behavior from the English class to another. The main concern of this paper, then, was to study this situation; how the telesecundaria teachers' attitude, might affect students' learning process as a result of their development; to know more about English in telesecundaria schools, how they work and some possible problems teachers may face when they are not specialized in the English area.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

This research provides aims at illustrating what telesecundaria schools are, some implications of being a telesecundaria teacher, and, some attitudes telesecundaria teachers have when teaching English in comparison to other subjects. The most influential interest for doing this research was the teachers' influence on the students' attitudes towards certain subjects as it was observed in a telesecundaria school. Then, it was important to know more about the attitudes, both, telesecundaria teachers and students have, especially in the English class because most of the teachers do not know neither how the language works nor how to teach it.

For this study, knowing about the implications of being a telesecundaria teacher was also important because even if teachers were trained to be in front of a class, most of them are not specialists in all the subjects. As a result, the rapport between the teacher

and students could be affected, even more when teaching a subject they are not experts. Also, the lack of references was a factor to continue investigating and contributing in this area because there is little research done in this area. Therefore, it was considered telesecundaria teachers' attitudes were an important aspect to study because the learning process could be negative if teachers and students have negative attitudes. Both, telesecundaria teachers and students face difficulties when teaching and learning a subject that is not dominated by the teacher.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, some important aspects related to Telesecundaria such as its origins, development and current situation will be presented. In addition, the importance of the teacher and the teacher's roles, attitudes and behavior will be discussed in order to understand this topic.

### *Telesecundaria Education in Mexico*

Telesecundaria education in Mexico was first introduced in the 60s (Jiménez, Martínez & García, 2010) after the Revolution when it was necessary to provide education to more people. Rural communities had no access to education as people in cities and most than 80% of population was illiterate (Jiménez, Martínez & García, 2010). Secondary education wanted to prepare students by doing activities like fishing, agriculture, gardening, etc., then, if they did not want to continue studying after their Secondary education, they were ready to enter the working environment. At first, Telesecundarias were not formal schools because some of them were implemented in houses or improvised places. When Telesecundaria emerged, there was a need for teachers; then, students graduated from primary schools became the teachers with the promise of continuing their studies. The government looked for people who wanted to go to communities and teach reading and writing in order to avoid people's backwardness and illiteracy. Telesecundarias main interest was to provide education and at the same time to keep people in town; a way of preventing migration to the cities to study.

### *How Telesecundarias started working in Mexico*

At the beginning, telesecundaria schools provided education in remote places where there were not general or technical schools (SEP, 2001). Teachers in telesecundarias had the support of the TV to cover the program, as the name says, in a telesecundaria the TV plays an important role for education. (Professor could watch classes on the TV for subjects they were not specialized in, and in that way they could guide students better). During a class, there were "telemaestros", videos of teachers explaining the lessons. After watching the video, the teacher reinforced the topics in the classroom, (Dirección General de Materiales Educativos, 2011).

### *How Telesecundarias work nowadays*

Telesecundaria model has been different from other teaching models because a teacher teaches all the subjects in each grade like in elementary school but with videos. In comparison with Secondary schools, in telesecundaria schools there is only one teacher for all the subjects while in other schools, there is one teacher for every subject. Sandoval (2009) mentions that nowadays Telesecundaria teachers face some problems, for example, in most cases televisions do not work, there is a lack of materials, schools are dilapidated, and there are too many students per classroom, among others. What is more, Telesecundaria teachers are concerned because the educational reform has changed their labor contract, salary, perks and bonuses.

### *How the Telesecundaria system should work*

The main purpose of Telesecundaria schools according to SEP (2001) is to develop students' intellectual skills to make them work autonomously inside and outside school. It is also expected that students develop the knowledge and skills related to natural and social life and at the same time they learn and develop values and attitudes to become responsible members of a society. Therefore, telesecundaria teachers need expertise on the contents of the program to develop the basic competences in students. In addition, they are responsible for teaching all the subjects included in the curriculum of secondary education. That is why the Telesecundaria teacher needs to know the social and familiar environment of every single student to help them when they need it (SEP, 2001).

### *Degree requirements of a Telesecundaria teacher*

The profession of Secondary teacher has experienced many changes through the years. In Mexico, teachers who teach basic education are graduated from a teaching training school (these training schools are known as escuelas normales), which implies having received pedagogical training and teaching in an institution specially designed for it. These colleges qualify and certify graduated students to teach. The curriculum consists of four years of formal education together with some teaching practice in addition to the social service in target schools. This curriculum offers some areas of specialization such as Mathematics, Spanish, English, etc., out of which students can choose to become specialists. (Sandoval, 2009).

### *Teachers' attitudes in the English subject*

According to SEP (2000) to learn a foreign language, the future teachers in secondary education need to acquire skills, knowledge, attitudes, the domain of the foreign language to be aware of the implications of teaching a foreign language and factors that could hinder or help the learning process. Teaching a language is not as easy as it may seem, it is different from teaching Spanish, Chemistry, Mathematics, etc., learners need to develop skills to language learning more than a high IQ. In Telesecundaria schools, the English

subject is called a foreign language subject, and learners study English the same way as they study the other subjects and teachers try to teach English the same way as they teach the other subjects but the main difference is the fact that they have a book with activities to develop the different skills such as oral expression and reading comprehension, but it seems to be difficult for both teachers and students to understand the activities when they have no idea of how the language works.

It seems to be difficult for teachers to explain or to guide students when they have problems with the language; this is due to lack of teachers training. To teach a subject, telesecundaria teachers explain a topic by using the book as a resource of information and as a tool to review different topics but in the English class, the book does not fulfill its function, and instead of being a resource or a tool for teachers, it seems to be just a book to fill in the blanks although students do not understand or write the words correctly. Every student has a book whose layout consists of texts, grammar explanations, examples and practice activities. In the English class, teachers have repetition or pronunciation activities and they rarely ask students to practice dialogues. Teachers do not do reading and writing activities because they think students do not understand the language (Nuñez, 2005).

#### *Teachers' role*

Professors in telesecundaria have to master all the disciplinary contents to be able to fulfill the objectives of telesecundaria education. In other words, teachers need to be prepared to be successful in what they do. In addition, they need to be aware of the contexts around them, it is necessary to know the familiar, social and cultural environment in which each student develops in order to provide quality education for them. Apart from this, teachers need to pay attention to the roles they play in the classroom; for example, according to the Secretaría de Educación Pública (2011) the role of the teacher is to coordinate and promote learning with the support of different materials and educational means.

The characteristics a telesecundaria teacher must have are the following:

- Design learning situations to know the needs and interests of telesecundaria students.
- Organize, implement and evaluate interactive activities that place each student in front of different situations that generate personal and group benefits.
- Develop and promote the implementation of institutional projects, with management of school resources to engage students in the process.
- To promote information and discussion meetings involving parents.
- Use of Information and communication technologies as support tools to increase the educational potential in relation to the objectives of teaching and learning.

#### *What does a teacher need to become a Telesecundaria teacher?*

Sandoval (2009) mentions that the professor who incorporates in a classroom without having studied in a Teaching training college, such as Normal Superior, learns by doing,

becomes a teacher by practice without the support of other experienced teachers and the proper training. To be a teacher, it is not necessary to get a teacher training diploma, but a university degree which certifies a B.A. Then, teachers become teachers by practice, as the old saying states: "Practice makes the master," this has become a common behavior in telesecundaria schools. In short, to be a Telesecundaria teacher the only requirement is to have the profile that the SEP (for its acronym in Spanish Secretaría de Educación Pública) requests.

### *Telesecundaria teachers' profile*

According to the Secretaría de Educación de Veracruz (SEV) the profiles admitted to be a telesecundaria teacher are the following:

LIC. EN CIENCIAS SOCIALES	LIC. EN EDUCACION TELESECUNDARIA
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN CIENCIAS NATURALES	LIC. EN ENSEÑANZA DEL ESPAÑOL Y LITERATURA
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN EL AREA DE LENGUA EXTRANJERA (INGLES)	LIC. EN LENGUA Y LITERATURA
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN EL AREA DE MATEMATICAS	LIC. EN LENGUA Y LITERATURA DE HISPANOAMERICA
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE CIENCIAS NATURALES	LIC. EN LENGUA Y LITERATURA ESPAÑOLA
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES	LIC. EN LENGUA Y LITERATURA HISPANICAS
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE ESPAÑOL	LIC. EN PEDAGOGIA
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE HISTORIA Y CIVISMO	LIC. EN PEDAGOGIA EN DESARROLLO EDUCATIVO
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE INGLES	LIC. EN PEDAGOGIA ESPECIALIDAD EN CIENCIAS NATURALES
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE MATEMATICAS	LIC. EN PEDAGOGIA ESPECIALIDAD EN CIENCIAS SOCIALES
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE PEDAGOGIA	LIC. EN PEDAGOGIA ESPECIALIDAD EN ESPAÑOL
LIC. EN EDUCACION MEDIA EN PEDAGOGIA	LIC. EN PEDAGOGIA ESPECIALIDAD EN INGLES
LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA	LIC. EN PEDAGOGIA ESPECIALIDAD EN MATEMATICAS
	LICENCIATURA EN PEDAGOGÍA
BIOLOGO	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN BIOLOGIA
LIC. EN BIOLOGIA	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN CIENCIAS NATURALES
LIC. EN BIOLOGIA ESPECIALIDAD EN AGROECOLOGIA	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN CIENCIAS SOCIALES
LIC. EN BIOLOGIA ESPECIALIDAD EN MANEJO DE RECURSOS NATURALES	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN ESPAÑOL
LIC. EN BIOLOGIA EXPERIMENTAL	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN FISICA
LIC. EN BIOLOGIA MARINA	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN FISICA QUIMICA
LIC. EN BIOLOGIA PESQUERA	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN FORMACION CIVICA Y ETICA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN GEOGRAFIA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION AREA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLES	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN HISTORIA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION AREA FISICA Y MATEMATICAS	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN INGLES
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION AREA LENGUA Y LITERATURA ESPAÑOLA	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN LENGUA EXTRANJERA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION AREA QUIMICA Y BIOLOGIA	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN LENGUA EXTRANJERA INGLES
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION CON ACENTUACION EN IDIOMA INGLES	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN LENGUA Y LITERATURA ESPAÑOLA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION CON ACENTUACION EN PEDAGOGIA	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN MATEMATICAS
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION CON OPCION EN CIENCIAS QUIMICO BIOLÓGICAS	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN QUIMICA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION CON OPCION EN CIENCIAS SOCIALES	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD EN TELESECUNDARIA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION CON TERMINAL EN CIENCIAS SOCIALES	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD HISTORIA, GEOGRAFIA O FORMACION CIVICA Y ETICA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION CON TERMINAL EN FISICO MATEMATICAS	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA CON ESPECIALIDAD PEDAGOGIA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION EN EL AREA CIENCIAS SOCIALES	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE ESPAÑOL
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION EN EL AREA DE FISICA Y MATEMATICAS	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE FORMACION CIVICA Y ETICA
LIC. EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION EN EL AREA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA	LIC. EN EDUCACION SECUNDARIA EN LA ESPECIALIDAD DE MATEMATICAS

According to the INEE (for its acronym in Spanish Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación), in Veracruz, the 0.5% of telesecundaria teachers studied media superior education; the 90.8% have a degree and the 8.7% have postgraduate studies. To overcome telesecundaria teachers' lack of knowledge about the different subjects they teach, the SEV's website offers courses for Telesecundaria teachers who work in Telesecundaria education model (system). The purpose of the courses is to acquire the educational tools that enable teachers develop in students the intellectual skills demanded by today's society; and implement them in a variety of situations in the diverse areas of personal and social life, in order to respond to the challenges of the present and the immediate future.

### *What is attitude?*

According to Rodrigues, Leal and Jablonski (2009) attitudes can be learnt and achieve different functions. Moreover, attitudes protect people's self-esteem, avoid conflicts, anxiety and establish the social identity. Some types of personality lead to the emergence of some attitudes because both are related to each other. It can be said that attitudes are responsible for judging or criticizing behavior, at the same time as Briñol, Falces and Becerra (2007) explained other essential characteristic of attitudes is that they constitute a mental phenomenon. It means that attitudes are responsible for the way people judge and criticize objects, people, and behavior, among others.

### *Telesecundaria teachers' attitude when teaching English*

In this paper it is expected to identify the attitudes professors have when they teach English. In telesecundaria schools, most of the teachers are not specialists in this area, they do not have the language learning experience, then, they do not know how to teach it as they did not have formal education in English. According to the Plan de Estudios of the Escuelas Normales (Educational Program of a training school) (SEP, 2002) future teachers have the opportunity to study English as a specialization in order to be prepared when they face the English class in Telesecundaria but it is important to mention that future teachers can choose the specialization they want to study and not all of them choose English.

	Primer semestre	Horas/ Créditos	Segundo semestre	Horas/ Créditos	Tercer semestre	Horas/ Créditos	Cuarto semestre	Horas/ Créditos	Quinto semestre	Horas/ Créditos	Sexto semestre	Horas/ Créditos	Séptimo semestre	Horas/ Créditos	Octavo semestre	Horas/ Créditos	
A	Bases filosóficas, legales y organizativas del sistema educativo mexicano	4/7.0	La educación en el desarrollo histórico de México I	4/7.0	La educación en el desarrollo histórico de México II	4/7.0	Seminario de temas selectos de historia de la pedagogía y la educación I	4/7.0	Seminario de temas selectos de historia de la pedagogía y la educación II	4/7.0	Evolución histórica de la lengua inglesa	4/7.0					
	Estrategias para el estudio y la comunicación I	6/10.3	Estrategias para el estudio y la comunicación II	4/7.0	Inglés I	4/7.0	Inglés II	4/7.0	Inglés III	4/7.0	Inglés IV	4/7.0					
	Problemas y políticas de la educación básica	6/10.3	Introducción a la enseñanza de Lengua extranjera (Inglés)	4/7.0	Los adolescentes y el aprendizaje del inglés	4/7.0	Literatura en lengua inglesa I	4/7.0	Literatura en lengua inglesa II	4/7.0	Elementos básicos de gramática comparada inglés-español	4/7.0					
			La enseñanza en la escuela secundaria. Cuestiones básicas I	4/7.0	La enseñanza en la escuela secundaria. Cuestiones básicas II	4/7.0	Estrategias y recursos I. Comprensión de la lectura	4/7.0	Estrategias y recursos II. Comprensión auditiva y expresión oral	4/7.0	Estrategias y recursos III. Lectura y escritura	4/7.0					
	Propósitos y contenidos de la educación básica I (Primaria)	4/7.0	Propósitos y contenidos de la educación básica II (Secundaria)	4/7.0	La expresión oral y escrita en el proceso de enseñanza y de aprendizaje	4/7.0	Planación de la enseñanza y evaluación del aprendizaje	4/7.0	Opcional I	4/7.0	Opcional II	4/7.0	Taller de diseño de propuestas didácticas y análisis de trabajo docente I	6/10.3	Taller de diseño de propuestas didácticas y análisis de trabajo docente II	6/10.3	
	Desarrollo de los adolescentes I. Aspectos generales	6/10.3	Desarrollo de los adolescentes II. Crecimiento y sexualidad	6/10.3	Desarrollo de los adolescentes III. Identidad y relaciones sociales	6/10.3	Desarrollo de los adolescentes IV. Procesos cognitivos	6/10.3	Atención educativa a los adolescentes en situaciones de riesgo	6/10.3	Gestión escolar	6/10.3					
B	Escuela y contexto social	6/10.3	Observación del proceso escolar	6/10.3	Observación y práctica docente I	6/10.3	Observación y práctica docente II	6/10.3	Observación y práctica docente III	6/10.3	Observación y práctica docente IV	6/10.3	Trabajo docente I	10/17.5	Trabajo docente II	10/17.5	
	Horas/semana	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32		10		16		

Área de actividad	
A	Actividades principalmente escolarizadas
B	Actividades de acercamiento a la práctica escolar
C	Práctica intensiva en condiciones reales de trabajo

Campos de formación	
---	Formación general para educación básica
---	Formación común para todas las especialidades de secundaria
---	Formación específica por especialidad

Table 2: Degree study programme of the Benemérita Escuela Normal Veracruzana (SEP, 2000)

### Telesecundaria teachers' attitude when teaching other subjects

As the Plan de Estudios of the Escuelas Normales shows, the future teachers have the opportunity to learn how they will teach their students in every single subject. However, it does not give them the tools to face unexpected situations when something they do not know is brought up to class. Telesecundaria teachers have a big challenge in their everyday situations. They not only need to be well-prepared with concepts and knowledge, but they also need to have the disposition to deal with different attitudes and behavior from the students, for that, they also need to have positive attitude.

As stated at the beginning, this chapter has dealt with some important issues regarding Telesecundarias' origins and development. In addition, it has also discussed what requirements are necessary to become a teacher in this educational system. However, due to the fact that these types of schools are poorly studied very little has been said about them, especially in the area of English. For this reason, it is expected that this paper is the keystone for further research.

## METHODOLOGY

This research aims at illustrating some of the problems a Telesecundaria teacher faces regarding the English class. Most importantly, the main focus of this paper is to study the teachers' attitude when teaching English versus other subjects at this level. This is because, most telesecundaria teachers are not specialists in English as they are in other areas, for example, Mathematics, Biology, Spanish, etc. With this paper, it is expected to



answer the research questions about the attitudes teachers have when they teach other subjects than English, in order to compare how the teachers' attitude might be different from the other subjects with the English class. In other words, the main aim of this paper is to see if teachers react differently when students question them in the English class or they react the same when they are questioned in the other subjects. The qualitative research was chosen because it offers the researcher the opportunity to study the subjects in their natural context. And, as this paper is expected to show the different attitudes teachers may have in Telesecundaria School depending on what subject they teach to compare them such attitudes.

### *Qualitative research*

Over the years, many authors have defined qualitative research as a way to express an idea by observing a fact when it could not be explained with numbers. It means that in a qualitative research reality and nature are relevant points to study. In this kind of research, ideology and diversity are important aspects to consider because they study the way individuals behave (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista 2006). For this kind of research, it is important to study the characteristics of a group of people and the way they behave. Cortés and Iglesias (2004) argue that a qualitative research is a channel to investigate without numerical measuring, the process is dynamic by means of interpretation of the incidents and simultaneously, this approach is more utilized in social processes.

A qualitative research does not pick up pieces of information, it starts by asking questions. As Quecedo and Castaño (2003) explain, in a qualitative research it is important to understand the context people get on in order to have a better idea of what they do and the way they behave. In a qualitative research the investigator does not look for the truth but he looks for people's perspectives; and to do this, he has to put his own beliefs, traditions and perspectives aside. The investigator and people interact in a natural way which allow the researcher have a good perspective of the phenomenon under study.

### *Data collection*

To collect the information for this research, it was necessary to use two methods: observations and online questionnaires. Online questionnaires through Google's application were useful to get general information about teachers profiles and experience at telesecundaria level and to know more about their experience in the English class. Observations were used to compare teachers' attitude in the English class with the attitude they had in the other subjects such as Mathematics, Geography, History, etc. Observations were useful to see how teachers react when students have questions about vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, (in the case of English). They also helped to see what teachers did when students had questions about the other subjects. Observations were the support of the online questionnaires and they gave a better idea of teachers' attitudes in the telesecundaria classroom.

### *Online questionnaires*

One of the methods used for this paper was the online questionnaires, this instrument is a google's application in which information can be gathered easily and fast and it can be sent by e-mail or text. Online questionnaires were very helpful to know telesecundaria teachers' circumstances. For these questionnaires, it was used Google forms applications, a Google's drive application in which people can create surveys to obtain statistics about different topics. Google forms have many advantages for example, obtaining of results automatically in charts, the time consuming factor is overcome with this application as the researcher sends the link and the participants can do it at any time.

Questionnaires were designed to know about characteristics teachers may have at a Telesecundaria. The purpose of questionnaires was to obtain information that could answer the research questions. The questionnaires were written in Spanish because most of the Telesecundaria teachers do not speak English, in this way they could understand all the questions and also answer them. The questions were easy to understand and the information required was about teachers' profile and experience. There were fifteen questions aimed at knowing the Telesecundaria teachers' level of education, the degree they hold, and the teaching experience they have at this level, the amount of time they spend with the different subjects, the time they dedicate to teach English, the kind of activities they do in the English class and if they like the English class or not and why, among others. In the observation sheet, the different aspects taken into account were the kind of materials teachers use in the class, if the class seems to be boring for students, the students' participation, among others. (See appendix 1)

#### *Observation.*

Marshall and Rossman (1989), state that observation is the description of situations, behaviors and events of a certain group of people to be studied. (As cited in Kawulich, 2005). For this research there were used participatory observations in which the observer interacted with the group in order to get participants confidence and to make them react naturally in their context. The observer was introduced to the students and teachers explained to them why the observer was there in the classroom and the purpose of the observations, in this case the purpose was to do this research. Students seemed not to have problems about the situation of being observed and in this way the observations were successful. Grinnel (1997) argues that observations are helpful to explore environments, behaviors, cultures, and different aspects of social life (As cited in Hernández, Fernández & Baptista 2006). To have objective observations it was necessary to design an observation guide that allowed the researcher see specific aspects that led to the answers the researcher was looking for. For example, teacher has control of the class, teacher is a friend of students, teacher gets nervous if he/she does not know anything, students show interest, students answer teacher's questions, among others. (See appendix 2)

## Context

This research was carried out in a Telesecundaria located in one of the outskirts of Xalapa, it is important to mention that Telesecundaria schools are commonly located in the suburbs of a city or little towns. Teachers work the morning shift only, they are required to arrive at school at 8:00 o'clock and leave at 2:00 o'clock from Monday to Friday. In Telesecundarias there are at least one group of every secondary level –first, second and third grades- teachers in Telesecundarias have to teach all of the following subjects. For first grade: Spanish I, Mathematics I, Science I (biology), Geography of Mexico and the World, Foreign Language I, Physical Education I, Technology I, Arts, State subject, Orientation and tutorial.

For second grade: Spanish II, Mathematics II, Science II (physics), History I, Civics and Ethics I, Foreign Language II, Physical Education II, Technology II, Arts, Orientation and Tutorial.

For third grade: Spanish III, Mathematics III, Science III (chemistry), History II, Civics and Ethics II, Foreign Language III, Physical Education III, Technology III, Arts, Orientation and Tutorial.

Primer grado	Hrs.	Segundo grado	Hrs.	Tercer grado	Hrs.
Español I	5	Español II	5	Español III	5
Matemáticas I	5	Matemáticas II	5	Matemáticas III	5
Ciencias I (énfasis en Biología)	6	Ciencias II (énfasis en Física)	6	Ciencias III (énfasis en Química)	6
Geografía de México y del mundo	5	Historia I	4	Historia II	4
		Formación Cívica y Ética I	4	Formación Cívica y Ética II	4
Lengua extranjera I	3	Lengua extranjera II	3	Lengua extranjera III	3
Educación Física I	2	Educación Física II	2	Educación Física III	2
Tecnología I	3	Tecnología II	3	Tecnología III	3
Artes (Música, Danza, Teatro, Artes Visuales)	2	Artes (Música, Danza, Teatro, Artes Visuales)	2	Artes (Música, Danza, Teatro, Artes Visuales)	2
Asignatura estatal	3				
Orientación y tutoría	1	Orientación y tutoría	1	Orientación y tutoría	1
	<b>Total 35</b>		<b>Total 35</b>		<b>Total 35</b>

Table 3: Study programme of Telesecundaria Schools

Every subject has its own book, the main difference between the books in general or technical schools and in Telesecundarias is that Telesecundaria's books include the number of the "teleclase" for each topic students review, this way teachers can follow the programs in an organized way. In the case of English, teachers have a book in which students can find texts about different topics, grammar rules, examples and a kind of test to improve their knowledge but maybe teachers do not know how to exploit all the sources the book offers. There is also a classroom library in which different books in English are included, but most of the teachers do not use them; some inferences can be made, it

might be because teachers do not understand them or students might not be interested in them or they could think learning English is not important.

### *Participants*

The participants were six female teachers who are different ages, they were native speakers of Spanish. To keep their anonymity, for the purpose of this research, they were called Li 1, Li 2, Li 3, and so forth. Teachers studied in an Escuela Normal (training school to become a teacher) and they have been working as teachers for many years, Li 1 has been working as a teacher for seven years, Li 2 has been working for five years, Li 3 for about nine years, Li 4 approximately fifteen years and Li 5 and Li 6 more than twenty years. Three teachers out of the six surveyed (Li 2, Li 4 and Li 6), stated that they have taken an English course in order to be more prepared because they have to teach English three times per week. The other three (Li 1, Li 3 and Li 5) commented that they have not studied English at all. In order to obtain a more complete and varied sample of the answers given, the teachers from all the three grades were chosen.

### *Research procedure*

For this paper, a questionnaire and some observations were carried out. The link of the questionnaire was sent via e-mail and text messages. The participants responded to the questionnaires within a week. As the tool used (Google forms) to gather this data shows the results automatically, the responses were analyzed and interpreted to do so, the charts were analyzed carefully one by one in order to be sure the results were not repetitive, the participants answered all the questions and the participants' answers were coherent. An observation sheet was designed before going to observe the Telesecundaria teachers taking into account the purposes of this research and the teaching inquisitiveness of the observer, it included some aspects about the teacher, the students, the English class and the other subject. To do the observation sheet, piloting was necessary, then, an English class and another subject class were observed. This way, the observation guide could provide the information needed to compare the attitudes teacher showed in each class and the way students responded. Every observation lasted about 40 minutes, it is the time a class takes.

Observations helped in this research to get a general understanding of the attitudes teachers had when they interacted in the English class in comparison with the other subjects. At the same time, observations were helpful to compare what teachers had commented in the questionnaires and what they did during the observations. In some cases what is said is not the same as what is done.

## **FINDINGS**

After analyzing all the data gathered, the information was organized in three categories in order to get a better understanding of the topic and a wider vision of the phenomena under study. The categories are explained as follows: 1) teachers and students' behavior in the Spanish classroom; 2) Teachers and students' attitudes in the English class; 3) Comparisons and contrasting of teachers and students' behavior in both English and Spanish class.

#### *Teachers and Students' behavior in the Spanish classroom*

As it was mentioned, the role of the teacher is important, he is the one in charge of all the subjects and it helps him/her to create a friendly environment in the class in most cases. For example, in the observations it was seen that the teacher is very relaxed when students say something, in one occasion one student made fun of the teacher and even laughed when the teacher Li 1 made a mistake and the student corrected the teacher:

Teacher: Vamos a escribir las palabras que faltan en el texto, la primera es "sueming"...  
*let's write the missing words, the first one is "swimming"*

Student: Ya "sueming" maestro, eso que dijo quién sabe que es. No se pronuncia "sueming" (laughing). *It is not like that teacher, I don't know what you said. The pronunciation is not "sueming"*

Teacher: Bueno, yo no sé pronunciarla bien pero esa es la respuesta correcta, la que sigue... *well, I don't know how to pronounce it but that word is the correct one, next...*

In this case students seem not to be respectful towards the teacher; this might be as a result of being together every single day and all day long. The teacher did not say anything and continued explaining. Li 1 seems to be a friend of students but has to set a limit for students not to cross the line. It is important to draw a line because when students have no limits, they tend to be disrespectful, especially at this age. In this specific case, the teacher showed a very relaxed attitude and acted as if it were natural to make mistakes.

On the contrary, Li 2 is very strict and students are always respectful, the teacher is like a friend but with clear limits so that she can keep some control over students and they do as teachers says. Li 2 speaks loud and has rules in the classroom. For example, if a student is walking around the classroom, the teacher asks him to go to his place and the student goes quickly. Li 2 is self-confident and students know that, she accepts comments and does not get angry if students correct her. Once she was explaining something in the English class and made a mistake, a student corrected her and she thanked him and explained to the students again.

Teacher: "Ahora vamos a ver la diferencia entre "before" y "after", esto es súper fácil y ya lo habíamos explicado, recuerdan que "after" es antes y "before" es después. Ahora repitan todos "after" antes y "before" después". *Let's see the difference between "before" and "after", this is easy and we have already reviewed this topic, remember "before" means antes and "before", después.*

Student: (Student stood up and walked to the teacher) "En el diccionario lo dice al revés, "after" significa después y "before" es antes". (*Teacher, but in the dictionary it is not the same, "after" means "después" and "before" means "antes"*).

Teacher: "Gracias hijo, tienes razón. Ahorita lo corregimos con todos tus compañeros, muchas gracias hijo, es cierto". (*You are right, let's correct the mistake, thank you so much, that's right*). (She was looking for that word in the dictionary to correct the mistake)

The teacher showed a good attitude and reacted in a good way, she told the students that she was wrong and the correct words are after that means "después" and before that means "antes".

Li 4 is a friend of students and as well as Li 1, the students do not respect the teacher but the difference between Li 1 and Li 3 is that Li 3 has rules and has marked the limits. Sometimes students make comments about the teacher but the teacher cannot hear them; and when she asks them they say they did not say anything. Students do not respect the teacher as they are supposed to.

Li 3 only asks the students to answer the exercises on the book; she speaks louder and reads the instructions and the activity in Spanish although it is the English class. Students do not understand the vocabulary or the grammar rules because they are not used to the English language. If students ask the teacher about the meaning of a word, she answers that they have a dictionary, for example:

Student: "Maestra, ¿qué significa "grin groceria"?; ¿Significa grocería?" (laughing)

*"after, what's the meaning of greengrocers? Is it a bad word?"*

Teacher: "No niño, eso no significa (laughing) y además no se pronuncia así, se dice "Green grocers", significa verdulería".

*"No, that's not the meaning and that's not the pronunciation, it is greengrocers'... It's the place where you can get vegetables"*

Student: "¿qué significa "bakeri"?"

*(what does bakery mean?)*

Teacher: "Para eso tienen su diccionario, búsqüenlo en el diccionario, no crean que todo se los voy a decir yo".

*"that's why you have a dictionary, look the word up in the dictionary... don't you think I will tell you everything you want to know"*

Sometimes teachers do not answer students' questions because they also do not know what students ask.

Li 5 and L6 are friends of students but they have limits, students are respectful and they are well behaved. There are some students who do not like to participate or to work, though. For instance when teachers ask for examples, students prefer to stay silence and not to say anything wrong.

As shown here, the teachers' behavior goes from a relaxed to a stricter one; the atmosphere in the classroom might depend on the teachers' own personality, mood and way of controlling students. In general, the English knowledge they have seems not to interfere with the rapport they built in the classroom, they accept they make mistakes and self-correct they let students laugh at the mistakes, yet, they have develop their own way of controlling misbehavior.

### *Teachers and students' attitudes in the English class*

In telesecundaria schools most of the teachers are not specialized in English so English tends to be rejected at this level. As mentioned before, only three of the teachers observed have studied English courses. This fact is important to understand why English is not practiced in the class. In most of the cases the teacher speaks in Spanish although the book is written in the foreign language. Students are not even used to following instructions in English. For example, once Li 1 wrote vocabulary about body parts on the board and students copied and repeated next.

Teacher: "Nariz" "Nose"

Students: "No sé, maestra" "*I don't know, teacher*"

Teacher: "cómo que no sé, dejen de jugar y traten de pronunciarla" "*Don't you know?... stop playing and try to pronounce it*" .

Students: "Pues así se escribe maestra, no sé." "*But that's the way you write it teacher, I don't know*"

In the English class, the teachers do not explain grammar; they just answer and read the texts on the book. For example, in the observation, it was seen that Li 3 speaks in Spanish all time during the English class, then, students are not familiarized with the language.

Teacher: "La lección trata sobre lugares y voy a leer el texto para que veamos de qué habla." "*The lesson is about places and I'm going to read it in order to see what it is about*"

Students: "¿Lo leemos cada quién?" "*Do we need to read it by ourselves?*"

Teacher: "No hijo, lo voy a leer yo"... "En la verdulería se encontraron María y Victor, necesitaban un kilo de tomates, unas naranjas y algunas zanahorias..." "*No, I'm going to read it... in the greengrocers'. Maria and Victor met each other, they needed a kilo of tomatoes, some oranges and some carrots...*"

However, there are other participants who, at least, read in English and give the instructions in English, too. Students seem to understand a little more than the others although the teachers do not pronounce very well. Some teachers use videos and audio recordings in order to listen to native speakers that way students may get familiar with the language.

Teacher: "Ya voy a poner el diálogo, todos atentos y calladitos para que escuchen lo que dicen. Contesten la actividad pero escuchen para que escriban la respuesta" "*I'm going to*

*play the dialogue, pay attention and be quiet in order to listen to what they are talking about. Answer the activity but listen carefully in order to write the answers”*

Student: “Ay maestra, hablan bien rápido y ni se les entiende nada. Yo no entiendo nada, ni se cómo se escribe eso que dicen” *teac e r, t e y speak e r y ast and I don't understand. I don't understand anyt i ng and I don't know o w to write w a t t e y say”*

Teacher: “Así es como se habla el inglés, traten de identificar las palabras conocidas”  
“ *at's t e way Englis is spoken, try to identi y t e words t a t you know”*

To conclude, students look not very familiarized with the English language. Also, teachers might not teaching English as they do not speak it, English is difficult for the teachers, they lack confidence with the target language as they are not experts on it. Students know their teachers are not prepared and they make fun of the teacher; students criticized the way teachers pronounced the words and gain a little control over the teachers but not that much as they do not know either. As a final remark, it can be said that English can be a difficult subject to teach, and so, the teacher's insecurity or lack of confidence can easily be perceived when they teach it. Despite this, they seem not to lose the control of the class.

#### *Comparisons and contrasting of teachers and students' attitudes in bot Englis and Spanish class*

The observations showed that as teachers in telesecundaria teach all the subjects, the relationship between them and students is very close. This is because they spend around six hours together every day during the week. Both, teachers and students, feel confident with each other, therefore, their attitudes are worthwhile discussing.

First of all, students in the English class usually get bored easily more than in the other classes mainly because they do not understand what is written in the English book. The attitude in this class from both, teacher and students, is negative because on the one hand, the students do not understand. And on the other hand, the teacher does not know how to explain teachers do not have a special training in the subject matter.

The teacher speaks in Spanish during the English class. This could be a negative aspect because students are learning English; they need to practice it. As teachers do not speak English, students do not show interest and start talking or doing other things.

Most of the teachers just use the book and the blackboard to teach English, only two out of the six teachers do different activities, such as watching videos about grammar explanations, listen to dialogues and others. Students are more interested when the teacher does something different in the class. For example, when Li 3 played the video the students were in silence and they started repeating the vocabulary after the pronunciation. Students showed interest and they repeated without the teacher's instruction.



When students had questions in the English class about vocabulary, the teacher suggested students to use the dictionary in order to get the answer. Students have dictionaries but they do not know how to use it because sometimes they do not know the spelling of the words.

The participants seem to be self-confident in the Spanish class, on one occasion Li 5 explained the different kind of words, such as oxytone, paroxytone and proparoxytone. Li 5 asked students to give examples in order to review what they already know.

Student: "Maestra, ¿tengo que decir una palabra esdrújula?" " *e ac er, do l a e to say a proparoxytone word?*"

Teacher: "Sí, un ejemplo de una palabra esdrújula" " *Yes, gi e an example o a proparoxytone word*"

Student: "Ay maestra es que no me acuerdo" " *ut I don't remember*"

Teacher: "Ya lo revisamos, es la palabra que suena fuerte en la ante penúltima sílaba" " *we reiewed tis topic, te words stressed on te tird -to - last syllable are proparoxytones*"

In the Spanish class, teacher seemed to be more comfortable than in the English class and answered the students faster and in a different way such as giving examples about what they were talking about.

## CONCLUSION

In this research, important information was obtained. According to Vega López and Trinidad (n.d.), Telesecundaria teachers are the ones who promote the change in the society and they have to promote values in the students to incorporate them in social life. Unfortunately, students in Telesecundaria are not trained as they should because of the lack of materials and poor teaching techniques on the side of the teacher. As illustrated before, teachers are not well-prepared to teach all the subjects. Telesecundaria teachers use very few techniques to teach, resulting in regular lessons which demotivate students; especially at this age, when they are curious and want to do more dynamic activities.

Telesecundaria teachers' attitudes are not varied from one class to other, teachers and students feel comfortable in the classroom and as they spend many hours per day there, the environment is friendly and relaxed. The way teachers teach varies from subject to subject; in the Science class, for example, they do activities such as experiments, in Spanish they make comparisons, in English they translate texts. The 50 minutes they have to teach a subject is not enough for students' practice to consolidate, activities should be short.

Telesecundaria educational model has to be improved in order to provide better education for students. One possible way of solving this problem is by having different teachers teaching according to their teacher profile. It may take long to have teachers from different areas in one school but it is necessary to offer better education conditions. In the

case of English, it is urgent that telesecundaria teachers should be trained to improve the language classes so that students see the real use of learning a language.

## **LIMITATIONS**

While doing this research some limitations made the process a bit difficult. First of all, the time the school term is not enough for doing a deep research, more time was necessary to obtain richer data. Second, the school that was chosen for doing the observations is very poor and dilapidated. The environment is not good enough to promote the learning conditions, this could be a problem because if they do not work in a good environment, learning does not take place. Another limitation was the online questionnaire, a person answered it four times, making the data collection harder for the researcher. Finally, another problem that was faced was the observations; they were difficult because of the teachers' schedule, in some cases, the teachers had English class at the same hour making it difficult to organize the observations.

## **TEACHING IMPLICATIONS**

First of all teachers need to be trained in the subjects they teach because it is not the case to teach something wrong or halfway; this could affect the students' learning process. It is also important to improve the teachers' teaching skills because they always do the same and at this age, adolescents need to be motivated, classes should not be reduced to only answer the books. Telesecundaria teachers should try different activities, for example, quizzes, games, songs, and other strategies that are useful. Also, BA in English students should do their social service in these schools. Finally, the attitude Telesecundaria teachers have regarding English need to be improved. By having a better attitude towards the language teachers can motivate students better and involve them in the learning process.

## **FURTHER RESEARCH**

Interesting information was found with this research, for example, that videos are not used anymore; the lack of training and knowledge on behalf of the teachers, etc. Hence, it is expected that in the near future it will be possible to investigate about some strategies a Telesecundaria teacher could use for teaching the subjects they do not have much knowledge about. For example, the use of technology, as it is supposed that Telesecundaria teachers use the television, they could also use of web pages to facilitate the teaching and learning processes. Technology could be a useful tool for not well prepared teachers and in Telesecundaria the use of it might make the difference in education but as Backhoff, Pérez & Contreras (2015) mention, only six out of every ten Telesecundaria teachers use the media to teach a subject in a Telesecundaria school. (p. 8)

As it is known, nowadays the internet is very useful and talking about English, Telesecundaria teachers can look for activities online, games, tests and also exams that they can use in the classroom. Students should do different activities and the use of these materials could help teachers if they are not prepared. It is important to take into account that Telesecundarias need to do some research because there is not enough information about these schools, how they work, how teachers deal with all the problems face with the school premises, students, the materials, the equipment, etc.

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## Appendix 1

### Observation sheet

#### The teacher

T shows empathy		
T gets annoyed		
T ignores comments		
T answers positively		
T gets nervous if he/she doesn't know sth.		
T gets angry if Ss ask		
T is patient		
T has control of the class		
T is a friend of Ss		
T respects Ss		
T is self-confident		

#### The students

Ss show interest		
Ss do what the T asks		
Ss respect the teacher		
Ss participate		
Ss are disciplined		
Ss answer the T questions		
Ss trust in the teacher		
Ss like the way T explains		
Ss ask when they have questions		
Ss feel comfortable in the classroom		

#### The English class

The class is boring for Ss		
The class is dynamic		
The class is interesting for Ss		
The class is developed better than others for Ss		
The materials are designed properly for the ss' level		
The materials are only the book and the blackboard		
T provides extra materials for Ss (handouts, quizzes, puzzles, among others)		
T uses dictionaries, translator, internet and other sources of information for looking for something		
T seems to enjoy the English class		
T gets angry if Ss ask something about grammar or pronunciation		
T gets nervous if Ss ask something he/she does not know		
T pretends to ignore Ss questions by changing topic		

#### Other class

The class is boring for Ss		
The class is dynamic		
The class is interesting for Ss		
The class is developed better than English		
The materials are designed properly		
The materials are only the book and the blackboard		
T provides extra materials for Ss (handouts, quizzes, puzzles, among others)		
T uses dictionaries, encyclopedia, internet and other sources of information for looking for something		
T seems to enjoy the class		

Observations

## Appendix 2

### Grado de estudios \*

- Licenciatura
- Especialidad
- Maestría
- Doctorado
- Otro

### ¿Cuál es su formación? (área de estudios) \*

- Humanidades
- Técnica
- Económico-administrativa
- Biológico-agropecuaria
- Ciencias de la salud
- Artes

Cuando tiene algún problema en la clase de Inglés, ¿cómo lo resuelve? <sup>1</sup>

- Consulta en internet
- Busca en el diccionario
- Pide ayuda a otro maestro
- Evade la situación
- Otro...

¿Qué tipo de actividades realiza en la clase de Inglés? \*

- Ejercicios del libro de texto
- Traducción de los textos del libro
- Crucigramas, acertijos, memoramas, sopa de letras, entre otros
- Ver videos, escuchar canciones, resolver actividades en internet, entre otras
- Otro...



# ¿ENSEÑANDO CON IMÁGENES UN VOCABULARIO EFICAZ?

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## RESUMEN

Diversos estudios apoyan la idea de que las técnicas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de léxico de un idioma extranjero son de suma importancia, debido a que son herramientas motivadoras que permiten ordenar el trabajo, priorizar ideas, aprovechar los recursos disponibles de mejor modo, además permiten al alumno enfrentar el conocimiento a futuro. Teniendo tal referencia, se propone el uso de la técnica visual en la enseñanza de léxico. Nation (2008) afirma que la técnica visual es aquella que está relacionada con todo lo que ven los estudiantes y en donde se utilizan recursos visuales tales como: imágenes, cuadros y diagramas, siendo ésta eficaz en la enseñanza del léxico porque fomenta la memorización de las palabras de manera significativa, principalmente en aquellas palabras como los sustantivos, adjetivos calificativos, adverbios de modo y verbos. Por lo consiguiente, en el Centro de Idiomas- región Veracruz de la Universidad Veracruzana se trabaja en un proyecto en fase inicial, la cual involucra actividades didácticas donde el alumno demuestre el aprendizaje de léxico simple o compuesto, utilizando la técnica visual para comprobar si realmente la adquisición de nuevo léxico es eficiente. Para este proyecto se tomó como muestra alumnos de dos idiomas diferentes, inglés e italiano, de niveles básicos. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es compartir los resultados de aprendizaje de léxico obtenidos por los alumnos hasta el momento. Así mismo, contribuir a la comunidad inmersa en la enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros con actividades que fomenten el aprendizaje significativo de una manera dinámica.

**Palabras claves:** Técnica visual, léxico, enseñanza, aprendizaje significativo.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

En la actualidad en México el aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero se ha vuelto sin duda indispensable debido a que este país es parte del mundo globalizado y va expandiendo internacionalmente sus horizontes en el comercio, educación, cultura, etc., es decir, la globalización al ser considerada como un proceso de interacción e integración entre la gente, las empresas y los gobiernos de diferentes naciones, conlleva a que los jóvenes mexicanos adquieran un idioma extranjero y cuenten con las herramientas que les ayuden a ser agentes competitivos en los ámbitos laborales, académicos y personales.

Para que los jóvenes de nuestro país sean competitivos en los ámbitos mencionados anteriormente, es primordial que los programas de estudios de idiomas extranjeros tanto a nivel primaria, medio superior y superior desarrollen en los aprendices competencias lingüísticas que les ayuden a comunicarse, es decir, que unifiquen los conocimientos, habilidades y actitudes para que sean capaces de comprender, transformar y actuar en el mundo actual. El Centro de Idiomas región Boca del Río de la universidad pública del estado de Veracruz, Universidad Veracruzana, se suma a esta tarea colosal, formando estudiantes competentes interesados en adquirir los conocimientos, las habilidades y las actitudes necesarias para el dominio de una lengua extranjera y el manejo de la diversidad lingüístico-cultural, la cual es reflejada de manera competitiva en los ámbitos laboral y social.

No obstante, se ha podido observar que durante nuestra labor docente de los idiomas inglés e italiano básico en Centro de Idiomas se necesita fortalecer la competencia léxica, para que ésta a su vez genere una competencia lingüística entre los aprendices. Así mismo, se ha identificado que uno de los factores cruciales en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del léxico de dichos idiomas es el uso de técnicas apropiadas para la enseñanza. Por lo consiguiente, el presente documento es un trabajo de investigación en fase inicial que se refiere al tema del fortalecimiento de la competencia léxica de los idiomas inglés e italiano a través de la técnica visual. El planteamiento del problema está basado en la siguiente pregunta ¿Cómo se puede fortalecer la competencia léxica de los idiomas inglés e italiano para que el alumno sea capaz de desarrollar su competencia lingüística de dichos idiomas?

La investigación de esta problemática se realizó por el interés de conocer si realmente la competencia léxica de los alumnos de inglés básico 1 (IBAS100) y los alumnos de italiano (OBAS 100) se fortalece mediante la técnica visual y los vuelve más competentes lingüísticamente. Por otro lado, también tiene la finalidad de concientizar a los profesores inmersos en la enseñanza de idiomas y a los alumnos a utilizar dicha técnica para el incremento de léxico, proponer clases más dinámicas y difundir el conocimiento alcanzado por los alumnos. Este proyecto de investigación está enfocado en tres fases. En la primera se pretende demostrar que los estudiantes adquieren léxico simple o compuesto, en la segunda el estudiante aprende expresiones fijas y semi-fijas y en la tercera el estudiante aprende colocaciones.

## **JUSTIFICACIÓN**

Nation (1990) señala *“Vocabulary is now recognized as central to any language acquisition process, native or non-native”* por lo tanto, dentro del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de cualquier idioma extranjero es primordial que el aprendiz maneje vocabulario para el desarrollo lingüístico y competencia léxica; que los docentes utilicen técnicas efectivas y apropiadas en la enseñanza del mismo las cuales favorezcan el aprendizaje y a la vez éstas generen ambientes propicios para la producción del idioma extranjero.

Durante nuestra labor docente en el Centro de Idiomas región Veracruz de la Universidad Veracruzana a través de los resultados de evaluaciones se ha podido identificar que los alumnos que cursan IBAS100 y OBAS100 presentan un léxico insuficiente para poder expresar información oral y/o escrita en un nivel básico, el cual de acuerdo con el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas (MCER) el estudiante es capaz de comprender y utilizar expresiones cotidianas de uso muy frecuente, así como frases sencillas destinadas a satisfacer necesidades de tipo inmediato. Por tal motivo, esta investigación tiene como finalidad ayudar a los alumnos que presentan esta problemática a incrementar su léxico mediante la técnica de ayuda visual, para que a su vez lleguen a tener una mejor competencia lingüística. Por otro lado, esta investigación pretende aportar información de los resultados a la comunidad de profesores del idioma inglés e italiano que enseñen en el área básica para que sea modelo de una mejor técnica de enseñanza de vocabulario y así se contribuya a la mejora de las clases para hacerlas más dinámicas y motivacionales para los alumnos.

## **MARCO TEÓRICO**

### *Las técnicas de aprendizaje*

Las primeras escuelas, las griegas, son la cuna de los primeros métodos o técnicas de aprendizaje, las primeras formas de presentar el saber de aquella época, a través de la comunicación, del intercambio entre los pueblos. Las técnicas de aprendizaje han estado presentes desde que el hombre empezó a adquirir conocimiento, a reflexionar y a filosofar. Cuando el individuo experimenta el proceso de aprendizaje se enfrenta también a ciertas técnicas que le son útiles en todo su camino para llegar a un aprendizaje significativo. (Flores, 2004).

Las técnicas de acuerdo con Brown son las actividades específicas manifiestas en el salón de clases que son consistentes con un plan (método) y por lo tanto en armonía con un enfoque. (Brown 2001). Mientras que Bernardo et al (2011) las definen como una serie de herramientas que ayudan a mejorar el aprendizaje y rendimiento académico, las cuales, al ponerse en práctica, agilizan, dinamizan y, sobre todo, facilitan el conocimiento y su retención. Las estrategias, técnicas y medios de aprendizaje que se planifican de acuerdo con las necesidades de la población a la cual van dirigidas, los objetivos que persiguen y la naturaleza de las áreas y cursos, tienen la finalidad de hacer más efectivo el proceso del aprendizaje.

Las técnicas y estrategias son herramientas de vital importancia dentro del aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero, de acuerdo con Oxford (1990), quien desarrolló una taxonomía de estrategias para el aprendizaje de una lengua (*Strategies Inventory for Language Learning, SILL*), estas son pasos tomados por los estudiantes para formar su aprendizaje. A su vez, Gu (2003) considera las estrategias como una serie de acciones que el estudiante decide llevar a cabo para facilitar su aprendizaje. Además, agrega que

las estrategias empiezan cuando el aprendiz analiza la tarea y la situación, haciéndolas viables en su repertorio.

Desde este punto de vista, para Jones (1995) las estrategias de aprendizaje utilizadas para un idioma no van en contra de las técnicas, sino considera que existe una estrecha relación entre ambas. Jones (1995) define las estrategias como las encargadas de establecer lo necesario para resolver bien la tarea del estudio y las que determinan las técnicas más adecuadas a utilizar. Mientras que las técnicas son las responsables de la realización directa del aprendizaje, a través de procedimientos concretos.

### *Técnica visual*

Según Magaña (2011) la técnica visual es aquella que está relacionada con todo lo que ven los estudiantes, utiliza recursos visuales tales como imágenes, cuadros y diagramas. Es una técnica eficaz utilizada en la enseñanza del léxico porque fomenta la memorización de las palabras de manera significativa, principalmente aquellas palabras como los sustantivos, adjetivos calificativos, adverbios de modo y verbos.

French opina que dentro de esta técnica se pueden utilizar varios materiales visuales como son los objetos físicos (realias). Estos objetos reales (realias) son de gran utilidad cuando se quiere enseñar léxico concreto a los alumnos de nivel básico. También, los dibujos o pinturas pueden ser utilizados dentro de esta técnica para presentar el vocabulario tanto concreto como abstracto. (French, 1983).

Sin embargo, trabajar con imágenes puede tener algunas limitaciones. Magaña (2011) afirma que es posible que los alumnos se preocupen demasiado por la imagen y se olviden de la palabra en sí, explica que quizá si la palabra que deben aprender es “run”, solamente se van a enfocar en la cara de la persona que está corriendo haciendo un lado el significado. Por tal motivo sugiere que es mejor darles las palabras escritas, para que el propósito sea bien claro.

De la misma manera, Nation menciona la importancia de determinar el significado de una imagen, para que no haya diferentes maneras de interpretarla, es decir; es muy importante que las imágenes sean claras y precisas. Sin embargo, puntualiza que no es fácil encontrar una imagen que corresponda a una sola palabra. Por ejemplo, una persona que está comiendo puede representar diferentes palabras de varias categorías gramaticales: hombre, comer, delicioso, verduras, etc. (Nation 2001).

La técnica visual ha sido recuperada por los seguidores y practicantes del método de Respuesta Física Total (*Total Physical Response- TPR*) la cual promueve la inmersión inicial en una gran cantidad de información comprensible mientras se hace uso del entorno inmediato del salón de clases, y de las cosas que se pueden introducir en el aula. Una lección siguiendo este método requiere que el profesor demuestre acciones, use objetos reales, dibujos para que luego los aprendices respondan siguiendo ciertos

comandos. Los diferentes autores antes mencionados coinciden en que la técnica visual es representada mediante diferentes herramientas o recursos visuales tales como dibujos, ilustraciones, tarjetas, murales, diapositivas, realias, entre otros; para la enseñanza del nuevo léxico.

Al respecto, Cuesta (2009) indica que estas herramientas no solo pueden enseñar vocabulario nuevo, sino también ayudan a practicar el léxico previo, puesto que estimulan los principios básicos de la memoria visual. Tornberg (2009) afirma que las asociaciones fomentan la memorización de palabras, según este autor es muy importante que los alumnos puedan relacionar la nueva palabra con sus conocimientos anteriores. De esa manera pueden recordar la palabra durante más tiempo.

### *Léxico*

Partiendo de la pregunta de qué es el léxico, podríamos encontrarnos con un sinfín de definiciones y posturas, desde el significado de la real academia española, la cual define al léxico como:

1. *adj. Perteneciente o relativo al léxico (vocabulario de un idioma o región).*
2. *adj. Ling. Que expresa contenidos o conceptos propios del léxico, por oposición a los característicos de la gramática.*
3. *m. Diccionario de una lengua.*
4. *m. Vocabulario, conjunto de las palabras de un idioma, o de las que pertenecen al uso de una región, a una actividad determinada, a un campo semántico dado, etc.*
5. *m. Conjunto de voces, modismos y giros característicos de un autor o de una obra.*

Durante la década de los 90 comienza a gestarse lo que más adelante sería uno de los abordajes más innovadores y característicos de estos tiempos en el ámbito de la enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Los lineamientos más importantes del enfoque léxico son definidos por el conocido lingüista británico Michael Lewis en 1993, bajo su obra titulada *The Lexical Approach. The State of ELT and a Way Forward*, en donde dice que el léxico consiste en el aprendizaje no solo de palabras o vocabulario aislado, sino en el aprendizaje de bloques prefabricados de palabras (*chunks*) y en donde la idea principal es lograr la fluidez y la naturalidad en la comunicación gracias a la adquisición de segmentos léxicos, pues son enunciados lingüísticos empleados por nativos. Así, Lewis (1993) propone enseñar estos segmentos léxicos desde niveles iniciales para que a medida que los aprendientes avancen en el conocimiento de la lengua extranjera sean capaces de separar dichos segmentos léxicos, reconocerlos y usarlos para otros segmentos.

### *Aprendizaje significativo*

El aprendizaje es un proceso mediante el cual el sujeto, a través de la experiencia, la manipulación de objetos, la interacción con las personas genera o construye conocimiento, modificando, en forma activa sus esquemas cognoscitivos del mundo que lo rodea, mediante el proceso de asimilación y acomodación. No obstante, lo que realmente importa es tener un aprendizaje significativo, el cual según el teórico norteamericano David Ausubel (1978), es el tipo de aprendizaje en donde un estudiante relaciona la información nueva con la que ya posee, reajustando y reconstruyendo ambas informaciones en este proceso. Dicho de otro modo, la estructura de los conocimientos previos condiciona los nuevos conocimientos y experiencias, y éstos, a su vez, modifican y reestructuran aquellos. Este concepto y teoría están enmarcados en el marco de la psicología constructivista.

Siguiendo la idea que menciona Ausubel acerca del aprendizaje, Nation (1990), menciona que el estudiante tiene que enfrentarse a la adquisición de palabras nuevas (léxico) o conjunto de palabras como lo menciona Lewis (1993) por medio de un aprendizaje significativo, ya que tanto estudiantes como maestros ven al léxico como un elemento importante en el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua.

### *Competencia léxica*

La enseñanza del léxico tiene como finalidad que las unidades léxicas pasen a la competencia comunicativa o lingüística del individuo, dado el valor del vocabulario como elemento estructurador del pensamiento (función simbólica) y su necesidad para la interacción social (función comunicativa), tal como manifiesta French (1983) Es evidente que el léxico es el componente lingüístico que mejor comprende el conocimiento del mundo y la competencia comunicativa de un hablante porque, como indican Ogden y Richards (1954), el lenguaje es un medio para conseguir objetivos y para simbolizar relaciones.

El dominio del léxico de una lengua puede observarse en cuatro componentes:

1. Competencia gramatical (lexicología, morfología y semántica, relaciones entre los signos y sus referentes, formación de palabras, elección de palabras para expresar significados específicos, etc.)

2. Competencia sociolingüística (conocimiento de las reglas socioculturales de uso, adecuación de la forma al contexto sociolingüístico, interpretar los enunciados por su significado social, interpretar el lenguaje figurado).

3. Competencia discursiva (combinación de significados para lograr un texto hablado o escrito en diferentes géneros).

4. Competencia estratégica (estrategias verbales y no verbales para compensar las deficiencias en la comunicación real debidas a limitaciones o a incapacidades

momentáneas -gramaticales, sociolingüísticas, discursivas-, y también para aumentar o realzar el efecto retórico de los enunciados).

Así mismo es importante mencionar factores que pueden facilitar o limitar la competencia léxica, por ejemplo, Thornbury (2008) menciona que hay factores como pronunciación, ortografía, longitud, complejidad, gramática, significado, connotación e idiomática los cuales están inmersos en la competencia léxica. Nation también afirma que el aprendizaje de nuevo vocabulario de una lengua extranjera es todo el tiempo influenciado por el primer idioma, causando en muchos de los casos un efecto de “fosilización” esto es que los estudiantes siempre mantienen el significado de la primera lengua para el significado de la palabra nueva sin darse cuenta de que quizá la palabra tenga un significado diferente debido al contexto. Un ejemplo de ello es cuando se cuestiona a los estudiantes: “what are you like?” y confunden la palabra “like” con el verbo gustar. A lo que Folse (2004) menciona que efectivamente la polisemia es un factor esencial de estudio para todos los alumnos de una lengua extranjera, ya que la mayoría de las palabras polisémicas o significado múltiple tienen que ser aprendidas bajo un cierto contexto, puesto que si no se hace de esa manera se interpretan erróneamente.

Por otro lado, si el estudiante es limitado en vocabulario en su propio idioma esto hace que no se aventure a descubrir y aprender nuevas palabras en el idioma extranjero. Estudiantes con un nivel de competencia bajo tienden a relacionar el vocabulario de acuerdo al sonido de las palabras, por ejemplo, tienden a conectar palabras con sonido similar como *horse* y *house*, además tienden a relacionar sonidos del idioma materno con el idioma a aprender, por ejemplo, *actually* y *actualmente*, lo cual causa problemas de aprendizaje puesto que los alumnos confunden el significado. (Nation 1990).

Con respecto a la pronunciación Thornbury (2008) comenta que las palabras con sonido desconocido o no familiar para los estudiantes son las que mayormente cuestan trabajo de aprender, así como las que son difíciles al pronunciar. En cuanto a la ortografía de la palabra comenta que parece ser uno de los factores que contribuye a que una palabra se dificulte debido a que hay muchas irregularidades, por ejemplo, las palabras que contienen letras silenciosas tales como: *know*, *pneumonia*, *tomb*, etc.

En este sentido, Folse (2004) indica que el idioma inglés tiene una correlación baja entre las letras y el sonido, lo que hace que muchas palabras se escriban y pronuncien erróneamente. Esto es especialmente cierto cuando el inglés es comparado con idiomas como el español o japonés en donde la pronunciación es consistente con la ortografía de la palabra. Así mismo conocer la ortografía de la palabra es bastante desafiante para estudiantes de la L2, puesto que una letra puede tener diferentes sonidos, un ejemplo de ello es la letra *a* que puede ser pronunciada en cinco diferentes modos: *cat* /æ/, *at* e *r/a*, *lawn* /ɔ/, *cake* /eɪ/, *inter al* /ə/ [sc w a]. (Folse, 2004).

Thornbury (2008) en su libro *How to teach vocabulary* menciona que las palabras más largas parecen ser las palabras problemáticas para los estudiantes a diferencia de

las palabras cortas, puesto que las palabras cortas son más usadas, es decir, las palabras cortas son frecuentes en la comunicación del estudiante y favorecen la capacidad de su aprendizaje.

Para Folse (2004) la frecuencia es muy importante en la competencia lingüística debido a que hace que el estudiante adquiera la palabra con facilidad, efecto contrario al no tener la frecuencia adecuada, ya que sin ella la palabra jamás se adquiere. Por ejemplo, las palabras *starving*, *ravenous* y *famished* pueden significar lo mismo, no obstante, una de ellas es la más común por su uso frecuente dependiendo el contexto.

Nation (1990) también considera la frecuencia del uso de palabras para el desarrollo de la competencia léxica. Menciona que un estudiante puede obtener el aprendizaje de una palabra por la frecuencia en que se usa en los textos, en las lecciones de clases, en su lengua materna y por su frecuencia en sí, es decir, cuando un maestro utiliza una palabra demasiadas veces ésta tiene un impacto en el estudiante. Así mismo comparte la opinión de Thornbury (2008) con respecto a que las palabras cortas son las más utilizadas, y comenta que en inglés las palabras monosílabas tales como: *big*, *run*, *can*, *bag*, etc son usualmente las más frecuentes.

Otro factor que Nation (1990) puntualiza es el caso de la adecuación o la inadecuación de la palabra, lo cual se da cuando el estudiante de la lengua extranjera utiliza una palabra inadecuada para el contexto en que se desenvuelve la comunicación, por ejemplo, cuando utiliza una palabra descontinuada o anticuada en vez de una actualizada o una informal en vez de una formal. El significado de la palabra es un elemento más que atender cuando se aprende léxico. Cuando dos palabras como en el caso de *make* y *do* tienen el mismo significado puede ser causa de un mal aprendizaje, o al contrario cuando una palabra tiene muchos significados también puede causar dificultades puesto que el estudiante asocia esa palabra con un solo significado y le es complicado aceptar el segundo o tercer significado totalmente diferente. (Thornbury, 2008).

Davies (2000) menciona que a pesar de que el aprender léxico puede ser una tarea gratificante para el estudiante y pareciera un asunto simple a primera vista, no obstante, es un trabajo arduo y desafiante, ya que mientras que la gramática pareciera ser finita el léxico es virtualmente infinito. Mantener cientos y después miles de palabras y frases activas para la comunicación en los estudiantes de una lengua extranjera es una labor complicada, debido a que veces tienen que hacer un esfuerzo en memorizarse las palabras o frases que raramente utilizan en una comunicación real pero que serán evaluadas en las próximas pruebas, lo cual hace que alumno se sienta desmotivado por aprender un vocabulario descontextualizado con sus intereses.

### *Competencia lingüística*



El concepto de competencia lingüística, lexicón mental o léxico mental utilizado por Chomsky es definido como un sistema de reglas que, interiorizadas por el individuo, conforman sus conocimientos verbales (expresión) y le permiten entender un número infinito de enunciados lingüísticos (comprensión) (Chomsky 1965), es decir, es el conjunto de conocimientos que permiten al hablante de una lengua el comprender y producir una cantidad, potencialmente infinita de oraciones gramaticalmente correctas, con una cantidad finita de elementos.

Para Padilla et al (2008) la competencia en comunicación lingüística se refiere a la utilización del lenguaje como instrumento de comunicación oral y escrita, de representación, interpretación y comprensión de la realidad, de construcción y de comunicación del conocimiento y como instrumento de organización y de autorregulación del pensamiento, de las emociones y de la conducta, y la cual tiene como objetivo final el dominio de la lengua oral y escrita en numerosos contextos.

## **PREGUNTAS DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

### *Pregunta Central*

¿Cómo se puede fortalecer la competencia léxica del idioma inglés e italiano para que el alumno sea capaz de desarrollar su competencia lingüística del mismo idioma?

### *Interrogantes del estudio*

- ¿Juega un papel importante el léxico en el aprendizaje de un idioma?
- ¿Tener léxico extenso y diverso es esencial para el dominio de una lengua extranjera (inglés/ italiano)?
- ¿Cómo aprenden las palabras y frases los alumnos?
- ¿Qué estilos de aprendizaje prefieren los estudiantes?
- ¿Qué tipo de estudiantes hay en las clases?
- ¿Qué tipo de técnica es la que utilizan los alumnos para aprender léxico?
- ¿Qué propósito tiene la técnica visual?
- ¿Tener técnicas para aprender léxico es de ayuda para los alumnos?
- ¿Las clases de idiomas se vuelven significativas con ayuda de diversas técnicas para aprender léxico?
- ¿Los alumnos con léxico extenso y diverso son más competentes lingüísticamente hablando que los que carecen de este?

## **HIPÓTESIS**

Alumnos de inglés e italiano básico fortalecen su competencia léxica mediante la técnica visual haciéndolos más competentes lingüísticamente.

## **MÉTODO**

El Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Veracruzana región Veracruz se encuentra situado en la ciudad de Boca del Río, Veracruz, México. Fue fundado en octubre de 1980 y actualmente ofrece cursos de diferentes lenguas extranjeras entre las cuales están: alemán, inglés, italiano, francés y chino, además cursos de comprensión de Textos en inglés, los cuales son ofertados en una amplia variedad de horarios. A su vez, el Centro de Idiomas funge como sede de algunos exámenes de certificación internacional en lenguas.

El centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Veracruzana región Veracruz cuenta con una población de 3,125 estudiantes. Entre los cuales 1000 pertenecen a unos de los programas de licenciatura de la Universidad Veracruz y los 2000 restantes son alumnos considerados público externo. Cabe mencionar que este tipo de estudiantes son profesionistas, amas de casa, jubilados alumnos de último semestre de bachillerato o alumnos que sólo se dedican al estudio de un idioma extranjero. El 90% de los estudiantes pertenece a un nivel socioeconómico medio-bajo a medio, y el 10 % un nivel medio - alto.

La muestra que se seleccionó para esta investigación está constituida por dos grupos. El grupo de italiano básico 100 el cual cuenta con 20 estudiantes, 14 mujeres y 6 hombres cuyas edades fluctúan entre los 17 y 65 años. El horario de clase de este grupo es de 10:15 a 11:30 horas de lunes a jueves. El segundo grupo corresponde a un nivel básico 100 de inglés, cuyos integrantes son 18 mujeres y 2 hombres. El horario de este grupo es de 9:00 a 10:15. Dentro de este grupo, existen 13 individuos que estudian un programa de licenciatura de la Universidad Veracruzana, el resto son personas pertenecientes a público en general, cuyas edades están comprendidas entre los 30 y los 50 años. El procedimiento de muestreo que se realizó en esta investigación es no probabilístico, se seleccionaron estos alumnos debido a que por medio del ejercicio diario frente a grupo nos percatamos que los estudiantes no adquirían el vocabulario nuevo.

La primera fase de la investigación, enseñar léxico simple y compuesto por medio de la técnica visual, se inició en febrero de 2017 y se concluyó en agosto de 2017. La investigación es de tipo cuasi experimental y el enfoque utilizado en esta investigación fue el método cuantitativo y cualitativo. Las técnicas de investigación fueron observaciones, exámenes (pre-test y un post-test) y encuestas. Las observaciones que se hicieron fueron de participantes, en donde se formó parte activa del grupo que se estudió con el fin de saber el nivel de léxico que poseían los alumnos, y por lo consiguiente se tuvo una visión más clara de lo que sucedió en el grupo, ya que los miembros se comportaron normalmente al no saberse sujetos de estudio.

Con respecto los exámenes estos fueron formatos redactados en forma de interrogatorio en donde se obtuvo información acerca de las variables a investigar. Primeramente, se les aplicó un pre- examen (pre-test) con diez palabras de léxico concreto previamente seleccionado, léxico no común para ellos, utilizando la técnica

auditiva como contraste. Posteriormente se aplicó el post-examen (*post-test*) con las mismas características del *pre-test*, léxico concreto y mismo número de reactivos utilizando la técnica visual.

La tercera técnica, fue la encuesta, la que consiste en obtener información acerca de una parte de la población o muestra, mediante el uso del cuestionario o de la entrevista. Su objeto puede variar, desde recopilar información para definir el problema hasta obtener información para probar una hipótesis. Se aplicó una encuesta con formato de cuestionario a la muestra, para saber las opiniones de los alumnos con respecto a la técnica visual y si ésta durante toda la investigación cumplió con su cometido, fortalecer la competencia léxica del inglés e italiano de los alumnos de nivel básico del Centro de Idiomas. Los datos fueron analizados de manera cuantitativa y cualitativa.

## CONCLUSIONES

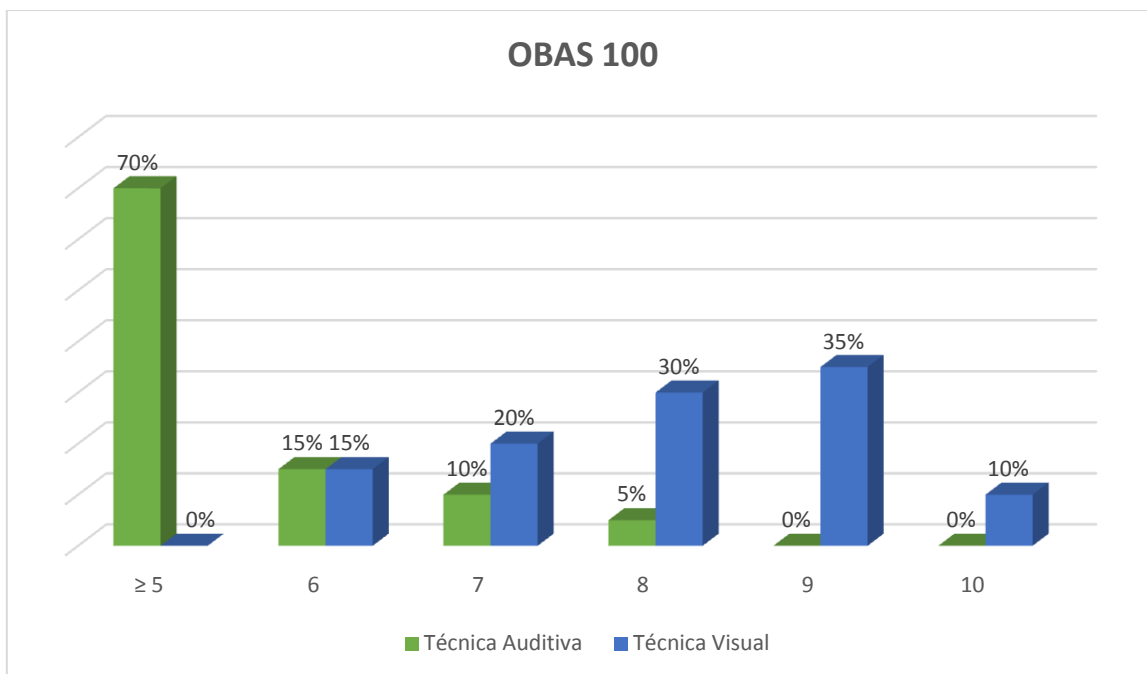
Puesto a que la investigación está en su fase inicial, aun no es posible llegar a conclusiones que comprueben o rechacen la hipótesis planteada, solo se cuenta con los resultados de la fase uno, en donde se encontró que los estudiantes tienen una preferencia por la técnica visual en comparación a la técnica auditiva puesto que los resultados del pos-test muestran un incremento de aciertos, los cuales fueron comprobados mediante la prueba de t de Student.

## RESULTADOS

Muestra: 20 alumnos

Grupo: OBAS 100

Calificación	% de alumnos Técnica auditiva	% de alumnos Técnica visual
≥ 5	70	0
6	15	15
7	10	20
8	5	30
9	0	25
10	0	10

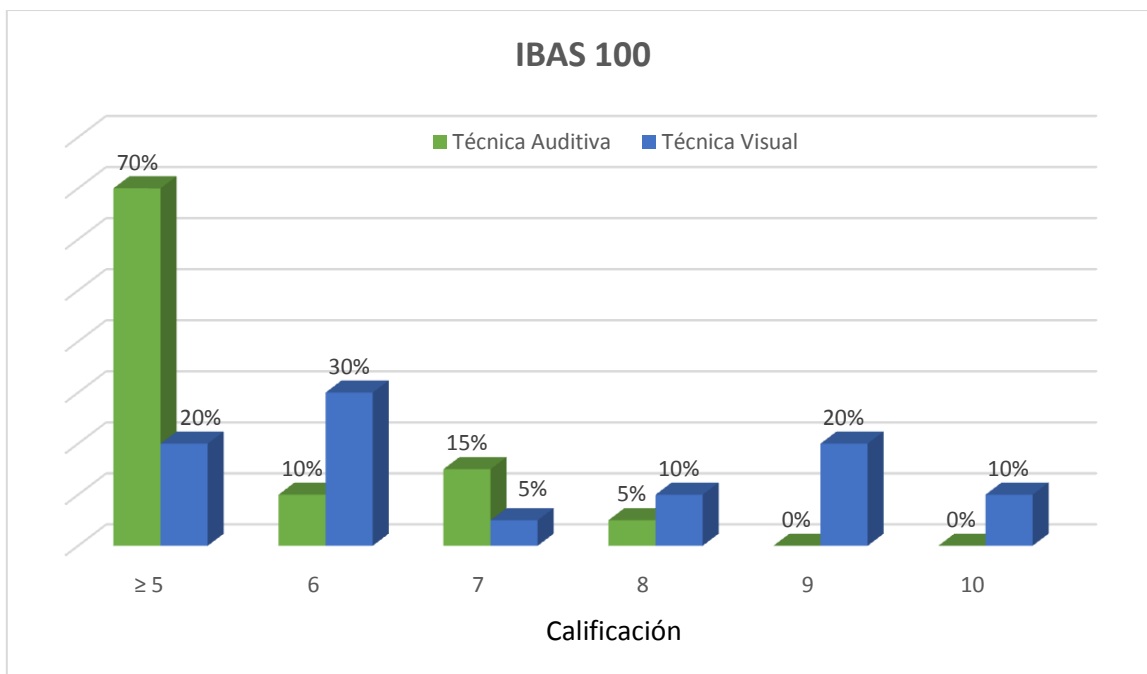


## RESULTADOS

Muestra: 20 alumnos

Grupo: IBAS 100

Calificación	% de alumnos Técnica auditiva	% de alumnos Técnica visual
≥ 5	70%	20
6	10	30
7	15	5
8	5	10
9	0	20
10	0	15



De la misma manera por medio de los resultados de la encuesta se concluye que los alumnos se sintieron más a gusto con la técnica visual debido a que expresaron haber aprendido el léxico con más facilidad por imágenes ya que estas los ayudaban a relacionar, interpretar o tener una idea del contexto, caso contrario a cuando les explicábamos los conceptos. Además, las imágenes les permitían pensar más sin traducir a la lengua materna.

Sin embargo, se puntualiza que, si bien se encontraron aspectos positivos al usar imágenes como herramientas para el aprendizaje de léxico tales como interés en la palabra y la clase, retención de esta, estimulación de la imaginación, también se encontró que no todas las imágenes fueron óptimas para enseñar el léxico que habíamos seleccionado. Hubo imágenes que les parecieron confusas a los estudiantes y algunas otras más no daban el significado a enseñar, de igual manera hubo una limitación de léxico con relación a la imagen, es decir, los estudiantes insistían en relacionar la imagen a determinadas palabras sin generar nuevas ideas.

Por lo antes mencionado se pretende que estas observaciones den pauta para mejorar en la segunda fase de la investigación, la cual se llevará a cabo para finales de noviembre abarcando el periodo intersemestral de invierno diciembre 2017- enero 2018, en donde se pretende enseñar léxico de expresiones fijas y semifija.

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# EL ENFOQUE BASADO EN TAREAS Y EL PNIEB

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## RESUMEN

El Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB) es más que un documento. Constituye un referente sui generis en el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa en el contexto público mexicano. Ello se debe a que su estructura plantea toda una teoría de la lengua y del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Asimismo, ofrece una guía metodológica para su aplicación en clase. Del mismo modo, brinda sugerencias para efectuar la evaluación del desarrollo de competencias comunicativas en los estudiantes. Sin embargo, su operatividad ha experimentado diversas vicisitudes. Entre ellas se encuentran las metodologías que los docentes han empleado para la enseñanza del inglés. Estas ideas son discutidas a lo largo del presente documento en el cual se presenta, en primera instancia, un panorama de la enseñanza del inglés hasta el 2011. Asimismo, se exponen las condiciones necesarias para operar efectivamente el PNIEB. En un segundo momento, se exponen concepciones teóricas y metodológicas sobre la lengua, su aprendizaje, la organización de contenidos desde el diseño de secuencias de actividades bajo el enfoque basado en tareas y procedimientos de evaluación de competencias. La finalidad del presente documento es que tanto investigadores educativos del área de enseñanza y aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa en el contexto mexicano como profesores de educación básica cuenten con bases teóricas necesarias para poder analizar el cómo se ejecutan las prácticas docentes al implementar el PNIEB en el aula.

**Palabras clave:** PNIEB, metodología, evaluación, teoría del aprendizaje, secuencia didáctica, Enfoque Basado en Tareas

## INTRODUCCIÓN

El Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB por sus siglas) ha representado un verdadero desafío para los docentes de inglés de educación básica. Ello se debe a diversos factores. El primero se refiere a las condiciones de operación de dicho programa. Sobre todo en educación básica, donde ha mostrado distintas inconsistencias en su operatividad e implementación en el aula. Un segundo desafío es la estructura metodológica bajo la cual se constituye.

La metodología bajo la cual se fundamenta el PNIEB suele ser compleja. Esto se debe a que en su conformación confluyen, al menos, tres perspectivas o nociones del aprendizaje de lenguas: el enfoque comunicativo-funcional, el enfoque del aprendizaje basado en tareas y una noción socio-interactiva del aprendizaje de la lengua (Mejía,



Briseño y Cardoso, 2014). Tales perspectivas –o nociones- sobre el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera resultan, la mayoría de las veces, incomprensible para los profesores de educación básica, razón por la cual es necesario proporcionar a tales docentes un acercamiento teórico-metodológico que les permita diseñar situaciones de aprendizaje acordes a las necesidades de sus alumnos.

Para comenzar este estudio, se aborda un somero recorrido histórico por el panorama mexicano de la enseñanza del inglés hasta el año 2011 en el cual se publicó el PNIEB para secundaria. Posteriormente, se continúa con una revisión de las condiciones ideales para lograr los objetivos que el PNIEB se plantea –desarrollar y consolidar las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes a través de prácticas sociales del lenguaje-. Enseguida se desarrollan los aspectos curriculares imbricados en el PNIEB, así como la teoría de la lengua y del aprendizaje que subyacen. Del mismo modo se explican los constructos *prácticas sociales del lenguaje* y *competencias específicas*. Esta sección concluye con un abordaje teórico sobre la metodología del aprendizaje basado en tareas y el diseño de situaciones de aprendizaje. El documento finaliza recapitulando los aspectos más sobresalientes abordados en esta revisión teórica sobre el PNIEB y el enfoque basado en tareas.

## **JUSTIFICACIÓN**

### *Panorama de la Enseñanza del Inglés en México al 2011*

La enseñanza del idioma inglés en México se ha desarrollado desde hace más de ochenta años. De acuerdo con la Subsecretaría de Planeación y Evaluación de Políticas Educativas (2015), la enseñanza del inglés en secundaria es obligatoria desde 1926. Lamentablemente, no se tiene datos de un seguimiento histórico documentado que dé cuenta de las transformaciones en la enseñanza del inglés que hayan ocurrido desde aquél entonces hasta el año 1975 (Latapí, 1975). En tal virtud, sólo se procede a mencionar algunas transformaciones relevantes en cuanto a la enseñanza del inglés a nivel currículo, desde el año 1958 hasta 1975.

Para dar cuenta de ello, Latapí menciona que en el sexenio 1958-1964 se emprendió una revisión de los planes y programas de estudio *por áreas de conocimiento*. En tal virtud, con el propósito de que la educación contribuyese al desarrollo socioeconómico de aquella época, se modernizó la estructura curricular de la Educación Secundaria. Con ello, la asignatura de Inglés pasó de tener una hora a dos horas a la semana, aunque no se precisa una perspectiva teórica del aprendizaje y de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras (Latapí, 1975).

Para el sexenio 1964-1970, las reformas a los planes y programas de estudio tuvieron una perspectiva pedagógica desde el aprendizaje basado en la acción y la enseñanza mediante la producción de constructos ideológicos o materiales. Sin embargo, nada se menciona en cuanto a la enseñanza del inglés. Para el sexenio 1970-1976, los

planes y programas de estudio establecieron objetivos específicos de aprendizaje a través de la exploración y descubrimiento del conocimiento. Asimismo, estableció mecanismos para acreditar conocimientos adquiridos. Sin embargo, no hace mención alguna sobre la enseñanza del inglés (Latapí, 1975).

Información escasa se tiene con respecto a programas de inglés para el periodo 1982-1988. La única información disponible proviene de Mejía, Briseño y Cardoso (2014) quienes mencionan que el programa de inglés de 1982 tenía como objetivo que los estudiantes conocieran los aspectos formales de la lengua con el propósito de leer literatura en inglés. Ello bajo la creencia que el lenguaje literario era superior al hablado. Para que los alumnos alcanzasen dicho objetivo, ellos debían conocer y memorizar las reglas gramaticales y el vocabulario de la lengua que estaban aprendiendo –inglés-, a fin de traducir textos literarios.

Una parte aguas en los planes y programas de estudio se originó en el sexenio 1988-1994. Particularmente, el 18 de mayo de 1992, “se firmó el Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica (ANMEB), mediante el cual el gobierno federal, a través de la SEP, transfirió a los gobiernos de los estados los servicios de educación básica” (Zorrilla y Barba, 2008, p.7). Esta transferencia de los servicios educativos a los estados permitió que diseñaran e implementaran sus propios programas de inglés para educación básica –algunos con un énfasis en necesidades regionales como en los estados fronterizos-(Subsecretaría de Planeación y Evaluación de Políticas Educativas, 2015).

En esta reforma - conocida como reforma del 93-, particularmente en el nivel Secundaria, se reorganizó el currículo por asignaturas y se empezó a distribuir materiales a los maestros como fue el denominado *Libro para el Maestro*. En dicho texto, se esbozaba una guía metodológica para la enseñanza del inglés a adolescentes mexicanos. Del mismo modo, se estableció en el currículo nacional de educación secundaria el pasar de dos a tres horas a la semana de instrucción en Lengua Extranjera –inglés- (Latapí, 2004; Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1995; Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1993).

El programa de Lengua Extranjera Inglés establece que el propósito de la enseñanza de dicha lengua es que el alumno “la utilice como instrumento de comunicación; es decir, que tenga la posibilidad de adquirir conocimientos a través de ella, de comprender y expresar ideas, sentimientos y experiencias y no solo la considere objeto de estudio” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1993, p. 130). Para lograr tal objetivo, el enfoque metodológico para la enseñanza del inglés fue el comunicativo. Dicho enfoque “traslada la atención de lo que es el lenguaje a lo que se hace con el lenguaje, determinando así los contenidos a enseñar, el papel de los alumnos y del maestro, el tipo de materiales y los procedimientos y técnicas” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1993, p. 132).

Sin embargo, la falta de información referente al nivel mínimo de dominio del idioma con el que debían contar los docentes, la carencia de entrenamiento pedagógico bajo el enfoque comunicativo y las prácticas docentes como la traducción y la repetición en coro han hecho que, desde la implementación del Programa de Lengua Extranjera Inglés 1993 hasta el inicio del nuevo milenio, los estudiantes no sean capaces de desarrollar sus habilidades lingüísticas ni de comunicarse en inglés (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2006). Ante tal situación, en el año 2006 la Secretaría de Educación Pública emprendió una revisión del plan del 93.

Dicha revisión implicó establecer un objetivo de enseñanza contextualizado a la realidad mexicana, así como una descripción más detallada de la metodología de enseñanza. En cuanto al objetivo de enseñanza, se estableció el identificar, practicar y aprender lo que hacen los usuarios expertos de la lengua extranjera para y durante la interpretación y producción de textos orales y escritos, enfatizando la función social de tales actos lingüísticos. De ahí surge que el objeto de estudio son las “prácticas sociales del lenguaje” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2006, p. 109).

En especial, el programa de estudios 2006 Lengua extranjera inglés adoptó una noción del aprendizaje bajo el enfoque del aprendizaje basado en la experiencia. Este enfoque encuentra sus bases en una concepción constructivista del aprendizaje bajo la cual cada individuo –aprendiz- constantemente construye y reconstruye significados a partir de la interpretación de experiencias personales. Por ello, se puede decir que la experiencia personal inmediata es el punto focal del aprendizaje (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2006).

Además, este enfoque permite una organización de los contenidos mediante unidades temáticas agrupadas por bloques a través de los cuales los alumnos desarrollan tres prácticas sociales del lenguaje: “Realizar algunas transacciones básicas, Dar y obtener información factual de tipo personal y no personal; y establecer y mantener contactos sociales” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2006, p. 125). Para poder desarrollar cada práctica social del lenguaje, los estudiantes requieren conocer y desarrollar un cierto número de funciones del lenguaje. Por ejemplo, para la práctica social del lenguaje *Establecer y mantener contactos sociales*, los estudiantes debían desarrollar las funciones del lenguaje *Dar consejos* así como *Hacer y responder sugerencias* (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2006).

Con el presente programa de estudios 2006, se pretendió que los alumnos hayan estudiado, al finalizar tercero de secundaria, un promedio de 270 a 300 horas de inglés, por lo cual deberían haber salido con un nivel A2 del Marco de referencia europeo para el aprendizaje, la enseñanza y la evaluación de lenguas. Sin embargo, los resultados de un estudio emprendido por una organización empresarial mexicana revelaron que cerca de un 80% de alumnos participantes se situó en un nivel inferior al A2. Tan sólo un 6% del total alcanzó el nivel A2. Ello demuestra que los alumnos “no poseen las herramientas

básicas para comunicarse en inglés con base en los estándares nacionales e internacionales plasmados por la SEP” (Székely, O’Donoghue y Pérez, 2015, p.86).

A la par del programa nacional que sólo estructuró la enseñanza del inglés a nivel Secundaria, 21 entidades federativas generaron sus propias propuestas para la enseñanza del inglés a nivel primaria. Sin embargo, al no ser un programa a nivel nacional, provoca que su operación sea heterogénea en cuanto a cobertura, niveles de logro, contenidos que abordan y horas de clase. Tal situación propicia la necesidad de diseñar programas de estudio para la enseñanza del inglés desde tercer año de preescolar hasta sexto grado de primaria, así como crear las condiciones para operarlos con equidad y calidad en todas las escuelas del país (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a).

Ante tal panorama, a partir del 2009 y hasta el 2011 la Secretaría de Educación Pública empezó a diseñar e implementar el Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB por sus siglas). El objetivo de este programa fue que los estudiantes que concluyeran el tercer año de secundaria, lo hicieran con un dominio de inglés intermedio-nivel B1 de acuerdo con el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCER)-(Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a).

Asimismo, se diseñaron planes y programas de estudio desde tercero de preescolar hasta tercer grado de secundaria. También se incluyeron programas de formación continua y de certificación del dominio del idioma para docentes. Del mismo modo, se desarrolló una innovación sui-generis: la Certificación Nacional de Nivel de Inglés (CENNI). Tal certificación permitió generar equivalencias de los distintos estándares de inglés- equiparables a los propuestos por el MCER- y se determinaron los niveles de conocimiento que los alumnos de educación básica debían tener en cada ciclo del PNIEB. Tal propuesta innovadora resultó acotada al fusionarse con otros programas gubernamentales que conformaron Programa de Fortalecimiento de la Calidad en Educación Básica (Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad, 2015).

A pesar de tan ambicioso programa, los resultados obtenidos por el estudio hasta el año 2015 demuestran que México tiene un sistema de enseñanza del inglés que no ofrece oportunidades significativas de aprendizaje del idioma. Esta aseveración se verifica al momento en que los alumnos no son capaces de poner en práctica en una conversación lo que han estudiado en clase (Mexicanos Primero, 2015). Ante tal situación, se debe plantear cuales son las condiciones mínimas y necesarias para alcanzar los objetivos del PNIEB.

#### *Condiciones necesarias para lograr los objetivos del PNIEB*

Existen tres áreas que las autoridades educativas deben atender para lograr satisfactoriamente implementar el PNIEB. La primera es el desarrollo curricular, la segunda se enfoca en el desarrollo de materiales y la tercera de orienta al desarrollo

profesional del docente de inglés. La primera área, desarrollo curricular, requiere un replanteamiento en cuanto a su alcance. El PNIEB está diseñada para que los alumnos transiten por un camino gradual desde un nivel A0 o Desconocimiento total del idioma hasta que alcancen un nivel B2 o de usuario independiente, de acuerdo con el MCER (Sayer, Mercau y Blanco, 2013).

Sin embargo, se han desarrollado estudios en los cuales se evidencia que los alumnos después de haber dedicado un aproximado de 360 horas a clases de inglés durante su educación básica, “no pueden comunicarse ni por escrito ni de manera oral con sus interlocutores (Székely, O’Donoghue y Pérez, 2015). Ello se debe principalmente a que no existe una continuidad, vinculación y secuencia entre los contenidos de primaria y los de secundaria, aunado a que en el nivel de preescolar y primaria las lecciones de inglés bajo el programa PNIEB tiene un estatus no obligatorio (Ramírez, Pamplón y Cota, 2012). Ante tales condiciones, los alumnos que ingresan a secundaria pública no cuentan con bases sólidas para alcanzar el nivel B2 que el PNIEB señala.

El segundo aspecto se refiere al uso y desarrollo de los materiales didácticos. Para la Secretaría de Educación Pública (2001), se espera que los docentes utilicen en sus clases de inglés textos auténticos; por ejemplo, etiquetas comerciales, cartas, diálogos, entre otros. Sin embargo, también reconoce que se pueden diseñar materiales didácticos cuyo propósito sea social y comunicativo, que estén contextualizados y respondan a modelos de lenguaje auténticos. El diseño y/o adaptación de materiales didácticos –sin incluir el libro de texto- es responsabilidad del docente. Un estudio reciente señala que la formación, capacitación y experiencia de los profesores de inglés no cuentan con las habilidades necesarias para seleccionar, adaptar y diseñar materiales educativos acordes a las necesidades de aprendizaje de los alumnos (Ramírez, Pamplón y Cota, 2012).

El tercer rubro se refiere a la falta de un nivel adecuado en conocimiento, uso y comprensión del idioma por parte del docente, lo que trae como consecuencia que sus estrategias metodológicas de enseñanza propicien que sus alumnos no desarrollen las habilidades necesarias para comunicarse en inglés (Calderón, 2015). Con respecto a estrategias metodológicas, resultados de estudios recientes con profesores de educación básica arrojaron que una carencia fundamental de ellos es el desconocimiento sobre cómo crear ambientes de aprendizaje propicios para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés, así como sobre organización de los contenidos de enseñanza y los aprendizajes esperados (Mejía, Briseño y Cardoso, 2014; Mejía, Briseño y Cardoso, 2013).

Especial énfasis se hace en el docente de inglés. Ello se debe a que en diversos escenarios educativos en nivel básico, es el único actor que sirve como modelo a seguir por los estudiantes. Por tal motivo, resulta fundamental que el docente genere las condiciones necesarias para promover situaciones de comunicación oral y escrita en la que se use el inglés con fines académicos, sociales, literarios y lúdicos (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a). Para ser más específicos, se requiere que el docente conozca

y domine los propósitos y contenidos del nivel educativo donde prestarán sus servicios. Dicho de otro modo, se requiere de un docente que reconozca todos los componentes de la situación educativa en la que está implicado con los alumnos y que sepa adaptarse a dicha situación (González, 2011).

Sin embargo, el reto más importante que el PNIEB le presenta al docente de educación básica es el diseñar, implementar y evaluar situaciones de aprendizaje que propicien en el alumno las capacidades para comunicarse de manera básica en diversas situaciones en las que utilice el lenguaje para organizar su pensamiento y su discurso, para analizar y enfrentar problemas y para manejar diferentes expresiones culturales. Para lograr tales habilidades en el docente, éste tiene que ofrecer muestras modelo de la lengua que enseña; seleccionar y modificar documentos que usará como auxiliares didácticos, a partir de criterios de contenido lingüístico o referencial; así como aplicar evaluaciones formales prestando mayor atención al uso del código o lengua que enseña (Martínez, Killian, Delgado y Brande, 2013).

En síntesis, el desafío que representa la implementación del PNIEB en educación básica es una adecuación a los contenidos curriculares del programa. Se debe tener en cuenta el panorama actual en el cual alumnos que estudian en escuelas primarias públicas no cuentan en su totalidad con suficientes profesores de inglés y que además cuenten con el conocimiento sobre el idioma y la capacitación adecuada en metodologías didácticas para lograr los objetivos del PNIEB. Es por ello que cuando los alumnos llegan a secundaria –en el ámbito público- es casi imposible lograr que desarrollen las habilidades lingüísticas y culturales necesarias para poderse comunicar en inglés con otras personas.

Aunado a la adecuación curricular, el otro reto que enfrenta el profesor de inglés en educación básica es su propio dominio de la lengua inglesa, así como su propia preparación profesional. Como se hizo mención, un docente que no posee suficiente conocimiento sobre la lengua inglesa se encuentra en serias dificultades para poderla enseñar. Del mismo modo, si el docente desconoce los fundamentos teóricos –la perspectiva sobre la lengua inglesa y su enseñanza-, el objetivo de aprendizaje y el enfoque didáctico del diseño de situaciones de aprendizaje, originará que sus alumnos no desarrollen las destrezas, habilidades y actitudes necesarias para comunicarse adecuadamente en inglés con otras personas. Ante tal escenario, es necesario revisar los aspectos curriculares y del enfoque de enseñanza del Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica.

## **DESARROLLO**

### *Aspectos Curriculares del PNIEB*

Un primer aspecto a revisar es el de la Política Lingüística (PL) en la que se inserta el PNIEB. Para entender tal término, conviene revisar la definición de Payne (2007, p. 237

citado en Reyes, Murrieta y Hernández, 2012, p. 171): “la política, planeación, organización y facilitación de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera o segunda lengua”. La PL se refiere al conjunto de acciones encaminadas a establecer condiciones generales para el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. En el caso de México, tales acciones se derivan de los resultados obtenidos en 2006 en el Programa para la Evaluación Internacional de Estudiantes (PISA por sus siglas en inglés) administrado por la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económico –OCDE- (Reyes, Murrieta y Hernández, 2011).

De los resultados obtenidos en tal evaluación, surgen doce recomendaciones que OCDE efectuó al sistema educativo mexicano. Dos de ellas cobran especial importancia: la necesidad de establecer estándares de logro en áreas clave como lectura, aritmética y alfabetización digital; y la de alinear el currículo de éstas para que guarden coherencia en la progresión de un nivel de estudios a otro, así como el diseño de materiales didácticos que las apoyen (Hopkins, Ahtaridou, Matthews y Poster, 2007, citado en Reyes, Murrieta y Hernández, 2011). Dentro de ese contexto, distintos documentos de política educativa mexicana- como el Plan Sectorial de Educación 2007-2012 y el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2010- han considerado la necesidad de reformar, reforzar y articular la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera en toda la educación básica (Reyes, Murrieta y Hernández, 2011).

Para lograr la enseñanza del inglés en toda la educación básica, se identifica como un aspecto necesario el incorporar la asignatura de inglés de una manera articulada a los planes y programas de estudio de la educación básica (desde tercero de preescolar hasta la secundaria). El marco contextual de esta política tuvo como fundamento atender las necesidades de desarrollo de México en un mundo globalizado, en el cual se requiere que los países cuenten con ciudadanos que posean un dominio efectivo del inglés desde edades más tempranas –política más y temprano- (Sayer, Mercáu y Blanco, 2013; Mercáu, Sayer y Blanco, 2012).

Una vez establecida la política educativa en la que se enmarca el PNIEB, se revisan las características del programa PNIEB, así como el propósito de la enseñanza de inglés para la educación básica –con especial énfasis en educación Secundaria-. Para comenzar, el propósito general de la enseñanza del inglés en Educación básica se definió como propiciar las condiciones necesarias para que los alumnos “obtengan los conocimientos necesarios para participar en prácticas sociales del lenguaje -orales y escritas- con hablantes nativos y no nativos del inglés mediante competencias específicas” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a, p.22). Como se puede apreciar, el propósito de la enseñanza del inglés busca que los alumnos desarrollen competencias comunicativas, sociales y culturales a través del aprendizaje del idioma.

De una manera más particular, el propósito de la enseñanza del inglés en educación básica es lograr que los alumnos reconozcan el papel del lenguaje en la construcción del conocimiento y de los valores culturales, además de que desarrollen una

actitud analítica y responsable ante los problemas que afectan al mundo. Para lograr tal propósito, se estructuraron programas de estudio cuyo objetivo es el desarrollo de competencias que conllevan la producción e interpretación de diversos textos orales y escritos –de naturaleza cotidiana, académica y literaria– mediante los cuales los alumnos serán capaces de satisfacer necesidades básicas de comunicación en diversas situaciones cotidianas, familiares y conocidas (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a).

En segundo lugar, se describe grosso modo los propósitos bajo los cuales los programas de estudio se desarrollaron. Los programas de estudio del PNIEB son cuatro y están organizados por ciclos de aprendizaje. El Ciclo 1 comprende de tercer año de preescolar hasta segundo grado de primaria. El propósito central de este ciclo es sensibilizar a los alumnos en relación con el inglés. El Ciclo 2 (tercero y cuarto grado de primaria) persigue que los alumnos obtengan los conocimientos necesarios para comprender y utilizar el inglés para establecer un contacto social básico con su repertorio lingüístico (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a).

El Ciclo 3 abarca quinto y sexto grado de primaria. El propósito de la enseñanza del inglés en este ciclo es que los alumnos desarrollen competencias específicas para desarrollar tareas comunicativas simples y cotidianas sobre temas conocidos o habituales. Finalmente, el Ciclo 4 –que abarca de primero a tercero de secundaria- tiene como propósito que los alumnos consoliden su dominio del inglés en situaciones comunicativas básicas y desarrollen competencias específicas para que comprendan y produzcan, de manera general, textos orales y escritos sobre diversos temas (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a).

Ahora bien, el enfoque pedagógico del PNIEB busca el desarrollo de competencias. Este término se refiere al “conjunto de capacidades que incluye conocimientos, actitudes, habilidades y destrezas que una persona logra mediante procesos de aprendizaje y que se manifiestan en su desempeño en situaciones y contextos diversos” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2004, p.22). En específico, el PNIEB enfatiza tres tipos de saberes relacionados con la lengua inglesa. El primero es *saber hacer* e implica acciones comunicativas en situaciones concretas de interacción. El segundo, *saber sobre la lengua*, significa conocer las propiedades, características y elementos del lenguaje. El tercero es el *saber ser* y está vinculado con las actitudes y valores que permiten la comunicación armónica, tolerante e inclusiva ante la gran diversidad cultural (Martínez, Killian, Delgado y Brande, 2013).

Después de haber revisado el propósito que tiene la enseñanza del inglés en educación básica –lograr que los alumnos mediante el uso de una lengua extranjera construyan su conocimiento y valoren la dimensión cultural que ello implica, así como el enfoque pedagógico bajo el que se sustenta el PNIEB –enfoque bajo el desarrollo de competencias- se analizarán los elementos teóricos que constituyen la visión del uso y aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa. Dicho análisis pretende identificar la definición que el



PNIEB hace sobre la lengua inglesa, así como el enfoque que este programa sugiere para la enseñanza de dicha lengua.

### *Teoría sobre la Lengua y del Aprendizaje*

Para comenzar, se definen los conceptos teoría sobre la lengua y teoría sobre el aprendizaje de lenguas. El primer término se refiere a la percepción sobre cómo se organiza, comporta y funciona una lengua con un propósito en específico. Además, la teoría sobre la lengua influye directamente sobre un método o enfoque de enseñanza (Richards y Rodgers, 2001). Por su parte, la teoría sobre el aprendizaje de lenguas se refiere a los procesos psicolingüísticos y cognitivos incluidos en el aprendizaje de una lengua, así como las condiciones que se deben reunir para que dichos procesos de aprendizaje sean activados (Richards y Rodgers, 2001).

Una vez definidos los términos en cuestión, la teoría de la lengua bajo la que el PNIEB se fundamenta considera a la lengua como un objeto complejo mediante el cual un individuo comprende el mundo y se integra a la sociedad; expresa, intercambia y defiende sus ideas; mantiene sus relaciones interpersonales; accede a la información; participa en la construcción del conocimiento; y que sirve no sólo a propósitos comunicativos, sino también cognitivos y de reflexión sobre su propio proceso de creación discursiva e intelectual. Por lo tanto, ser un usuario competente de la lengua significa ser capaz de interactuar con otros a través de la producción e interpretación de textos orales y escritos con el fin de participar en la sociedad (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011b; Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2006).

Desde la perspectiva teórica sobre la lengua, el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa implica adquirir las convenciones (implícitas) de uso impuestas socialmente y los modos de usarlas en los diversos ámbitos sociales en los que participan las personas para: comunicar y pensar las ideas y los sentimientos; establecer y mantener relaciones con las personas; acceder a la información; construir conocimientos; y organizar el pensamiento (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011b). Además, este enfoque se basa en una perspectiva de la lengua llamada socio-interactiva. Esta perspectiva define al lenguaje como un vehículo para el desarrollo de relaciones interpersonales y para el desarrollo de transacciones sociales entre individuos en contextos ordinarios de actividades cotidianas (Mondada y Doehler, 2004; Richards y Rodgers, 2001).

Dicha percepción sobre la lengua se traduce a una teoría sobre el aprendizaje del inglés. Para el PNIEB, el aprendizaje del inglés se basa en la capacidad de reflexión sobre la lengua y su vínculo con las funciones comunicativas del lenguaje con el propósito de analizar y mejorar la competencia comunicativa de los alumnos. Asimismo, el PNIEB promueve y fomenta la reflexión de las formas lingüísticas del lenguaje, además de sus funciones y usos comunicativos (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a). Dicha percepción se materializa mediante un enfoque metodológico llamado *prácticas sociales del lenguaje*.

Asimismo, una forma de manifestar en el programa de estudios dicho enfoque es a través de la sistematización de competencias específicas con el lenguaje –saber sobre, hacer y ser con el lenguaje- en un contexto social determinado. Dichas competencias se refieren al tratamiento de acciones comunicativas desarrolladas en situaciones concretas de interacción, en las que resalta la función social del lenguaje. Por lo tanto, a través de la participación situada en diversos ambientes sociales se puede desarrollar competencias específicas con el lenguaje (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a). A continuación se aborda a detalle el sustento teórico sobre las prácticas sociales del lenguaje y las competencias específicas.

### *Prácticas Sociales del Lenguaje y Competencias Específicas*

En primer lugar se define el concepto de prácticas sociales del Lenguaje. Para la Secretaría de Educación Pública (2011a, p.28), las prácticas sociales del lenguaje:

[...] son pautas o modos de interacción que, además de la producción o interpretación de textos orales y escritos, incluyen una serie de actividades vinculadas con éstas. Cada práctica está orientada por una finalidad comunicativa y tiene una historia ligada a una situación cultural particular. Por ejemplo, en la actualidad, las prácticas del lenguaje oral que involucran el diálogo son muy variadas. Éste establece o se continúa de acuerdo con las regulaciones sociales y comunicativas de las culturas donde tienen lugar.

Cabe recordar que la percepción del lenguaje como un vehículo de comunicación social proviene de una interpretación Vigotskiana sobre la naturaleza del lenguaje. Es decir, se asume que la naturaleza del lenguaje se encuentra en la sociedad. Esto se debe a que la sociedad establece patrones de comunicación basados en situaciones culturales específicas. De ahí deriva que en el aprendizaje de una lengua es más importante aprender patrones sociales de interacción que solamente contenidos lingüísticos (Sánchez, 2004).

En segundo lugar, las prácticas sociales del lenguaje se enmarcan en una visión del aprendizaje bajo la premisa de construcción social del conocimiento. En otras palabras, los ambientes sociales contribuyen a generar las condiciones para el aprendizaje de una lengua -inglés- porque implican el desarrollo de actividades colectivas que favorecen la participación y el intercambio de información entre iguales a partir de lo que cada uno sabe hacer y necesita aprender para superar con éxito el desafío de comunicarse en inglés con un propósito social específico. Por ello, se puede afirmar que esta perspectiva de aprendizaje de la lengua no considera variedades lingüísticas mejores que otras (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a).

Por otra parte, la manifestación en el programa de estudios de las prácticas sociales del lenguaje se logra mediante el desarrollo de competencias específicas con el lenguaje. Se les concibe como “configuraciones complejas y articuladas de hacer con el lenguaje, saberes sobre el lenguaje y maneras de ser con el lenguaje, cuyo propósito es preservar las funciones que el lenguaje tiene en la vida social y sus aspectos formales” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a, p.29). En otras palabras, constituyen el conjunto de nociones sobre el lenguaje, su uso y las actitudes que se ponen de manifiesto en una situación comunicativa en un contexto social específico –en la familia, en la escuela y en ambientes recreativos-.

Las competencias específicas de saber hacer con el lenguaje corresponden a las acciones comunicativas desarrolladas en situaciones concretas de interacción que implican la producción e interpretación de textos orales y escritos de la manera como lo realiza un hablante competente del inglés al participar con éxito en actividades con el lenguaje situadas en los diversos ámbitos sociales en los que se desenvuelve –familiar, escolar y lúdico-. En tanto, las competencias específicas de saber sobre el lenguaje involucra un conjunto de conceptos, aspectos y temas de reflexión sobre propiedades, características y elementos del lenguaje orientados a que los alumnos cobren conciencia de sus conocimientos, reflexionen sobre aspectos peculiares de la lengua inglesa y desarrollen con mayor confianza y versatilidad el uso del lenguaje (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a).

El tercer rubro de competencias específicas se enmarca en el saber ser con el lenguaje. La intención de estos saberes es que los estudiantes incrementen sus oportunidades para compartir sus conocimientos y experiencias con el inglés manifestando actitudes y los valores implicados en interacciones orales y escritas. El propósito de dichos saberes es que los alumnos “tomen conciencia de la propia cultura y la de otros países, aprendan a actuar con el lenguaje en diferentes ámbitos de la vida social y valoren las consecuencias de dicho actuar” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011a, p. 33).

Tras haber revisado la naturaleza de las prácticas sociales del lenguaje y de las competencias específicas con el lenguaje, se aborda una perspectiva teórica sobre el diseño de una situación de aprendizaje basada en el PNIEB, bajo el enfoque de enfoque del Aprendizaje Basado en Tareas (TBL por sus siglas en inglés). Este abordaje permitirá que el profesor de inglés que trabaje bajo el programa PNIEB esté consciente de las consideraciones metodológicas que debe tomar en cuenta desde antes de realizar una planeación didáctica.

#### *Diseño de una situación de aprendizaje*

Una situación de aprendizaje se concibe como un conjunto de actividades articuladas a fin de resolver un conflicto cognitivo –los contenidos a estudiar- por parte de los estudiantes, quienes entablan una serie de relaciones –entre ellos y el profesor-. Tal conjunto de

actividades, relacionadas entre sí, permitirán el desarrollo de competencias genéricas y específicas con la lengua (Frade, 2009; Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2004). Aunado al concepto de situación de aprendizaje, se encuentra el de secuencia de aprendizaje. Díaz Barriga (2013) señala que una secuencia didáctica es el resultado de establecer una serie de actividades de aprendizaje que tengan un orden interno entre sí. Asimismo, sostiene que la secuencia didáctica demanda que el alumno realice acciones que vinculen sus conocimientos y experiencias previas con algún interrogante que provenga de lo real y con información sobre un objeto de conocimiento.

Díaz Barriga (2013) sostiene que la construcción de una secuencia didáctica tiene como punto de partida una serie de aspectos formales que emanan del plan de estudios, pero particularmente del programa en el que se inscribe. Además, la estructura de la secuencia se integra con dos elementos que se realizan en el aula de manera paralela: la secuencia de las actividades para el aprendizaje y la evaluación para el aprendizaje inscrita en esas mismas actividades. Debido a la naturaleza del presente documento, sólo se limita a mencionar -grosso modo- la estructura que compone a una secuencia didáctica. Sin embargo, se enfatiza su utilidad en cuanto son componentes de la metodología de enseñanza de la lengua –enfoque didáctico y evaluación de los aprendizajes-.

En primer lugar, la secuencia inicia con actividades de apertura. Ellas permiten abrir el clima de aprendizaje –partiendo de un problema de la realidad-, o bien, abrir una discusión en pequeños grupos sobre una pregunta que parta de interrogantes significativas para los alumnos. Asimismo, se puede desarrollar a partir de una tarea que se les pida a los estudiantes. En segundo término, las actividades de desarrollo. Éstas tienen la finalidad de que el estudiante interaccione con una nueva información –mediante trabajo intelectual y mediante el uso de tal información en una situación problema a resolver-. Finalmente, las actividades de cierre que se realizan con la finalidad que el estudiante logre reelaborar la estructura conceptual que tenía al principio y la integre a una evidencia de aprendizaje (Díaz Barriga, 2013).

Para lograr una situación de aprendizaje de lengua adecuada a las necesidades de los estudiantes, se debe considerar cuatro condiciones primordiales. De acuerdo con Willis (1996), la secuencia didáctica debe incluir una cantidad suficiente de información en el idioma extranjero en estudio, siempre y cuando dicha información sea comprensible para el nivel de lengua de los alumnos. En segundo lugar, debe propiciar oportunidades para usar el lenguaje en situaciones reales de comunicación. Por ende, -y en tercer lugar- debe favorecer el desarrollo de las habilidades lingüísticas, sin desatender el estudio de las formas en que se produce la lengua extranjera -cuarta condición-.

Con la intención de propiciar que los estudiantes desarrollen competencias, la organización de las actividades en la secuencia didáctica juega un papel importante. Sin embargo, la secuencia didáctica por sí sola no asegura que los estudiantes desarrollen sus habilidades comunicativas. El profesor de lengua debe orientar sus esfuerzos bajo

una concepción del aprendizaje que permita que sus estudiantes experimenten por sí mismos bajo su guía cómo funciona la lengua y cómo se estructura. Esta perspectiva del aprendizaje es conocida como aprendizaje basado en la experiencia y guarda una relación muy estrecha con el enfoque de aprendizaje de la lengua de las prácticas sociales del lenguaje como se verá a continuación.

La noción del aprendizaje a través de la experiencia es una conceptualización pedagógica del aprendizaje humano (desde una perspectiva cognitiva), del cual se pueden derivar una variedad de metodologías y tareas. No es un término que pueda ser aplicado a una serie de actividades para el salón de clases, tampoco es un método a seguir por maestros y estudiantes. Más bien, es un enfoque basado en la noción de la naturaleza constructivista del aprendizaje la cual sostiene que cada individuo está constante y activamente involucrado en dar sentido al mundo por medio de la construcción o reconstrucción de significados a partir de la interpretación de experiencias personales (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2006).

La noción del aprendizaje basado en la experiencia concuerda con la estructura de una unidad didáctica basada en el enfoque basada en tareas (TBL, por sus siglas en inglés). El objetivo de una unidad didáctica de TBL es desarrollar los conocimientos instrumentales y formales necesarios para que los alumnos puedan realizar una actividad comunicativa. Al respecto, el trabajo en el aula se organiza mediante una secuencia de tareas de comunicación y de apoyo lingüístico que conducen de forma coherente y lógica, desde una perspectiva comunicativa y pedagógica, a la realización de una tarea final. Últimamente, la unidad didáctica de TBL requiere que el estudiante de lenguas emplee sus conocimientos lingüísticos previos –como sustento- y experimente con nuevas formas lingüísticas al realizar las tareas comunicativas (Estaire, 2009).

### *Metodología del Enfoque Basado en Tareas*

El origen de esta metodología se remonta a principios de los años 80. En especial, se relaciona con el reporte de un proyecto comunicativo de enseñanza del idioma inglés en escuelas primarias y secundarias de la India llamado *Bangalore Project*, iniciado en 1979 y terminado en 1984 por N. Prabhu. El objetivo de dicho proyecto fue mejorar la metodología del enfoque situacional, enfatizando el desarrollo de competencias comunicativas (Sánchez, 2004; Willis, 1996).

La metodología TBL se caracteriza por privilegiar la comunicación sobre la forma del lenguaje. Es decir, la producción de textos orales o escritos es primordial a corregir detenidamente los errores lingüísticos en dichas producciones. Ello se debe a que el enfoque TBL se centra en actividades significativas centradas en el contenido más que atender las formas lingüísticas. Por ello, se dice que el enfoque TBL se centra más en una filosofía educativa centrada en atender las necesidades comunicativas de los estudiantes (Hismanoglu y Hismanoglu, 2011; Willis, 1996).

Una vez enunciadas las características del enfoque TBL se expone el significado que expertos en el área le han asignado al concepto tarea. Willis (1996) define a la tarea como una actividad con un propósito definido en la cual los estudiantes usan la lengua para alcanzar un propósito verdadero. Esta definición la completa Ellis (2003) quien lo define como un plan de trabajo que requiere que los estudiantes procesen la lengua de forma pragmática para lograr un objetivo evaluado en términos de qué tan adecuado o correcto fue desarrollado el contenido de la actividad. Por lo tanto, el rol que una tarea desempeña en el aprendizaje de una lengua es el estimular su deseo natural de mejorar su competencia comunicativa mediante el desarrollo de tareas comunicativas del mundo real (Córdoba, 2016).

Para desarrollar una secuencia didáctica bajo el enfoque del TBL, se debe considerar el objetivo de aprendizaje que se pretende alcanzar. Basado en ello, se estructura la secuencia de actividades en actividades previas, durante y al finalizar la tarea (Munira y Ferdousi, 2012; Willis, 1996). El propósito de las actividades previas a la tarea –actividades de inicio- es que los estudiantes se preparen para realizar actividades subsidiarias que contribuirán en la realización de la tarea integradora –genéricamente llamada tarea-. Ejemplo de estas tareas subsidiarias son actividades encaminadas a proveer a los estudiantes con el vocabulario y frases con contenido gramatical que necesitarán integrar en la tarea.

En cuanto a las actividades realizadas durante la tarea –actividades de desarrollo-, se compone de actividades subsidiarias –como son la sistematización de información, elaboración de textos orales o escritos necesarios para la tarea- cuyo propósito es que los estudiantes desarrollen la tarea. Este tipo de actividades se caracterizan por desarrollarse en equipos colaborativos bajo la guía y supervisión del docente, quien actúa como consejero. Finalmente, las actividades posteriores a la tarea – actividades de cierre- tiene como objetivo presentar la tarea final y valorar tanto el producto como el proceso de desarrollo de la tarea.

La evaluación del aprendizaje mediante el enfoque TBL requiere valorar dos áreas. La primera, qué tan bien se completó la tarea en cuestión. La segunda área se relaciona con la propiedad en el uso de la lengua al realizar la tarea por evaluar. Es decir, se valora si el estudiante pudo desarrollar la tarea asignada usando como vehículo de comunicación la lengua en estudio. Por ello, se puede decir que la evaluación de una tarea se puede realizar mediante dos consideraciones. La primera, referida en la dificultad que la tarea tiene para ser realizada. La segunda se enfoca en valorar la pertinencia de los actos comunicativos desarrollados al realizar la tarea (Benavides y Valvona, 2008).

## **CONCLUSIONES**

El Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB) representa un significativo avance en cuanto a diseño instruccional y curricular se refiere. En específico, considerar el estudio de la lengua extranjera –inglés- como parte del currículo nacional se traduce en

un diseño de programas de estudio que estén acordes con los estándares de aprendizaje que conforman el currículo nacional de educación básica. Por lo tanto, se puede decir que el PNIEB es un programa sui generis. Sin embargo, la viabilidad en su aplicación en las escuelas públicas del nivel básico ha constituido un reto para los docentes en las áreas de metodología didáctica, evaluación del aprendizaje y formación docente.

En primer lugar, la metodología que el PNIEB propone se compone de una perspectiva de la lengua desde una visión interactiva social. Dicha teoría del lenguaje implica que para aprender una lengua se requiere crear ambientes de aprendizaje socialmente significativos para los alumnos. Ello se traduce en diseñar una secuencia didáctica en la que se establezca una serie de actividades que promuevan el uso de la lengua extranjera a fin de dar solución o resolver una tarea integradora. Dicha tarea integradora debe ser motivante y constituir un reto cognitivo para los alumnos. Ellos, mediante las interacciones sociales entre sus compañeros y con el profesor lograrán desarrollar sus habilidades comunicativas, objetivo que persigue el PNIEB.

En segundo lugar, la evaluación del aprendizaje que el PNIEB señala se basa en valorar el desarrollo de competencias. Sin embargo, el docente debe estar consiente que evaluar competencias no significa valorar únicamente la competencia lingüística del alumno. Valorar el desarrollo de competencias – bajo el enfoque comunicativo-socio-cultural –enfoque del PNIEB- representa valorar las interacciones que los alumnos desarrollan durante y después de la elaboración de la tarea integradora. Es decir, la evaluación por competencias requiere del maestro sistematizar información que obtiene de su propia labor cotidiana. Por ello, se puede decir que la evaluación que el PNIEB promueve no privilegia el uso de exámenes como único medio para obtener datos del desarrollo de competencias lingüísticas y comunicativas.

En cuanto a la formación docente, es necesario que el docente de inglés de educación básica se forme en metodologías actuales de enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Ello se debe a que el enfoque metodológico del PNIEB requiere de un docente que conozca quienes son sus alumnos, como aprenden de mejor manera y sobre todo, cómo pueden desarrollar sus competencias comunicativas de mejor manera. Asimismo, el formarse en metodologías actuales en la enseñanza del inglés demanda que el docente sea capaz de adaptar lo mejor de cada metodología a las necesidades de aprendizaje de sus alumnos y con ello lograr que ellos desarrollen sus habilidades comunicativas.

Finalmente, la presente revisión de literatura contribuye a que tanto investigadores inmersos en el área de procesos de enseñanza aprendizaje del idioma inglés, así como profesores de educación básica y alumnos en formación para convertirse en futuros profesores de inglés cuenten con un sustento teórico que les permita desarrollar competencias pedagógicas a fin de comprender, analizar, reflexionar, aplicar y evaluar el uso del enfoque basado en tareas al desarrollar los contenidos establecidos en el PNIEB.

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# ¿CÓMO LLEGAR A SER MAESTROS CREATIVOS? UNA AUTO-REFLEXIÓN

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## RESUMEN

En el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera existen factores tales como estilos de aprendizaje, motivación, ambientes educativos, técnicas y estrategias, entre otros, los cuales se encuentran correlacionados. Por lo tanto, es importante que los profesores tomen responsabilidad como co-participes en dicho proceso y optimicen todos estos factores para lograr un aprendizaje significativo. En ocasiones el componente creatividad parece ser superado por causas múltiples tales como el uso de las nuevas tecnologías, o por la necesidad de cubrir el programa de estudio a tiempo. Sin embargo, es pertinente considerar a la creatividad como un elemento valioso que se debe activar o reactivar dentro de la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera, puesto que estimula la atención, motiva y satisface la necesidad de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Además, la creatividad tiende a mejorar la autoestima, la confianza y la autonomía de los mismos; creando un ambiente placentero y memorable. La creatividad es: *“pensar fuera de cuadro, crear diversas, frescas, y originales ideas, nuevas soluciones a los problemas, o encontrar diferentes percepciones a una situación”*. (Read, 2015). De igual manera, Maley (2015) afirma que la creatividad nos ayuda a enfrentar los retos en un mundo de cambios constantes y nos da las soluciones que necesitamos. Por lo consiguiente, el objetivo principal de este trabajo es contribuir en la reflexión cotidiana de la práctica del profesor de idiomas extranjeros, con la finalidad de llegar a ser un maestro creativo sin importar la edad que tengan los estudiantes, el ambiente o modalidad en la que se trabaje.

**Palabras claves:** creatividad, actividades didácticas, alumnos universitarios.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

Durante muchos años los profesores de idiomas, se han esforzado por mejorar las clases y métodos de enseñanza para poder transmitir a los estudiantes de una lengua no sólo el conocimiento sintáctico y/o gramatical; sino también cultural y situacional de la misma. Poder lograr que los estudiantes de idiomas puedan tener una conexión emocional, tal que amen aprender otros idiomas y aún más, que amen disfrutar un idioma extranjero, es sin duda una de las preocupaciones de los profesores de lenguas hoy día.

Al buscar la calidad educativa, los profesores de idiomas se han de enfrentar a diferentes factores a los cuales se ha de poner atención inmediata. Un profesor de lenguas no puede esperar que la solución venga de lo externo, sino debe encontrar soluciones originales e inteligentes al contexto en que se desarrolla, esto es a lo que algunos autores, definen como creatividad.

De acuerdo a Bono (2000) es el talento o habilidad que tiene cada individuo para transformar su entorno. Mientras que De la Torre (2006) asegura lo siguiente: *"La creatividad es un bien social, una decisión y un reto de futuro. Por ello, formar en creatividad es apostar por un futuro de progreso, de justicia, de tolerancia y de convivencia"*. De la misma manera, Montes de Oca (2008) agrega: *"Y para lograr este fin es preciso preguntarse por las características del modelo pedagógico que puede respaldar y orientar este proceso formativo, permitiendo materializarlo en las prácticas de enseñanza contextualizada. La educación es al mismo tiempo un producto y una herramienta del proceso histó-rico-evolutivo de la humanidad, y en este orden de ideas exige una constante reflexión y teorización permitiendo a la vez su retorno y efecto transforma-dor en el ser humano, ... En nuestras manos est el lograr que la educación no sea instrumentalizada por objetivos ajenos a ella y a sus receptores"*

Por otro lado, el diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua Española (2017) define a la creatividad como: *"acultad de crear, capacidad de creación"*. Por lo tanto, este trabajo busca la reflexión del docente de una lengua extranjera con relación a su creatividad, ya que no se trata de innovar por trascender, aunque ciertamente algo de eso existe en el interior de todo ser humano y no excluye a los profesores que han dedicado su tiempo a tan noble labor. El deseo es encontrar la manera de capitalizar tiempo, dinero, esfuerzo para lograr una clase que motive, inspire, que sea inolvidable. De modo que el profesor de lenguas modifica su entorno: lo personaliza, lo hace único e irreplicable con cada grupo.

Por medio de la reflexión de ser creativos, se ha de llamar la atención de todo profesor de lenguas y se les invita a desarrollar las habilidades y competencias de la creatividad, las cuales les permita:

a) Innovar dentro de su ambiente de aprendizaje teniendo en su profesor un modelo y un co-participante en el proceso enseñanza –aprendizaje que involucra tanto al profesor como al estudiante.

b) Reconocer la tecnología como un recurso y la falta de esta como una oportunidad.

c) Buscar el cambio y promoverlo con control, de modo que sea evaluable, y lograr dicho cambio de manera ordenada y respetuosa.

Durante la búsqueda de una metodología de enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros para México, se ha encontrado el *Enfoque a la Creatividad*. Este enfoque menciona algunos puntos y precisiones que se han de compartir, a lo largo de este trabajo. La posibilidad de la aplicación de dicho enfoque en las escuelas de idiomas extranjeros en México será de gran utilidad a todos los profesores quienes deseen mejorar su práctica docente al incorporar la creatividad no sólo como una actividad o dinámica sino como un enfoque en la adquisición de lenguas extranjeras.

## DISCUSIÓN

### *El Enfoque de la Creatividad. El rol del profesor de Lenguas.*

La búsqueda de métodos y técnicas de enseñanza que garanticen, no sólo el aprendizaje de los estudiantes de idiomas sino la capitalización de tiempo, dinero, y material, es sin duda la preocupación de los profesores de idiomas en todo el mundo. Durante mucho tiempo, las palabras talento y creatividad aparecen como sinónimos en diferentes ocasiones. No obstante; es oportuno reconocer que el talento es dado al nacer, o incluso antes, afirma la ciencia de la neurología. En cambio, la creatividad se adquiere, y se presenta en momentos, situaciones diversas, en ambientes específicos.

Dentro del ámbito educativo, al parecer los cambios o transformaciones han ido de poco en poco en comparación con otras áreas del conocimiento. Además, parece que la creatividad dentro del aula se ha enfocado más al carácter pedagógico de la disciplina y últimamente a la inclusión masiva de la tecnología en las clases de una lengua extranjera. Ballerster (2002) señala: *“las situaciones abiertas de aprendizaje, a partir de experiencias y emociones personales, con estímulo del pensamiento divergente en que el alumnado proyecta sus ideas, potencian la diferencia individual y la originalidad y se convierten en hechos clave y decisivos para una enseñanza activa y creativa”*.

De modo, que se ha decidido iniciar este recorrido con algunas consideraciones al respecto. La primera será el rol del profesor en el aula. Contemplando no sólo la importancia de la producción lingüística, sus conocimientos teóricos, pedagógicos o tecnológicos de la materia. Por lo que el presente trabajo no se trata de un análisis terminológico sino de enfatizar las competencias que ha de poseer el profesor de idiomas.

En cuanto al rol del profesor de idiomas dentro del aula debemos tener en cuenta que antes de enseñar una habilidad debemos adquirirla nosotros mismos. Por lo que si se desea que los alumnos canten o bailen el profesor de idiomas ha de lograr dichas habilidades primero. Para ello es necesario en ocasiones abandonar el rol docente para formar parte del grupo. *“Deberíamos, pues juzgar la creatividad en el salón por lo que el profesor logra que los estudiantes hagan y no por lo que hace el profesor”*. (Stevick, 1980). Es decir, un profesor creativo no es aquel que logra que sus estudiantes

rían, corran y/o salten dentro del aula debido a que él llegó con un disfraz, o cuenta chistes sin parar. Un profesor creativo es quien logra que los estudiantes deseen participar en clase, compartan su conocimiento con sus compañeros, sus experiencias de aprendizaje, o que se involucren en diferentes proyectos: sociales, culturales, de investigación, etc. todos ellos relacionados con la adquisición lingüística y su integración profesional.

En ocasiones veremos el esfuerzo de algunos profesores que constantemente buscan la creatividad en el aula a través de ellos mismos, o en la inclusión de juegos y dinámicas para “entretener” a los estudiantes. Desafortunadamente, estos juegos o actividades no son indicador de la competencia lingüística de los estudiantes, y en ocasiones al comparar las calificaciones de grupos de dichos profesores dinámicos a las calificaciones de profesores no dinámicos los resultados no son muy diferentes. Más aún, en ocasiones los resultados son desalentadores; por lo que en diferentes momentos los profesores prefieren evitar dichas dinámicas para aprovechar el tiempo en otro tipo de actividades, que, aunque menos divertidas, permiten a los estudiantes entender mejor el tema. De manera que re pensar en el rol del profesor de idiomas para *El Enfoque Creativo* es necesario e incluso podríamos suponer la necesidad de un nuevo rol para el profesor de lenguas.

“Ser autónomos significa gobernarnos a nosotros mismos, ser responsables de nuestras acciones y sentimientos, deshacernos de patrones estereotipados que nos esclavizan porque el hombre nace libre y tiene derecho a serlo, tiene derecho a una autonomía que sus propios padres le retiran cuando se escuchan los comentarios: “ ay que acer caso a las personas mayores” Franca, 2 6 ). Al parecer las nuevas tendencias educativas dan al estudiante el papel protagónico e incluso, “único” de quién se espera autonomía.

Sin embargo, en un proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje no es posible dejar a los estudiantes como únicos responsables. En dicho proceso ambos: estudiante y maestro comparten la misma responsabilidad, siendo ambos autores y actores, es decir, los dos construyen con experiencias únicas elementos que promueven la construcción del conocimiento y al mismo tiempo les permiten la socialización de dicho conocimiento adquirido siendo ambos co-participes del crecimiento y enriquecimiento educativo por igual.

Por lo que, en esta reflexión nos hemos de concentrar en el papel docente y su importancia sin olvidar a cada uno de los elementos que hacen este proceso una realidad, como lo son: las autoridades educativas, administrativas, y los padres de familia que se consolidan como agentes de fortaleza institucional, etc. (Padilla y Espinosa, 2015). Y, por lo tanto, se ha de centrar esta reflexión en el profesor ya que es en él en quien recae la mayor responsabilidad ante la sociedad y ante él mismo.

Es importante la consideración del papel del profesor o maestro de lenguas, ya que desempeña muchas de las tareas relacionadas con la labor docente de cualquier otra institución educativa; además, las expectativas de los estudiantes y las exigencias o demandas de la sociedad al académico universitario, suelen coincidir en la mayoría de las universidades en México siendo siempre altas.

Algunos de los roles que se han de mencionar en esta ocasión son los siguientes:

Controlador	Asesor	Organizador
Promotor	Negociador	Motivador
Evaluador	Investigador	Facilitador
Colaborador	Acompañante	Expositor
Mediador	Observador	Investigador
Guía	Agente de Cambio	Recurso

Una observación pertinente en este momento es que a través del tiempo los roles del profesor de idiomas han ido cambiando debido a las tendencias educativas y quizá sin que se pueda notar, junto a la inclusión de las nuevas tecnologías. Por lo que parece que cada vez se requiere menos tiempo del profesor junto al estudiante, es decir; es menor el tiempo de acompañamiento en el aprendizaje y menor la socialización del conocimiento adquirido. Al parecer se puede apreciar con cierto ceño de melancolía o añoranza al profesor fuente del conocimiento de antaño, al tutor, al colaborador, guía y acompañante hoy en día resumido a profesor- recurso. En donde: *“...el pro esor debe estar siempre listo para ofrecer su ayuda si es necesario. Después de todo, tiene el lenguaje y el conocimiento que los estudiantes pueden necesitar, sobre todo en las tareas de escritura. Sin embargo, el profesor no debe estar disponible como un recurso para ciertas actividades, como uegos de comunicación o uegos de roles...”* “Los diferentes roles del pro esor y los alumnos en el aula de lenguas extran eras” (Juan y García 2012).

No es posible seguir considerando al profesor de idiomas como un recurso, ya que los recursos no podrían evaluar, analizar, proponer, crear y mucho menos ser responsables de un proceso de aprendizaje. La deshumanización de las profesiones en todo el mundo parece ser la respuesta más fácil para la realización de procesos mecanizados. También parece ser la meta de algunas corporaciones lucrativas pero la labor del profesor no puede ser mecanizada, lucrativa o resumida a un recurso.

Por ello hemos de proponer para los profesores de idiomas un nuevo rol: el rol de “participante”. Este rol coloca al profesor de lenguas en una posición única cuyas

ventajas pueden ser innumerables, desde esa posición el docente podrá ver el proceso de enseñanza desde donde nunca había sido considerado con anterioridad, puesto que se ve inmerso en el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje sin ser el único responsable de dicho proceso.

### *La creación de un ambiente creativo*

La creación de un ambiente adecuado para generar, promover y motivar a los estudiantes a la adquisición de una nueva lengua, no es tarea fácil por lo que algunos profesores han enfocado sus esfuerzos en la creación de ambientes adecuados para que el proceso enseñanza aprendizaje se lleve de manera óptima, y han concentrado la creatividad en el salón de clases. Por lo que el segundo tema de reflexión será la creatividad en los ambientes de aprendizaje de una nueva lengua.

Ahora bien, si es cierto que los profesores de idiomas deben de lograr el ambiente óptimo no pueden olvidarse del proceso, las necesidades, los métodos o técnicas de aprendizaje, las dinámicas de aprendizaje, la autonomía y la importancia de la toma de decisiones. Este Enfoque de la Creatividad permite a los profesores de idiomas no sólo identificar y conocer los métodos y técnicas de su quehacer cotidiano que tiene el potencial creativo que se desea, sino además identificar los procedimientos educativos que se realizan y enriquecerlos con toques de creatividad. (Maley y Peachey, 2015)

La generación de ambientes creativos de aprendizaje, de tecnologías creativas, métodos creativos, tareas creativas, y de tener un rol creativo en el proceso enseñanza aprendizaje de un idioma depende mucho de una actitud creativa. La idea de innovar parece pertenecer al ser humano desde siempre puesto que es una habilidad de sobrevivencia, de no conformismo, de la búsqueda constante de cambios que se pueden controlar y que se desea controlar. Es por ello, que a continuación se ha de profundizar en cada uno de los aspectos de la creatividad. Al mismo tiempo indicar algunas ideas que mencionan Maley y Peachey (2015) en su libro "*Creativity in the English language classroom*" junto con algunas consideraciones personales.

### *La actitud creativa*

<b>La actitud creativa debe:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No sobre cargar la clase de actividades.</li> <li>• Ser constante.</li> </ul>	<b>Rol</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modelador</li> <li>• Participante</li> <li>• Motivador</li> </ul>
	<b>El ambiente de aprendizaje debe:</b>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aprovechar la enseñanza de los estudiantes.</li> <li>• Generar tradiciones y romperlas.</li> <li>• Aplicar los saberes heurísticos siempre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establecer un ambiente óptimo.</li> <li>• Establecer un ambiente en donde todo se puede mejorar y las críticas son bien recibidas (pedir que dar críticas se hagan con respeto)</li> <li>• Re-valorar el ambiente de aprendizaje de cada estudiante o del grupo.</li> <li>• Modificar el mobiliario</li> <li>• Crear un espacio creativo</li> </ul>		
	<b>El ambiente de enseñanza debe:</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establecer un ambiente organizado.</li> <li>• Establecer un tiempo personalizado (dar retroalimentación)</li> <li>• Aprovechar la tecnología.</li> </ul>		
	<b>El proceso</b>	<b>metodos y técnicas</b>	
		<b>Las actividades deben ser:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• con límites.</li> <li>• de contraste.</li> <li>• de observación.</li> <li>• de recolección</li> <li>• de información y reporte.</li> <li>• en diferente dirección constante.</li> <li>• Potencializadoras de talentos individuales.</li> <li>• multidisciplinarias.</li> </ul>
	<b>Las estrategias deben ser:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• de motivación (todo trabajo debe ser publicado).</li> <li>• de relajación.</li> <li>• de plantear problemas que ellos puedan resolver y analizar.</li> <li>• de cambio de roles (video)</li> <li>• de inventar cosas juntos.</li> </ul>	

El idioma como instrumento de creatividad es sin duda uno de los elementos con los que cuenta un profesor de lenguas, y es precisamente este elemento que ofrece al profesor de lenguas un abanico de posibilidades que ha de presentar a sus estudiantes.

Uno de los aspectos en que hace énfasis este Enfoque Creativo es en la realización de actividades que involucren distintos escenarios; actividades dentro y fuera del aula, en línea, en clases, actividades en donde se presenten opiniones, se tomen decisiones, se busquen soluciones, se reflexione, se responda a las reacciones de los diferentes actores del proceso enseñanza – aprendizaje. Este enfoque, además, presenta a los estudiantes como generadores de recursos, no sólo como receptores de

conocimiento. Además, rompe con la rutina de los profesores de ser ellos los encargados de proveer material para los estudiantes y para sus clases.

Ofrece a los estudiantes la posibilidad de ser ellos los proveedores de recursos didácticos y aún más ser ellos mismos un recurso didáctico. Štěpánek, y Haaff (2011) ofrecen algunos principios que los profesores de idiomas podrían pedir a los estudiantes para mejorar su habilidad lectora:

- Explorar sus campos de interés en línea y encontrar textos que ellos consideren de información relevante.
- Enviar ejemplos de dichos textos al grupo.
- Leer dichos textos antes de la siguiente clase.

En este momento, el profesor debe seleccionar los textos y de acuerdo al grupo y al tema de la clase crear las actividades que considere tanto para producción e incluso evaluación del curso.

- Comparar dos textos que ellos hayan seleccionado y considerar las diferencias o similitudes.
- Seleccionar un texto o párrafo para escribirlo al respecto con sus propias palabras.
- Identificar las ideas principales, las ideas de soporte, las oraciones, el argumento principal del texto.
- Identificar las fechas, los datos, los hechos, las opiniones, etc.
- Comentar las estrategias de lectura, de búsqueda, de investigación, de aprendizaje, de vocabulario.
- Votar por el texto más interesante, más divertido.

De este modo se podrían llevar acabo muchas actividades que relacionen diferentes habilidades, por ejemplo, poemas, canciones, videos, biografías, puntos gramaticales, capsulas informativas, tutoriales, etc.

Otro de los temas que no se deben pasar por alto es el utilizar el vocabulario que los estudiantes ya utilizan, así como su conocimiento previo.

### *Los siete pilares de la creatividad*

De acuerdo con Read (2015) existen siete pilares de la creatividad, tales como:

1. La creatividad no se da en vacunas, menciona la autora, es necesario un detonador de la creatividad, algo que nos sirva para encender la chispa del pensamiento o estimular la aportación de ideas. Este elemento detonante puede ser: una idea, una foto, un texto, una historia, un objeto, una pregunta o problema, o la combinación de algunos o varios de estos elementos.

2. “El pensamiento creativo surge cuando los estudiantes se involucran emocionalmente en una actividad explica Read (2015). De modo que el factor emocional es determinante para la creatividad. Generalmente, vemos a diferentes profesores involucrados con los gustos e intereses de sus estudiantes, buscando con conocimiento de ello o no, este elemento emotivo que les pueda ayudar a realizar clases no sólo significativas, integrales sino además inolvidables.
3. Los estudiantes necesitan un marco en donde puedan desarrollar las habilidades del pensamiento creativo y generalmente se ha de presentar a ellos un modelo a seguir, un ejemplo. Ello le permite al estudiante delimitar el trabajo, tarea o actividad a realizar, al mismo tiempo que les permite concentrarse en sus propias ideas. Dicho modelo proporciona el soporte lingüístico necesario. Además, que este “marco” les proporciona seguridad, autoconfianza y control.
4. La creatividad, provee la oportunidad de generar ideas de una manera libre y espontánea, al mismo tiempo concede disciplina de pensamiento, curiosidad, atención a los detalles y esfuerzo.
5. La creatividad es mejor adoptada en el desarrollo de la mente (Dweck, 2007) mientras que los niños son alentados a creer que pueden mejorar su presentación y alcanzar mejores resultados a través del esfuerzo propio, perseverancia y trabajo duro.

#### *Pilar Uno. La construcción de la autoestima*

La autoestima es caracterizada por cinco componentes: la sensación de seguridad, de identidad, de pertenencia, de propósito y de competencia personal. Este pilar es fundamental, es quizá la razón por la cual Read (2015) lo ha puesto en primer lugar. La principal razón de guiar a los estudiantes dentro de una experiencia educativa, es hacer de dicha experiencia algo positivo, agradable, y desde luego productiva en el aprendizaje.

#### *Pilar dos: Un modelo de creatividad*

Una regla esencial para desarrollar cualquier habilidad o cualidad en otras personas es necesario adquirir dicha habilidad para uno mismo primero. La capacidad de lograr la creatividad no puede venir de una fuente no creativa. De modo que el primer modelo de creatividad ha de ser el profesor mismo. La responsabilidad de la creatividad por parte del profesor de idiomas, por otra parte, no ha de requerir un cambio de personalidad del profesor. Desde luego que cada profesor ha de encontrar su rango de creatividad y este puede estar basado en aspectos muy específicos, rasgos o características que nos permiten ser únicos y que han de ser maximizados para lograr la creatividad.

#### *Pilar tres: Permitir a los estudiantes tomar decisiones.*

Al permitir a los estudiantes tomar decisiones ellos aprenden a ser responsables de las mismas, desarrollan autonomía y aprenden a tomar el control de su aprendizaje. Esto conduce a una sensación de auto pertenencia y liderazgo que les posibilita recorrer la

milla extra la cual conduce a la producción del trabajo creativo. El ejercitar la toma de decisiones ayuda a los estudiantes a hacer el aprendizaje más memorable y personalizado.

El ofrecer a los estudiantes oportunidades de tomar decisiones puede ser una herramienta poderosa en habilidades de dirección, las decisiones pueden ser pequeñas o grandes, desde la persona con la que han de trabajar, los colores que han de utilizar, el material, la hora o fecha de entrega de un proyecto, así como las decisiones grandes e importantes como los temas en los que han de participar, el proyecto con el que han de contribuir, etc.

#### *Pilar cuatro: Uso de preguntas efectivas*

La manera en que utilizamos las preguntas para llamar la atención de nuestros estudiantes y conducirlos a pensar creativamente, es esencial. Además, la búsqueda de estrategias que permitan a los estudiantes formular preguntas, dichas técnicas o estrategias les ayudan, motivan a la generación de preguntas mecánicamente, podría acercar a los estudiantes al cuestionamiento sistematizado y más adelante a la meditación, a la auto-reflexión e incluso a la introspección.

#### *Pilar cinco: Hacer conexiones*

Hacer conexiones y buscar la relación entre las cosas genera ideas e incrementa la chispa creativa del pensamiento. Es útil para motivar a los estudiantes a hacer conexiones entre la casa y la escuela, así como también entre una materia y otra. Más adelante, los estudiantes harán conexiones entre eventos presentes y pasados experiencias dentro y fuera del salón, entre ideas aprendidas de otras fuentes tales como libros y el internet. El estar alerta a las conexiones en diferentes áreas de sus vidas les ayudará a construir confianza y les proveerá de los cimientos que incrementaran la creatividad en su trabajo cotidiano.

#### *Pilar seis: Explorar ideas.*

Se requiere una atmosfera de respeto mutuo en donde los diferentes puntos de vista sean valorados y los juicios sean bien recibidos. Entonces, las técnicas de lluvias de ideas, solución de problemas y actividades donde los estudiantes expresan puntos de vista, sentimientos, etc. Pueden conducir a la exploración de un pensamiento creativo que permita a los estudiantes explorar, experimentar y jugar con diferentes ideas.

#### *Pilar siete: motivar la reflexión crítica.*

Finalmente, como parte de la promoción a la creatividad, es necesario entrenar a los estudiantes para evaluar y reflexionar sobre sus propias ideas, presentaciones, actividades y logros. Así mismo el desarrollo integral del estudiante le permitirá lograr la

autonomía con validez y valor en su trabajo creativo. Todo ello forma parte de un aprendizaje reflexivo y conduce al pensamiento creativo. También se requiere una reflexión constante por parte del profesor, de cada actividad no sólo concentrarse en la satisfacción de una clase que involucre la toma de decisiones, reflexión, autonomía y respeto a la otredad; sino además una reflexión crítica, constructiva a la actitud, al comportamiento, al respeto, empatía y sensibilidad humana en cada clase.

## **CONCLUSIONES**

Aun cuando parece que después de todos los métodos, técnicas, estrategias y de la tecnología a disposición de la enseñanza de idiomas, y de la búsqueda sincera de la calidad del quehacer docente ya no es posible agregar o incluir nada nuevo al proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje; se puede reconocer, revivir, y también se puede reflexionar y/o replantear el rol o papel del profesor de idiomas y los beneficios que trae consigo la posibilidad de desarrollar el pensamiento creativo en sus estudiantes y en él mismo. La posibilidad de mejorar las expectativas de una clase basada sólo en el libro de texto, de salir de la rigidez del programa, la posibilidad de mejorar la efectividad del tiempo de clase, de considerar la afectividad del tiempo de acompañamiento del profesor dentro del aula, etc.

Los beneficios de un enfoque creativo han de incrementar en gran medida la posibilidad de incluir en clases y en cada actividad objetivos educativos con un propósito definido, la enseñanza con valores, y la promoción de actitudes positivas, un ambiente académico flexible y ordenado, junto a una mezcla de un profesionalismo académico y a una curiosidad e interés no sólo por parte del docente sino también del estudiante. Este enfoque no se basa en la idea típica de que sea el docente quien domine el conocimiento, el tiempo y la experiencia educativa generando creatividad de modo que el estudiante no tenga idea de lo que tratará la clase al día siguiente. Este enfoque rebasa por completo ese tipo de trabajo; y abre la posibilidad al dialogo.

De modo que los métodos y técnicas podrán ser considerados no sólo del punto de vista académico, sino del punto de vista de los participantes, cuidando la autoestima de ambos, la motivación, transformando así la experiencia de aprendizaje a una experiencia memorable. De ahí que una clase puede ser guiada, por el docente, o puede ser guiada por los estudiantes, pero el momento de aprendizaje en conjunto hará de dicha experiencia algo único, y memorable. Los valores, el sentido de hermandad, respeto y confianza, serán finalmente de apoyo en la clase.

La búsqueda constante de nuevas ideas, métodos y actividades académicas en ocasiones no logran encontrar eco en los enfoques metodológicos ya existentes. Los profesores de idiomas en México han de enfrentarse a un sin número de estudiantes en clase, muchos de ellos con diferentes ideas, debido a un sinfín de razones que van desde su cultura, situación geográfica, política, social, religiosa, edad, nivel de inglés, estilo de aprendizaje, valores entre otros. Además; han de encontrar dentro de cada experiencia educativa el respeto, el profesionalismo, el compromiso y la búsqueda de la creatividad

que le permita adquirir y/o reforzar su identidad, valores y su compromiso con el aprendizaje de otro idioma, mismo que le permitirá conocer otras culturas, ideología y personas con las que podrá interactuar con respeto.

La importancia de trabajar con este enfoque es la oportunidad de incluir todo lo ya se ha utilizado en clase y aun así sentir la oportunidad de poder innovar. Este enfoque incluye la enseñanza por proyectos, de valores, de problemas, e incluso la enseñanza colaborativa. No es un enfoque excluyente sino incluyente, una propuesta de aplicación basada en el conocimiento y experiencia de cada profesor de lenguas, modulada por las necesidades y conocimientos previos del grupo, que potencializa las habilidades de cada estudiante y la reflexión del proceso enseñanza –aprendizaje.

Como profesores de idiomas estamos conscientes de la necesidad que tiene nuestro país (México) al incorporar en la educación métodos, técnicas y dinámicas que junto a los hábitos de estudio, de preparación de clases, de evaluación y apoyo constante del profesor y los compañeros de clase, puedan generar en los estudiantes seguridad, compromiso, una actitud positiva ante el cambio, y la búsqueda constante de mejorar, de potencializar las habilidades obtenidas y producir a través de la reflexión continua los hábitos y valores necesarios para convivir con otros.

Por lo tanto, es importante que, al buscar la innovación, la creatividad y la calidad en la labor docente, se pueda compartir los diferentes resultados con otros profesores de idiomas en México o en diferentes partes del mundo. Además, de poder exponer los trabajos realizados por los estudiantes de idiomas, los cuales han de satisfacer la demanda de la sociedad y dar respuesta a diferentes necesidades de esta. Dicha sociedad que demanda profesores cada vez más preparados, una sociedad que ha dado a los profesores de lenguas la oportunidad de compartir experiencias educativas con altas expectativas de calidad y profesionalismo.

Además, una sociedad que parece delegar la responsabilidad total de generaciones de estudiantes, faltos de valores, respeto, tiempo, deseo de salir adelante, compromiso por el estudio, e incluso visión e identidad, a los profesores. Por lo tanto, es necesario un enfoque que pueda retomar todo lo anteriormente planteado, que pueda generar el hábito de cuestionar, pensar, reflexionar, reportar, investigar, promover, gestionar, escuchar y respetar para que nuestro país tenga profesores más capacitados que busquen la calidad no en las instalaciones de lujo sino en los proyectos, actividades cotidianas, en el aprendizaje, en la autonomía y compromiso individual de los agentes del proceso enseñanza aprendizaje, en el respeto entre dichos agentes y generación de nuevas oportunidades de estudio, trabajo y vida de esta la sociedad en la que se convive.

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# ESTUDIANTES NO ESPECIALISTAS DE FRANCÉS, SU SENTIDO DE AUTOEFICACIA PARA APRENDER EL IDIOMA

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## RESUMEN

En este artículo, reportamos los resultados de una investigación cuyo objetivo fue establecer el sentido de autoeficacia de los estudiantes de francés de la Universidad de Quintana Roo y su experiencia respecto de las fuentes de la autoeficacia. Como referente teórico, utilizamos la teoría de la autoeficacia de Bandura. El diseño metodológico empleado fue cuantitativo por encuesta. Los hallazgos indican que la mayoría de los estudiantes se considera capaces en las 4 habilidades lingüísticas, pero destaca en la habilidad de lectura. Acerca de las fuentes de la autoeficacia encontramos que en cuanto a la experiencia vicaria la mayoría de los estudiantes dijo que ha habido personas que han sido modelos para ellos. Respecto de la persuasión verbal los estudiantes de los niveles B1 y A2 dos concordaron en haber recibido retroalimentación sobre su desempeño en francés mientras que los del nivel A1 mencionaron haberla recibido escasamente. En lo que concierne a los estados fisiológicos y emocionales casi la mitad de los estudiantes de los niveles A2 y B1 aseveraron que los ejercicios de expresión oral y escritura en francés los estresaban a veces. Un poco menos de la mitad de los participantes de los tres niveles declaró sentirse nervioso al hacer ejercicios de comprensión auditiva.

**Palabras clave:** sentido de autoeficacia, estudiantes de francés, fuentes de la autoeficacia

## INTRODUCCION

Durante los últimos años, el constructo de la autoeficacia ha generado gran interés entre los investigadores educativos. Chowdhury y Shahabuddin (2007, p. 2) aseveran que Bandura (1997) expone "amplia evidencia y documentación de que la autoeficacia es un factor clave para lograr resultados significativos en la vida de las personas". Locke y Latham (1990) y Zimmerman, Bandura y Martinez-Pons (1992), muestran que "la autoeficacia puede ser un buen predictor del rendimiento" (Chowdhury y Shahabuddin, p.3). Bandura (1997) sostiene que las creencias de eficacia influyen en cómo las personas piensan, sienten, se motivan y actúan. En ese sentido, es evidente que las creencias de autoeficacia juegan un papel importante en la educación y en la vida en general.

En nuestra experiencia en el área de francés en la Universidad de Quintana Roo, hemos notado que varios estudiantes son conscientes de la importancia de aprender una segunda lengua extranjera, adicionalmente al inglés. Por esta razón, muchos de ellos se inscriben en cursos de francés, pero solo algunos continúan estudiando este idioma hasta los niveles avanzados. El estudio de un segundo idioma proporciona a los estudiantes las percepciones sobre qué tan eficientes o ineficientes son para aprenderlo. Estas suposiciones a menudo pueden tener un impacto positivo o negativo en las creencias de autoeficacia y el proceso de aprendizaje de los alumnos. Investigar el sentido de autoeficacia de los estudiantes de francés proporcionaría elementos empíricos para ayudar a que un mayor número prosiguiera a niveles más altos de dominio de este idioma.

Hasta donde sabemos, las investigaciones sobre el sentido de autoeficacia asociados a estudiantes de francés como segunda o tercera lengua extranjera son escasas en México. Los estudios más relacionados se enfocan en aspectos tales como las creencias sobre la autoeficacia en investigación de estudiantes de maestría (Reyes & Gutiérrez, 2015) y en profesores de lenguas extranjeras (Reyes y Perales, 2016). Asimismo, encontramos un trabajo acerca de las creencias sobre alfabetización informacional de profesores universitarios (Reyes y Franco, 2014). En Quintana Roo, se han realizado dos tesis de licenciatura sobre las creencias de los profesores de inglés en formación (Pool-Antonio, 2015; Cruz-Rosales, 2015) y una de maestría acerca de las creencias de autoeficacia en investigación de estudiantes de licenciatura (Reyes- Cruz, & Gutiérrez-Arceo, 2015). El trabajo más relacionado con el presente es la tesis de Villanueva-Delgado (2015), quien investigó las creencias de autoeficacia de los estudiantes de inglés.

En el entorno internacional, algunas investigaciones han abordado las creencias de autoeficacia de estudiantes de francés en relación con otras variables como el estrés (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005), el nivel de ansiedad (Çubukçu, 2008), la motivación (Hsieh, 2008), las estrategias (Gahungu, 2007), la habilidad de decodificar y las atribuciones causales (Erler & Macaro, 2011), la autorregulación y el género (Bresó, 2007). La mayoría de ellos son de corte cuantitativo y utilizan escalas y cuestionarios. Estas investigaciones señalan que es importante trabajar en las debilidades de los estudiantes para incrementar su sentido de autoeficacia y su capacidad de logro. De igual manera, estos estudios también hallaron que la motivación, el uso de estrategias y la autorregulación se encuentran positivamente asociadas con un alto sentido de autoeficacia y un buen desempeño.

Otros investigadores se han interesado en indagar el sentido de autoeficacia en relación con las habilidades lingüísticas. Las intervenciones para mejorar la comprensión auditiva en francés (Graham & Macaro, 2008; Graham, 2011) han mostrado que el uso de estrategias incrementa esta habilidad al igual que el sentido de autoeficacia. Mills, Pajares, & Herron (2006), adicionalmente a las variables anteriores analizaron la lectura, la ansiedad y el género. Los resultados indicaron que aquellos estudiantes que reportaron

un mayor sentido de la eficacia para leer obtuvieron puntajes de dominio de lectura más altos. Así mismo, reportaron que la ansiedad en la lectura no tenía relación con la competencia lectora. La competencia lectora, sin embargo, se asoció negativamente con el sentido de autoeficacia en la lectura. La autoeficacia auditiva se relacionó positivamente con la competencia auditiva solo para las participantes femeninas, y la ansiedad auditiva se relacionó positivamente con la competencia auditiva tanto de hombres como mujeres.

Cubillos e Ilvento (2012) son los únicos investigadores que han abordado el sentido de autoeficacia en las cuatro habilidades a la par. Ellos descubrieron que realizar estancias en el país donde se habla la lengua estudiada mejora el sentido de autoeficacia en las 4 habilidades. Puozzo (2004) investigó el sentido de autoeficacia en general para aprender francés e italiano, los resultados de su estudio mostraron que la autoeficacia no tiene una acción directa sobre el comportamiento humano, sino que pasa por cuatro procesos de mediación psicológica que ayudan a las personas a comprender sus capacidades. Estos procesos son: cognitivo, motivacional, afectivo y selectivo. Los resultados en lengua francesa fueron satisfactorios, los de italiano, por el contrario, resultaron decepcionantes. Hunt (2002) investigó la autoeficacia de los estudiantes universitarios con respecto a las variables género, maestro, último curso de francés tomado y calificación final en el último curso de francés académico en el que se inscribieron los estudiantes. Los resultados mostraron que las creencias de autoeficacia de los estudiantes universitarios franceses se correlacionan con el rendimiento del alumno en el curso. También se halló que los estudiantes se sienten más capaces de realizar ejercicios de comprensión auditiva con sus compañeros y su maestro que con hablantes nativos.

Las investigaciones anteriores son relevantes para éste estudio porque ayudarán a informar y contrastar los resultados con los propios. Sin embargo, es importante destacar que estos trabajos examinaron sus propios contextos y algunas escalas se adaptaron de acuerdo con sus programas, por lo que las soluciones e instrumentos mostrados podrían no funcionar en otros campos y otros temas. Ninguno de estos estudios se realizó en México. El presente trabajo contribuye a la literatura incorporando las fuentes de autoeficacia como componentes de una escala ayudando así a llenar un vacío en el campo de las lenguas extranjeras. Adicionalmente, esta investigación proporciona conocimiento sobre la autoeficacia en el aprendizaje del francés en el ámbito mexicano ya que, hasta donde conocemos, no hay estudios al respecto.

## **JUSTIFICACIÓN**

Nuestro estudio tiene la potencialidad de contribuir a dar a conocer a los profesores de francés el concepto de autoeficacia, sus efectos en los estudiantes y los aspectos de su aprendizaje que les resultan problemáticos. Los profesores tienen la posibilidad de comparar los resultados empíricos sobre la autoeficacia con el estado de su práctica docente. Esta comparación puede hacerlos más conscientes de la importancia de proveer a los estudiantes con experiencias de desempeño reales, realizar retroalimentación

puntual, crítica y empática así como fomentar un ambiente de aprendizaje emocionalmente positivo. Lo anterior con miras a incrementar el sentido de autoeficacia de sus estudiantes.

Esta investigación podría adicionalmente estimular la realización de más estudios sobre el tema utilizando enfoques diversos para enriquecer el conocimiento sobre las creencias de autoeficacia en francés. Este trabajo también podría contribuir a que los estudiantes tomen conciencia sobre sus creencias y busquen estrategias para fortalecer las habilidades en las que tienen dificultades. En ese orden de ideas, el objetivo de esta investigación fue establecer cuáles son las creencias de autoeficacia de los estudiantes de francés de la Universidad de Quintana Roo con respecto a las cuatro habilidades lingüísticas (escuchar, hablar, leer y escribir). Del mismo modo, este estudio buscó analizar las experiencias que los estudiantes han tenido respecto de tres fuentes de la autoeficacia (persuasión verbal, experiencia vicaria y estados fisiológicos y emocionales) y su relación con las creencias de autoeficacia en las habilidades lingüísticas.

## **MARCO TEÓRICO**

Bandura (1997) define la autoeficacia percibida como “la creencia en la propia capacidad de organizar y ejecutar las acciones necesarias para alcanzar los logros deseados” (p. 3). La autoeficacia es una habilidad generativa en la que deben organizarse y desplegarse de manera efectiva sub-habilidades cognitivas, sociales, emocionales y conductuales. La autoeficacia percibida no es la habilidad en sí misma que uno posee, sino la creencia de que, en ciertas circunstancias, uno es capaz de realizar una determinada actividad. Las creencias sobre la autoeficacia son relevantes porque son los más importantes mediadores de la conducta y del cambio de ésta. Dichas creencias afectan el éxito o fracaso en las acciones que emprendemos (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Bandura (1997) establece que las fuentes de la autoeficacia son: la experiencia previa, la experiencia vicaria, la persuasión verbal y los estados fisiológicos y emocionales.

En cuanto a las experiencias previas, estas son las fuentes más importantes para desarrollar la autoeficacia (Bandura, 1997) porque se trata de los éxitos y fracasos por los que atraviesan los individuos. Además, dichas experiencias proporcionan la evidencia más auténtica de si uno es capaz de reunir todo lo necesario para tener éxito. El éxito aumenta la eficacia mientras que el fracaso la reduce, especialmente cuando el sentido de autoeficacia ya está fuertemente construido. Sin embargo, esto no ocurre así siempre. Los inconvenientes también pueden brindarle a la gente experiencia en la superación de obstáculos. Se dice que los obstáculos brindan a las personas la oportunidad de aprender cómo convertir los impedimentos en oportunidades para tener éxito. Si las personas están convencidas de que tienen la capacidad de tener éxito, persisten y se recuperan más rápido de las dificultades.

La segunda fuente predominante de autoeficacia es la experiencia vicaria (Bandura, 1997). Las experiencias vicarias se basan en el modelado. El modelado se usa

como una herramienta para aumentar las creencias de autoeficacia. En la experiencia vicaria, las personas evalúan sus éxitos en relación con los éxitos de otras personas cuando tienen una falta de conocimiento sobre sus propias habilidades. Un ejemplo de la experiencia vicaria podría ser cuando los estudiantes de francés comparan los resultados de sus exámenes para ver qué tan bien se desempeñaron sus compañeros. Los estudiantes que van más allá de sus compañeros de clase aumentan su autoeficacia, mientras que los estudiantes que no los superan generalmente disminuyen la suya.

En cuanto a la persuasión verbal, ésta se lleva a cabo cuando las personas reciben retroalimentación de otros. Las personas se motivan por los comentarios, críticas, puntos de vista y el apoyo que reciben de los demás. Un aspecto importante de esta fuente de autoeficacia es la credibilidad del persuasor. Es más probable que la eficacia de las personas se vea influida si el persuasor ya domina las habilidades que juzga. Por ejemplo, cuando los profesores o los asistentes franceses le dicen a sus alumnos que les va bien o mal en las tareas, o cuando los compañeros de clase felicitan a sus compañeros por una buena pronunciación en clase. Ver a personas similares a uno mismo realizando con éxito varias tareas puede aumentar el sentido de eficacia y persuadirnos para llevar a cabo esas actividades dado que ellos pueden ejecutarlas.

Finalmente, los estados fisiológicos y afectivos involucran los estados corporales y las respuestas que experimentan las personas cuando realizan ciertas tareas y las interpretaciones que les dan. Las personas con alta autoeficacia podrían considerar el nerviosismo como una reacción típica a tareas como dar un discurso en francés; mientras que las personas con baja autoeficacia podrían pensar que es una consecuencia de su falta de preparación y debilidad. Así mismo, los estudiantes que se ven afectados por el nerviosismo o la ansiedad mientras hablan en francés o participan en clases o en exámenes orales, pueden interpretar esos sentimientos como normales o como señales de su falta de organización.

## **PREGUNTAS DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

Como se mencionó líneas arriba, el objetivo de esta investigación fue establecer cuáles son las creencias de autoeficacia de los estudiantes de francés de la Universidad de Quintana Roo relacionadas con las cuatro habilidades lingüísticas (escuchar, hablar, leer y escribir). De igual manera, analizar las experiencias que los estudiantes han tenido respecto de tres fuentes de la autoeficacia (persuasión verbal, experiencia vicaria y estados fisiológicos y emocionales) y su relación con las creencias de autoeficacia en las habilidades lingüísticas.

Para alcanzar los objetivos establecidos, nos planteamos dos preguntas de investigación:

1. ¿Cuál es el sentido de autoeficacia de los estudiantes de francés de la universidad de Quintana Roo respecto a las cuatro habilidades lingüísticas?

2. ¿Qué experiencias han tenido los estudiantes respecto de tres fuentes (experiencia vicaria, persuasión verbal y estados fisiológicos y emocionales) de la autoeficacia?

## **MÉTODO**

Éste trabajo es un estudio cuantitativo descriptivo por encuesta (Reyes-Cruz, Hernández & Yeladaqui, 2011). Se eligió este diseño debido a que se trata de un trabajo exploratorio dado que, hasta donde hemos investigado, es el primero que estudia las creencias de autoeficacia para el aprendizaje del francés en contexto mexicano. Por ello también se adaptó una escala ya utilizada en otros estudios y se añadieron algunos ítems propios. Los resultados obtenidos aquí servirán de base para futuros estudios que utilicen otros diseños.

### *Contexto*

El presente estudio fue llevado a cabo en la unidad Chetumal de la Universidad de Quintana Roo, (UQRoo). La UQRoo es la universidad pública más importante en el estado de Quintana Roo. Como parte de la oferta educativa de la unidad Chetumal, se ofrece la Licenciatura en lengua Inglesa. Este programa está enfocado a formar profesionales capaces de planear y dar clases de este idioma, (Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa, 1995). El programa incluye 4 cursos opcionales de francés. Este campus también ofrece cursos de francés en el Centro de Enseñanza de Idiomas (CEI).

### *Muestra*

Para este estudio se eligieron a los estudiantes mediante una muestra intencionada (Creswell, 2008). Se invitó a participar a los estudiantes de francés del CEI y estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa inscritos en alguno de los cursos de francés. En total, la muestra estuvo constituida por 95 estudiantes (38 hombres y 57 mujeres), cuyas edades fluctúan entre los 18 y 36 años. En el momento del levantamiento de los datos, los estudiantes del CEI se encontraban en algún punto entre el 1° y el 6° semestre, y los estudiantes de la Licenciatura en 6°, 8°, 9° y 10° semestres.

### *Instrumentos*

El instrumento utilizado fue una adaptación del cuestionario *The Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy* [QESE] (Kim, Wang, Ahn & Bong, 2015), el cual contenía preguntas sobre autoeficacia y respuestas tipo Likert. Se hicieron tres versiones de la encuesta debido a los diferentes niveles de francés en que los estudiantes se encontraban. La versión A1 del instrumento incluía a los estudiantes de francés de los niveles Básico e Introductorio; la versión A2 a aquellos ubicados en los niveles Pre-intermedio e Intermedio, y la versión B2

a quienes cursaban el nivel Post-intermedio de francés. La encuesta se encontraba dividida en tres secciones: la primera parte consistía en 12 preguntas sobre las percepciones del estudiante para ejecutar tareas en las cuatro habilidades lingüísticas en francés (hablar, escuchar, leer y escribir). Es importante mencionar que estas preguntas se basaron en el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas (Consejo de Europa, 2002) y se adaptaron al nivel de francés que cursaban los estudiantes. El Marco fue utilizado para tener una fuente sólida que respaldara los niveles de dominio de la lengua. La segunda sección del instrumento estaba conformada por 12 preguntas respecto de las fuentes de la autoeficacia propuestas por Bandura (1987): experiencia vicaria, persuasión verbal, estados fisiológicos y emocionales. La tercera sección del instrumento consistió en 3 preguntas sobre datos demográficos de los estudiantes.

### *Procedimiento*

Se pidió autorización a los profesores de francés para administrar el instrumento en una clase al final del semestre. Se informó a los estudiantes sobre el propósito del estudio y se les solicitó su participación voluntaria. También, se les aclaró que su anonimidad sería protegida. El procesamiento y análisis de los datos se realizó mediante el software estadístico *The Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS).

Para el análisis de resultados se utilizó estadística descriptiva. La confiabilidad del cuestionario fue de un alfa de Cronbach de .746. De acuerdo con Muijs (2010), una puntuación por encima de .7 es usualmente considerada de confiabilidad razonable para fines de investigación.

## **RESULTADOS**

A continuación presentamos los resultados en el orden en que se establecieron las preguntas de investigación. La primera fue ¿Cuál es el sentido de auto-eficacia de los estudiantes de francés de la Universidad de Quintana Roo respecto de las cuatro habilidades lingüísticas?

En cuanto a la habilidad de expresión oral, los resultados proveen evidencia de que el 53% de los estudiantes del nivel B1 se considera capaz de hablar en francés. El 32% de los estudiantes del nivel A2 se autoevaluó como “totalmente capaz” y el 32% de los estudiantes del nivel A1 se describió como “básicamente capaz”. En la figura 1 se aprecian en detalle los resultados.



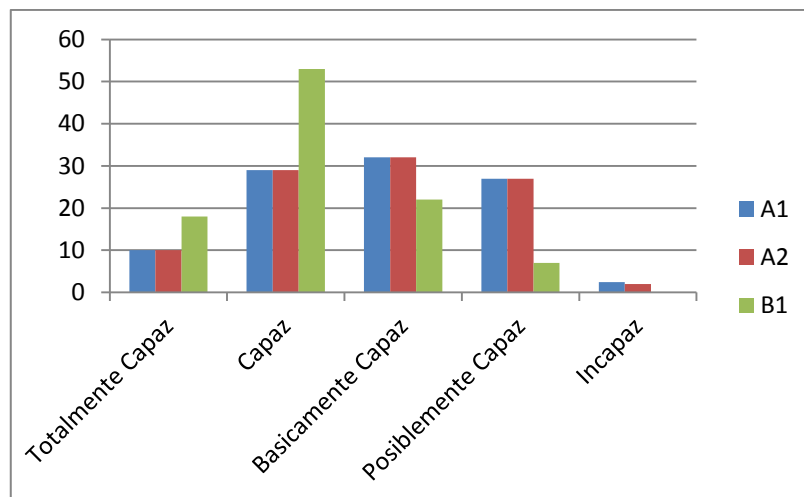


Figura 1. Expresión Oral

Los resultados de este estudio pueden compararse parcialmente con el de Cubillos e Ilvento (2012) que aunque se enfocó en estancias en el extranjero, concuerda con el presente estudio porque también muestra que el sentido de autoeficacia varía con la experiencia. Este hallazgo también es coherente con la teoría de la autoeficacia de Bandura (1997) en el sentido de que asevera que las percepciones de autoeficacia cambian a través del tiempo. Los resultados muestran que, en efecto, hubo un cambio en el nivel de autoeficacia en la habilidad de hablar de los estudiantes de todos los niveles. Es posible que los estudiantes del nivel B1 hayan afirmado no sentirse totalmente capaces porque, a pesar de que ya tenían experiencia y dominio de los temas básicos y algunos de los niveles intermedios, estos estudiantes cursaban un nivel relativamente alto. La complejidad de lo que están haciendo en este momento es alta, por lo que se espera que no se sientan totalmente capaces. Se puede decir que sus creencias son acordes con su situación de aprendizaje.

En cuanto a los estudiantes del nivel A1, éstos recién empiezan a estudiar el idioma y los temas que estudian son novedosos para ellos. La pronunciación y la gramática son completamente nuevas y, probablemente, esto hace que los estudiantes crean que no son tan eficaces. Sin embargo, los estudiantes de nivel A2 están en su segundo o tercer semestre de su carrera, ya superaron la etapa inicial, y se sienten más capaces de producir en francés. Además, los temas de este nivel no son tan complejos o difíciles de entender.

En lo que concierne la comprensión auditiva, los resultados revelaron que la mayoría de los estudiantes de todos los niveles (A2: 50%, B1: 47%. A1: 40%) se consideraba capaz de realizar tareas auditivas. La figura 2 muestra los resultados en detalle.

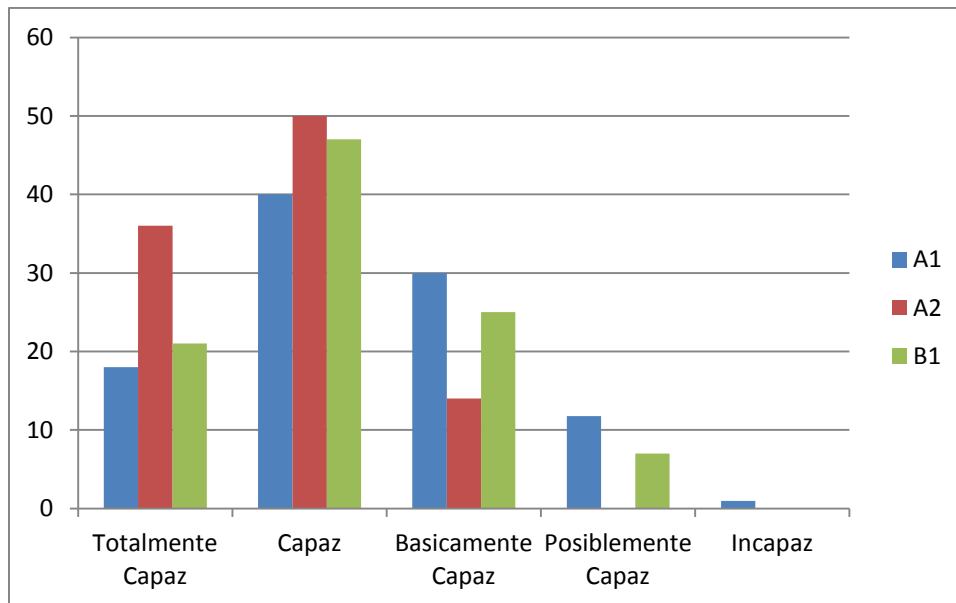


Figura 2. Comprensión auditiva

Estos resultados coinciden con los hallazgos de Bandura (1997), quien sugiere que las percepciones cambian a través del tiempo, y los niños finalmente juzgan sus capacidades en comparación con otros a medida que crecen. Probablemente, cuanto más tiempo pasan los estudiantes del nivel A2 en la práctica de la habilidad de escuchar, mejor desempeñan en ella. Por otro lado, los estudiantes del nivel B1 tal vez tienen ejercicios auditivos más complejos que los hacen sentir más estresados, a diferencia de los estudiantes del nivel A2, que tienen ejercicios difíciles, pero no demasiado complicados de realizar. Por el contrario, los estudiantes del nivel A1 tal vez no han desarrollado suficientemente la habilidad de escuchar, ya que son relativamente nuevos en la carrera y no cuentan con suficientes estrategias de comprensión auditiva. Contar con un sentido de autoeficacia alto es crucial para el desarrollo de habilidades auditivas efectivas (Graham, 2008).

En cuanto a la habilidad de lectura, la mayoría de los alumnos de nivel A2 (44%) y B1 (58%) se consideraron capaces de realizar actividades de lectura. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los estudiantes del nivel A1 (32%) dijo ser básicamente capaz. Obsérvense los detalles en la figura 3.

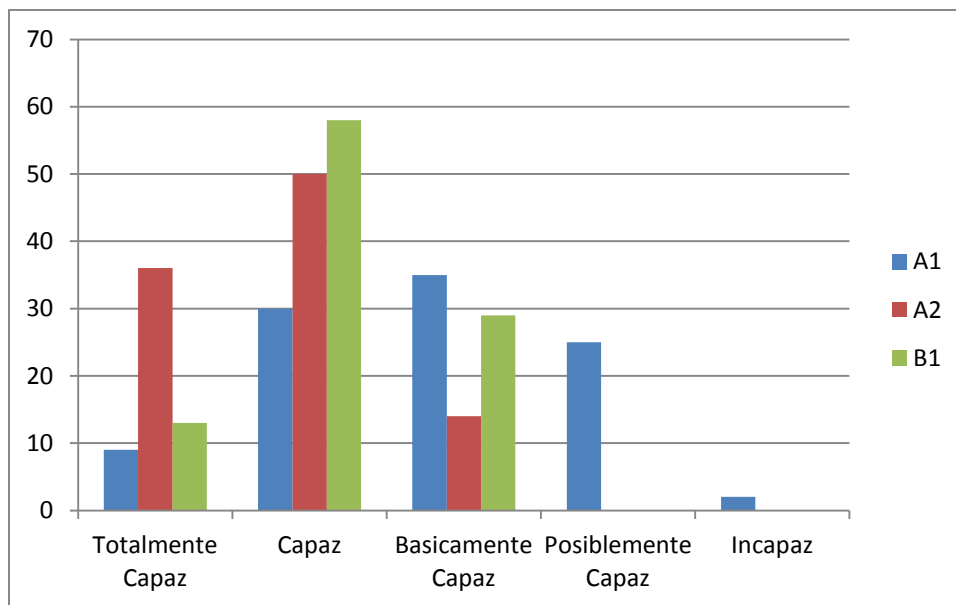


Figura 3. Comprensión de lectura.

Los resultados de este estudio coinciden con los hallazgos de Mills, et al. (2006), quienes sugieren que la autoeficacia está vinculada con el desarrollo de los estudiantes en la lectura. Estos autores también apoyaron las declaraciones de Bandura acerca de que los lectores de lenguas extranjeras pueden experimentar ansiedad cuando perciben que son menos competentes para leer. En el presente estudio, la mayoría de los estudiantes de nivel A1 se ubicó en la opción “básicamente capaz” mientras que los de los niveles A2 y B1 prefirieron mayoritariamente la opción “capaz”, seguida de “totalmente capaz”. Basándonos en los resultados de los autores anteriores, es posible que los estudiantes de nivel A1 tuvieran un vocabulario limitado, ya que estaban en un nivel de principiante. Igualmente, es posible que los estudiantes de los niveles A2 y B1 hayan aprendido estrategias de lectura. Sin embargo, ningún estudio precedente pudo compararse totalmente con los resultados del presente trabajo, ya que los primeros se centraron en investigar alguna de las habilidades lingüísticas de manera individual o en relación con otras variables. Luego entonces, se necesita más investigación para explicar con precisión estos hallazgos.

En cuanto a la habilidad de escritura, la mayoría de los estudiantes de la versión A1 (33%) se declaró "capaz". El 44% de la versión A2 expresó ser "Totalmente Capaz" y el 49% de la versión B1 mencionó sentirse “Capaz”. Consúltese la figura 4 para una información detallada.

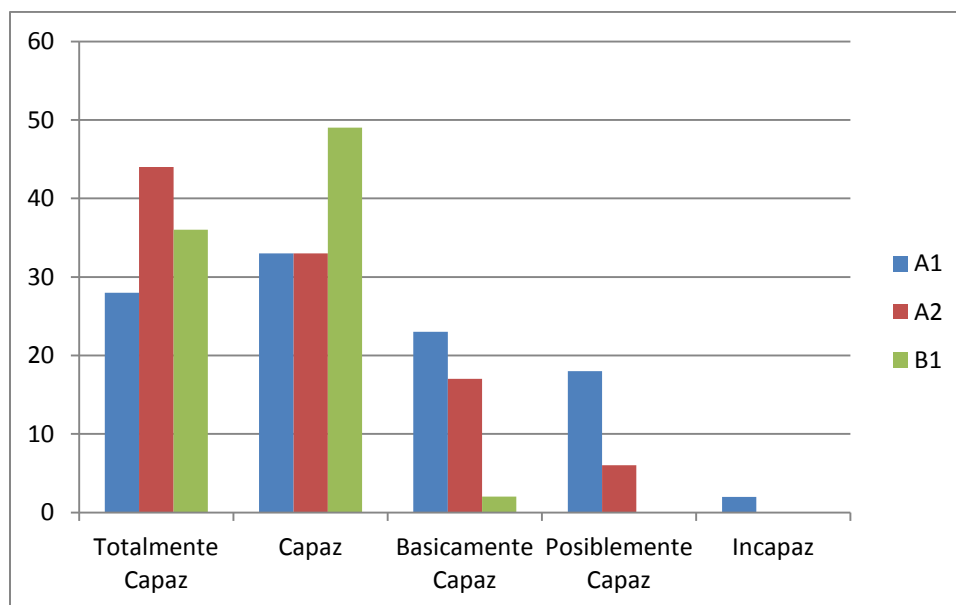


Figura 4. Habilidad de escritura.

Los resultados del presente estudio coinciden con los hallazgos de Zimmerman y Bandura (1992) efectuado con estudiantes universitarios de inglés. Estos hallaron que las fuentes de autoeficacia influyeron en las creencias de autoeficacia. También encontraron que los mensajes que los estudiantes recibían de adultos y compañeros sobre su escritura estaban directamente relacionados con el grado de confianza que los estudiantes sentían hacia sí mismos como escritores. Los tipos de escrito que los estudiantes del nivel A2 realizan son menos complejos que los requeridos para el nivel B1, posiblemente a ello se deba que se la mayoría se hayan autoevaluado “totalmente capaz”. En cambio, a pesar de que los tipos de textos para el nivel A1 son muy sencillos, los estudiantes apenas empiezan a conocer los rudimentos de la escritura en francés y por ello puede ser que se sientan menos capaces que sus contrapartes.

Los resultados generales en las cuatro habilidades lingüísticas revelaron que, en general, los estudiantes del nivel B1 piensan que son “capaces” de desempeñarse mejor en la habilidad de lectura. Por otro lado, los estudiantes del nivel A2 se sintieron más eficaces en la habilidad de escuchar y en la expresión oral. La mayoría de los estudiantes de la versión A1 se sintió más eficaz en la habilidad de escuchar que en otras habilidades. Los hallazgos del presente estudio coinciden con el de Mills et al. (2006), en el que afirman que los estudiantes que se perciben como buenos lectores se volvieron competentes en la lectura. Con base en sus resultados, es posible que los estudiantes del nivel B1 se percibieran como buenos lectores, lo que puede haber hecho que se sintieran más eficaces en la habilidad de lectura. Sobre los estudiantes de nivel A2 es posible decir que se sentían más eficaces en la comprensión auditiva y en la expresión oral. Puede ser posible que a medida que los estudiantes de este nivel van avanzando en el aprendizaje del francés se sientan más eficaces para realizar actividades en las habilidades mencionadas, dado que se presupone tienen un mayor conocimiento sobre el uso de estrategias que cuando estaban en el nivel A1.

Igualmente, podría ser posible que los estudiantes del nivel A1 de francés se hayan sentido menos eficaces en algunas habilidades porque en los niveles más bajos los estudiantes de idiomas extranjeros cuentan con menos vocabulario, gramática y conocimiento sobre la aplicación de estrategias efectivas en la habilidad de lectura que los estudiantes de los niveles superiores. También podría ser posible que los estudiantes de nivel A1 no conozcan estrategias efectivas de lectura, lo que indicaría que los maestros deberían trabajar más en su implementación.

A continuación se da respuesta la pregunta ¿Cuál ha sido la experiencia de los estudiantes con las fuentes de auto-eficacia?

En relación con la experiencia vicaria, los resultados revelan (ver figura 5) que menos de la mitad de los estudiantes en los niveles A1 (32%) indicó que la influencia de otras personas siempre ha sido importante para estudiar el idioma francés. Seguido por los estudiantes del nivel A2 (40%) quienes dijeron haber tenido siempre profesores de francés que han sido inspiradores. Finalmente, casi la mitad de los estudiantes del nivel B1 (40%) reportaron haber tenido siempre maestros inspiradores del francés.

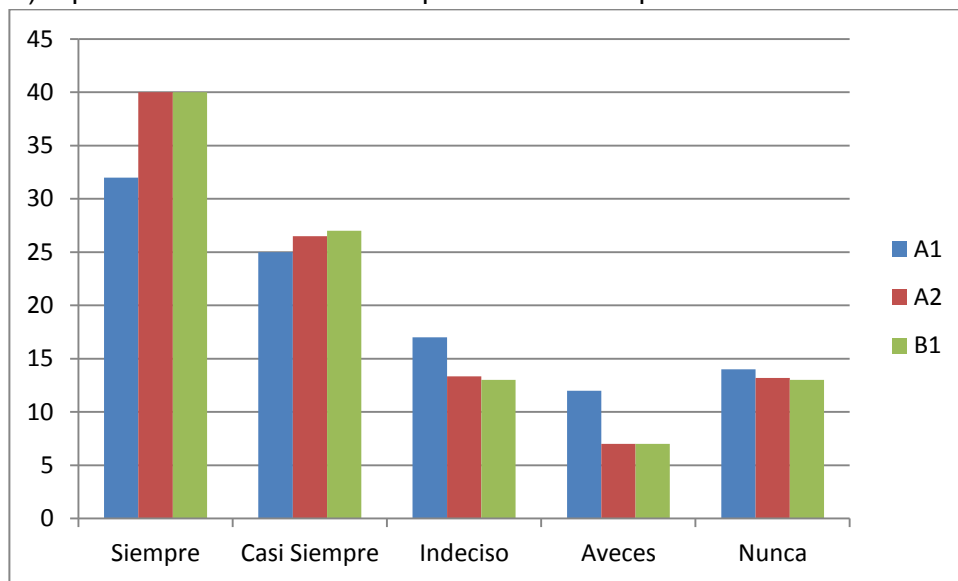


Figura 5. Experiencia vicaria

Bandura (1997) establece que cuando las personas son consideradas modelos, como amigos, parientes y asistentes nativos, se genera una gran motivación para alcanzar el mismo nivel, en este caso de francés. Según Bandura la influencia del modelo está relacionada con la confiabilidad de las personas. Los estudiantes mencionaron que tenían maestros que los inspiraron; es decir, los consideran modelos dignos de imitarse. Bandura establece que dependiendo de cómo los estudiantes percibieron el modelo, decidirán si son buenos o no. Si se dan cuenta de que su modelo es un apasionado de un determinado tema y sabe cómo hacer frente a los obstáculos, el estudiante verá a esta persona como un modelo a seguir pero no lo hará en caso contrario. Sobre los estudiantes que declaran no tener un modelo a seguir, podría ser

que en su experiencia académica, no hayan tenido maestros, parientes o amigos que consideren modelos dignos. Bandura menciona que la gente debe juzgar los modelos como dignos para que desee imitarlos. Los resultados de este estudio no coinciden con los hallazgos de Mahyuddin et al. (2006), quienes hallaron que inicialmente los estudiantes consideraban a los profesores como una inspiración, pero como no recibieron atención de su parte, estos estudiantes bajaron su sentido de autoeficacia. En el presente estudio, los estudiantes de todos los niveles (A1, A2 y B1) reportaron haber tenido siempre maestros inspiradores. Los hallazgos de este estudio sugieren que los maestros de francés de la UQRoo se preocupan de prestar suficiente atención a los estudiantes, lo que en consecuencia, aumenta sus creencias de autoeficacia.

En cuanto a la fuente de la persuasión verbal, los resultados revelaron (Ver figura 5) que menos de la mitad de los estudiantes en los niveles B1 (42%) y A2 (42%) declaró que los buenos comentarios casi siempre han tenido una influencia en sus percepciones; mientras que los estudiantes del nivel A1 (28%) se mostraron indecisos.

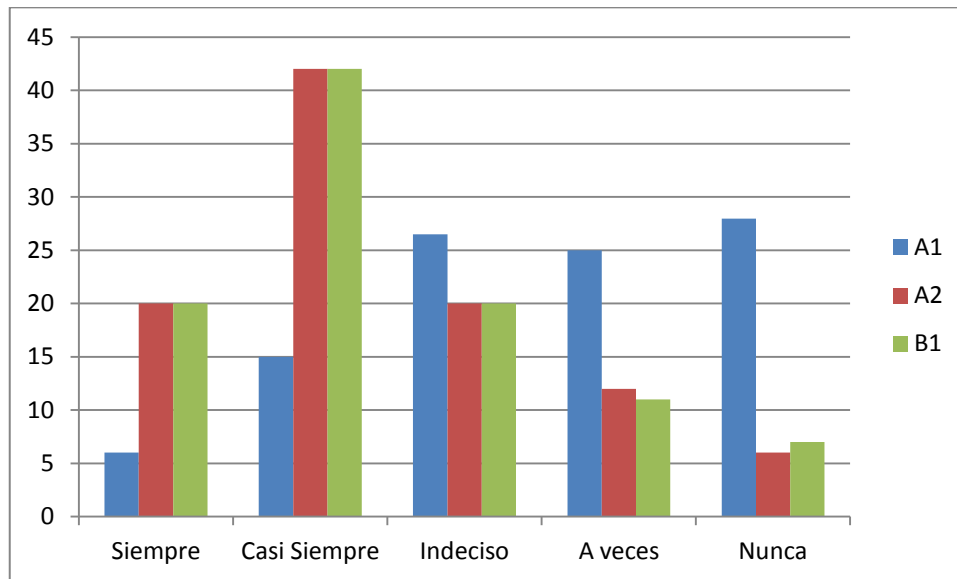


Figura 5. Persuasión verbal

Los estudiantes que recibieron una buena retroalimentación, por ejemplo, de amigos, maestros o familiares tienden a estar más motivados para seguir haciendo las cosas bien. Lit y Schunk (citados en Bandura, 1995) afirman que las personas persuadidas verbalmente tienden a dominar las actividades dadas y hacer un gran esfuerzo. En esta fuente, la mayoría de los estudiantes dijo que han tenido comentarios positivos sobre su progreso en francés. Los estudiantes que estaban ubicados en la respuesta "casi la verdad", probablemente han tenido comentarios buenos y malos, pero posiblemente han recibido más comentarios negativos o bien no los consideraron importantes. Bandura (1997) afirma que el escepticismo se desarrolla a partir de experiencias personales cuando la gente no cree lo que se les ha dicho. Esto significa que los ejecutores eventualmente ignorarían a sus persuasores. Hasta donde sabemos, no

hay estudios que investiguen esta fuente de autoeficacia con estudiantes de francés de diferentes niveles. Entonces, los resultados de este estudio no pueden compararse. Por lo tanto, sería pertinente investigar más sobre esta fuente.

En cuanto a la fuente de estados fisiológicos y emocionales, los resultados revelaron que casi la mitad de los estudiantes de los niveles A2 y B1 dijeron que los ejercicios de hablar y escribir en francés los estresaban a veces. Los participantes de los tres niveles, A1 (35%), A2 (26.5%) y B1 (43%), declararon sentirse nerviosos al hacer ejercicios de comprensión auditiva (Véase Figura 6).

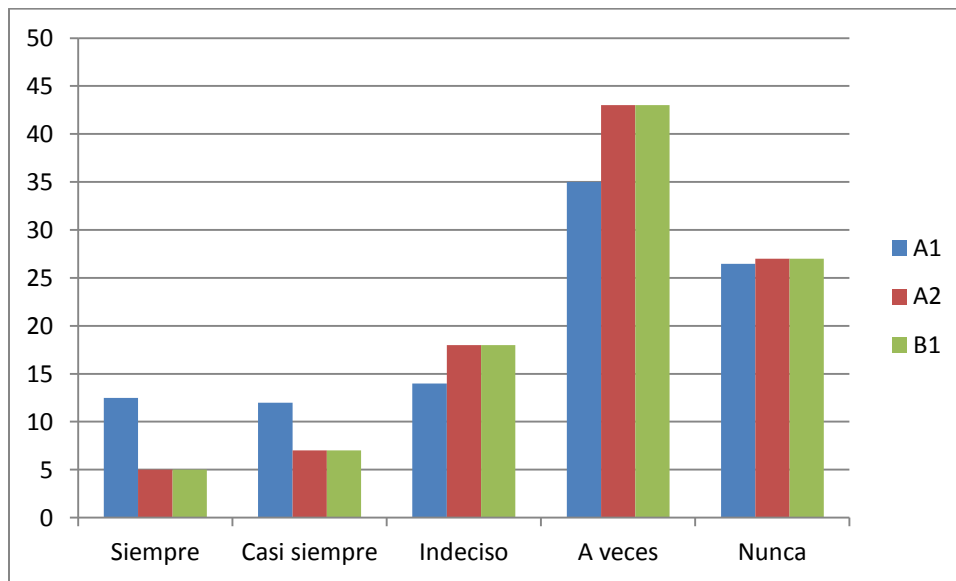


Figura 6. Estados fisiológicos y emocionales

Bandura (1995) afirma que aquellos que tienen un alto sentido de eficacia ven su estado de estimulación afectiva como un facilitador de rendimiento que aquellos que tienen muchas dudas. Los estudiantes que declararon no estar nerviosos o estresados por hacer las actividades tienen fuertes creencias de eficacia. Bandura (1997) sugiere que las personas que interpretan su estimulación como resultado de deficiencias personales son más propensas a disminuir sus creencias de eficacia que aquellos que ven su estimulación como una reacción transitoria que todos pueden experimentar. Hasta donde sabemos, no hay estudios que investiguen esta fuente de autoeficacia con estudiantes de francés. Sin embargo, estos resultados pueden compararse con el estudio de Mills et al. (2006) quienes encontraron que los lectores de lenguas extranjeras experimentan ansiedad cuando perciben que son menos competentes en su capacidad de leer textos en lenguas extranjeras. Además, los autores anteriores sugirieron que la ansiedad de escuchar se asoció significativamente con la competencia auditiva de todos los participantes. Entonces, podría ser posible que todos los participantes en este estudio se sintieran ansiosos y nerviosos al hacer las tareas de escuchar, hablar o leer, lo que puede haber causado que se sintieran menos eficaces en esta fuente.

## CONCLUSIONES

El objetivo de este estudio fue establecer el sentido de autoeficacia en los estudiantes que aprenden francés en el CEI y en la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa así como su experiencia respecto de tres de las fuentes de autoeficacia. Para lograrlo, se adoptó el enfoque cuantitativo y se utilizó un cuestionario como instrumento de investigación. Los resultados indican que la mayoría de los estudiantes se considera autoeficaces en las cuatro habilidades lingüísticas. Acerca de las fuentes de la autoeficacia encontramos que en cuanto a la experiencia vicaria la mayoría de los estudiantes dijo que ha habido personas que han sido modelos para ellos. Respecto de la persuasión verbal los estudiantes de los niveles B1 y A2 dos concordaron en haber recibido retroalimentación sobre su desempeño en francés mientras que los del nivel A1 mencionaron haberla recibido escasamente. En lo que concierne a los estados fisiológicos y emocionales casi la mitad de los estudiantes de los niveles A2 y B1 aseveraron que los ejercicios de expresión oral y escritura en francés los estresaban a veces. Un poco menos de la mitad de los participantes de los tres niveles declaró sentirse nervioso al hacer ejercicios de comprensión auditiva. Los resultados concuerdan con la teoría de la autoeficacia de Bandura (1997) que sostiene que la experiencia vicaria tiene un papel importante en el sentido de auto-eficacia de los estudiantes y que el contar con modelos sirve como otra herramienta eficaz para promover un sentido de eficacia personal. En general, el estudio coincide con la literatura previa. Aunque ésta investiga una o dos habilidades lingüísticas y no todas como en el presente trabajo.

El presente trabajo contribuye a ayudar a profesores y estudiantes de francés en la UQRoo a tener una mejor visión sobre cuáles son las percepciones de los estudiantes para aprender el idioma francés. Los resultados de este trabajo, entonces, sugieren que los maestros deben buscar diferentes estrategias para trabajar con las habilidades de escuchar y escribir, porque son en las que los estudiantes se sintieron menos eficaces. Es importante que los maestros hagan que estas habilidades sean observadas igual que las otras, para que los estudiantes puedan ganar confianza y concentrarse en las tareas. Es una buena idea que el CEI y la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa ofrezcan cursos específicamente diseñados para practicar una habilidad en lugar de varias en la misma lección. Tal vez, de esta manera, los estudiantes podrían concentrarse en sus debilidades y reforzar sus fortalezas y percepciones sobre su eficacia para un mejor desarrollo de cada habilidad. Sería trascendental si la UQRoo pudiera adaptar un laboratorio en el que los estudiantes pudieran expresar su creatividad e ir a practicar sus habilidades creando diferentes tipos de medios como programas de radio, periódicos, libros, revistas que se pudieran publicar.

Por otro lado, los estudiantes deben buscar diferentes estrategias para fortalecer sus habilidades de comprensión auditiva y de redacción. Deben ser conscientes de cómo utilizar las estrategias para planificar, supervisar y evaluar dichas habilidades. Para la habilidad de escuchar, conviene tratar de estar expuestos tanto como puedan a la lengua francesa. Escuchar diferentes recursos como programas de televisión y canciones en



francés podría ser una buena idea para hacerlo. Para mejorar la habilidad de escritura, es aconsejable que los estudiantes lean mucho, o escriban un diario para mantenerse al día con lo que aprenden en el aula y así mejorar sus habilidades. Es importante que los estudiantes sean responsables de su propio aprendizaje y éxito. Como Gahungu (2007) afirma:

“La meta de cada instrucción de segundo idioma es desarrollar la competencia comunicativa del alumno. Este esfuerzo puede ser desafiante; sin embargo, la planificación, la participación activa en el proceso de aprendizaje, la supervisión del progreso y la temperatura emocional pueden hacer la tarea más manejable y agradable. La medida en la que un estudiante de lenguas utiliza estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas puede determinar en última instancia el nivel de su éxito ” (p.157).

En futuros estudios sería interesante investigar el sentido de autoeficacia, de los profesores, para saber si su autoeficacia como maestros de la lengua francesa influye directamente en las creencias del estudiante sobre el aprendizaje del francés. Una limitación de este estudio fue que todos los resultados se basaron en las percepciones del estudiante de su propia autoeficacia y no se comparó con el desempeño real. Existe la posibilidad de inconsistencias entre ambos aspectos. En el futuro podría complementarse el estudio con pruebas de desempeño y entrevistas, lo anterior aportaría una mayor solidez a los hallazgos.

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## **SECCIÓN II: EVALUACIÓN DEL APRENDIZAJE DE LENGUAS**

# EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION METHODS FOR ENHANCING EFL STUDENTS' LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

In recent decades, a reform in education different from traditional evaluation processes seems to have found a positive response among most EFL teachers all over the world. However, alternative forms of assessment and evaluation have received limited attention so far, or there is a lack of awareness on the type of evaluation method being used. This research aimed at exploring alternative assessment methods in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) area, used by teachers enrolled in an MA TEFL program at the Language School of the University of Veracruz, to enhance students' learning. Thus, it is of paramount importance to review the most common assessment and evaluation methods used in the educational field, specifically in the TEFL arena, to understand how students' learning processes are evaluated and, as a result, to promote the method that best contributes to the achievement of their language proficiency, their autonomy, confidence and success. Interview and observation (field-notes) were employed to collect instructive data provided by in-service teachers. On the one hand, findings suggested that assessment and evaluation should avoid being merely summative; on the other hand, formative appraisal reveals traces of behaviourist methods. All this makes evident that in-service-teachers need some support to try alternative assessment and evaluation methods in their teaching situations; so that students may benefit from what their teachers do as effective evaluators, instructors and facilitators. Finally, an alternative way to implement assessment and evaluation methods is suggested.

**Key words:** analytical, assessment, evaluation, holistic, performance, rubric, scoring

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, due to a more dynamic and practical evolvement of the learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), teachers on this field have started to focus more on what their students can actually do with the language – competencies – than in only quantifying the outcomes revealed in an exam. This type of assessment is referred to as alternative, performance and/or practical assessments, since performance and production have started to have more weight than memorization. This is not something new, but teachers need to raise awareness of the way they can address learning assessment in their classes and have more informed arguments to back up a more meaningful form of assessment.

Students from the MA in TEFL from the Language School of the University of Veracruz were invited to participate in this project considering that they were enrolled in the subject “evaluation processes”, in which their main goal is to be up to date in new ways of conducting assessment. The outcome of this inquiry may also raise teachers’ awareness about what they already do regarding the application of different types of assessments; thus, at the end, they might be provided with some theoretical basis to support what they are already doing in their EFL classrooms, their daily practice in this area. However, the intention was only to explore, along with participants, the usefulness and relevance of new ways to evaluate EFL students’ learning.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions that helped us explore our concern expressed at the end of the previous section were:

- How useful and relevant are alternative assessment and evaluation methods for the MA program students’ working context?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using alternative assessment methods according to teachers?

## **OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of this study was to explore, among TEFL MA students, the usefulness and relevance of alternative assessment and evaluation methods to enhance EFL students’ learning. Thus, it was important to identify possible advantages and disadvantages that teachers identify when using alternative assessment methods.

## **CONTEXT**

Current evaluation systems in Mexico intend to move from traditional into more alternative assessments. However, it must be mentioned that both types of evaluation seem to overlap at most educational settings where they are applied, as teachers need to provide students with summative and formative assessments. For the purpose of this study, summative assessment is related to traditional evaluation as it gives emphasis on outcomes rather than on performance improvement (Calidoni-Lundberg, 2006). This is particularly relevant in the EFL context, as it is usually in constant evolution regarding teaching and learning methodologies, which take behaviourism and constructivism into consideration.

Nevertheless, at present, EFL institutions seem to accept traditional evaluation traces combined with more pragmatic evaluation methods as they may respond to professional and/or personal demands. On the one hand, students may be required a language certification; it is apparently here, when international exam policies are considered, implemented and/or imposed. On the other hand, students want to be

proficient in the use of a second language and be functional in foreign everyday settings. The main concern in this context is whether language teachers are aware of the methodologies they are presently using to measure their students' improvement or if they are more interested in observing and measuring their students' performance.

The University of Veracruz offers the Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (MEILE for its name in Spanish), program in which this study took place. This is a modular program designed for promoting the improvement of the professional level of those who work in the field of teaching and learning this language. MEILE is recognized as a quality program by the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACyT for its Initials in Spanish), and it is listed in the National Catalogue of Continuous Training and Professional Development by the Ministry of Education (SEP for its Initials in Spanish). Those MEILE students who have been awarded a grant are allowed to work a maximum of eight hours per week and they usually teach at levels that go from kindergarten to university.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section has been divided into six subsections. First of all, we deal with *recapitulating traditional evaluation*. After that, we contrast alternative assessments in the following subsection: *Discussing alternative methods*. The next subsection, *combining traditional and alternative assessment* describes a phenomenon that is taking place today. Then, the subsection *recognizing the characteristics of alternative assessment* emerges as a crucial point to raise awareness. The fifth subsection, *searching innovative means for assessment & guidance*, may confirm what teachers are already doing or may do in their teaching context. Finally, *exploring alternative assessment & guidance processes* are described for teachers to gain confidence in the use of this type of assessments.

### *Recapitulating traditional evaluation*

Using standardized exams is the common reference for traditional assessment (Lopes, 2015). In this respect, Aliasin & Amanlu (2017) affirm that teachers tend to stigmatize students depending on their results in exams based on multiple choice, fill-in the blank and cloze exercises, among other types of items. Teachers seem to have the habit of focusing more on students' accurate outcomes than on meaningful performance. In addition, in summative testing, the most traditional way of evaluating, teachers play the role of test administrator, instructor and examiner (Sandlund at al., 2016). However, according to Jabbarifar (2009), evaluation should go beyond language achievement and meaningless learning; therefore, language assessment should take into account what teaching and learning involve today. EFL learners need to be autonomous using language naturally. Considering the above mentioned, making decisions related to educational policies should be based on alternative forms of evaluation outcomes.



### *Discussing alternative methods*

Alternative assessment may, then, be understood as different from the traditional standardized assessment, which seems to classify students' capability and obstruct their autonomy and creativity (Lopes, 2015). This situation may occur because traditional testing forces students to rely more on their memory than on what they can do with the acquired knowledge. According to Herrera and Macias (2015) assessment has numerous purposes and may be applied in different forms; however, it continues being merely seen as a summative evaluation. In this respect, Braun et al. (2006) affirm that formative assessment is regarded as a way to assist students' learning processes while summative assessment is used for making decisions. Akubuilu (2012) adds that alternative assessments encourage generalizations, but teachers need to take into account different students' learning styles. Finally, Estrada et al. (2016) found that students' performance during oral presentations may be assessed with clear and friendly guidelines that would serve as parameters in a disclosed rubric. This last remark makes evident that traditional and alternative assessments could be combined with caution.

### *Combining traditional and alternative assessment*

There are certain types of assessments that can be encapsulated in the traditional evaluation paradigm. First of all, Herrera and Macias (2015) define summative assessment as a way to inform teachers of their "students' success or failure in their learning process based on a numeric scale" (p.1). On the contrary, analytical assessment provides data and feedback and allows re-teaching. National and international assessments search for a meaningful context to interpret test results and carry out cross-national comparisons. Thus, alternative assessment goes beyond the traditional type of test items such as multiple-choice, fill-in the blanks and cloze. In this respect, Gallagher (2008) briefly clarifies the dissimilarity between traditional and alternative assessments when he explains that the main difference has to do with the way they are used and not only with the specific purpose of a particular test.

Nevertheless, traditional and alternative assessments seem to overlap in the former paradigm, which embraces formative, analytical and holistic assessments. First of all, formative assessment implies that teaching and learning adjust while they are taking place. Secondly, analytical assessment allows constant data and feedback to improve students' performance. Finally, holistic assessment may encourage self and peer-assessment in a friendly environment. Therefore, the whole point of exploring alternative assessments is raising EFL teachers' awareness that by combining traditional and alternative assessments, students may be encouraged to focus on their academic performance as well as on their linguistic development (Lopes, 2015).

### *Recognizing the characteristics of alternative assessment*

There are different reasons why teachers and students may consider alternative assessments as ways to provide immediate evaluation in an ongoing process. For example, by participating in the design of the evaluation criteria, students may set their own achievement goals and teachers may contribute guaranteeing students will sort out a task with a reasonable level of difficulty (Aliasin & Amanlu, 2017; Lopes, 2015). In this regard, Lopes (2015) states that alternative assessments encourage students to raise awareness on the linguistic application of the target language in real situations and contexts outside the educational milieu. Espinoza (2015) adds that any task designed for a specific educational context should be authentic and meaningful as well as be based on a predetermined criterion. This criterion needs to be shared and agreed with students as it will be used to evaluate their performance during the preparation and development of tasks and projects.

It is to be added, that evaluation goes beyond a certification or standardized exam to pass or fail a subject, students may also face evaluation in case they want to write academic texts such as journal articles or book chapters. This real world task should be presented and discussed with undergraduate and postgraduate students, so that they become aware of the evaluation process they may go through when interested in publishing their work and what might be expected from them in this case (Lopez & Herrera, 2017). It must be noticed that such type of evaluation could be considered as lifelong learning and a truly innovative way of assessment and guidance.

### *Searching for innovative means for assessment & guidance*

There is a series of possible types of tasks, projects and activities within the alternative assessment paradigm, which may encourage students' language learning development. These have to do with activities such as organizing political campaigns or doing website projects, as explained later in this subsection. According to Lopes (2015), alternative assessments allow the use of varied tasks and evaluation criteria that must be disclosed, that is to say, they must be known by students. Muñoz (2009) adds that these tasks or projects should be based on students' needs, real world situations and meaningful activities. Akubuilu (2012) grounds Lopes' and Muñoz' ideas when asserting that alternative tasks should be relevant in the real world, therefore, students might get involved in activities such as cultural, ecological and political campaigns, conferences and/or documentaries. These tasks and projects need to be designed within challenging situations in which students perform to sort out different situations. In addition, as part of the process while carrying out these activities, they receive assessment and guidance from their teachers.

Moreover, students should be clearly guided on the form they will be assessed during class dynamics. In this way, they might be trained to cope with academic presentations and their corresponding evaluation. In this regard, Buenfil and Lopez (2016) highlight the importance of giving students the rationale behind the design of score descriptors, so that they know exactly what is expected from them. On the same line, Reddy and Andrade (2010) sustain that providing students with the evaluation criteria is truly beneficial as students can achieve autonomy, self-efficacy and more rewarding learning processes. It can be concluded that regarding traditional and alternative assessments, there have been attempts to standardize the use of agreed rubrics to evaluate, but at the same time, to function as guidelines to provide feedback and to monitor meaningful learning, which EFL teachers also need to be aware of.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study has been carried out as a Case Study framed by the qualitative approach, in which small and/or particular groups of human actors are studied in natural settings, in their everyday world, in a particular time. Thus, in this case, a group of MA TEFL students, taking the Evaluation Methods course (one of the subjects in this program) at the Language School of the University of Veracruz, has participated in this research, in order to know the relevance and their awareness of the evaluation/assessment methods they use in their respective teaching practice.

Qualitative inquiry, then, seeks to understand the meanings and significance of certain humans' actions from their own perspective (Lankshear and Knobel 2004; Maykut and Morehouse 1994; Richards 2003; Robson 2002) and it is done by employing a range of methods, and its analysis is based on a range of features. Thus, in qualitative research, data may be obtained through interviews (close or open-ended questions), and observation, among other methods, that help to investigate individuals, groups, institutions or other social units in an integrated and detailed way (Stake, 2010). Since in this study we aimed to explore the awareness and relevance of the implementation of alternative assessment and evaluation methods to enhance EFL students' learning, among the MA TEFL students at the University of Veracruz, we considered carrying it out as a case study by using interview and observation as the data collection methods.

### *Case Study*

As abovementioned, we made use of a Case Study within the Qualitative Paradigm as it allowed us to gather real-life information and to explore a particular phenomenon (Lopez, 2012; Stake, 2010); in this case the information from MA TEFL students (EFL teachers) who have implemented, or are exploring alternative assessment methods. According to Merriam (as cited in Gan, 2013), a case is "a phenomenon that is inherently bounded, with a finite amount of time for data collection or a limited number of people who could be interviewed or observed" (p. 97). In this case, it was a 4-month data collection period in a

group of 16 MA TEFL students, from which 6 students were purposefully chosen as participants (Patton, 2002).

As Creswell (2014) explains, a case study approach allows the researcher to gather information from different data collection instruments and sources. Hence, by considering this approach, we were able to obtain comprehensive information about the five participants interviewed and two (of them) observed with the purpose of analysing the data obtained from them. The former is consistent with Hayes' (2000) declaration that educational case studies mainly focus on typical members of groups, but they may also provide information on particular individuals.

### *Context & Participants*

Taking advantage of the researchers being the teachers in charge of the 'Evaluation Methods' course, the sample was purposefully chosen (Patton, 2002) from the group taking this subject at the moment of the research. They were invited to participate because they were available and willing to contribute with this case study (Convenience/Purposeful sampling, Cohen et al., 2000; Patton, 2002). The sample consisted of six participants; one man and five women from different cities of Mexico and a woman from Colombia. They were between 25 and 34 years old, and were also teaching at different educational levels and settings: from kindergarten to university. Two of them were observed while giving classes to a BA TEFL group, and these same participants and three others were interviewed when the course was over.

It is important to clarify that the students who were observed were in fact implementing assessment activities in the classes they gave at the Languages School - UV. Besides, during the interview, they talked about this experience, and all the participants commented other events they had experienced when teaching and evaluating in an English class, including the concepts they learnt about assessment in their MA class.

### *Data collection instruments: Interviews and Observation logs*

Since we wanted to get the participants to share with us their opinions and views about the evaluation/assessment methods they had used as teachers in their classes, by giving them "a degree of power and control over the course of the interview" (Nunan, 1992, p. 150), we used a semi-structured interview. This type of interview consists in having a list of questions and/or prompts to address the topic (See Appendix 1), considering that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each interviewee; nevertheless, it does not have to be intrusive or directive (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002; Patton 2002). We carried out the interviews until we noticed we had sufficient data and had reached a saturation point, that is, the data stopped revealing new and relevant information (Kvale, 1996) as demanded in qualitative research.

Regarding the moderate participant observation, which we also made use of, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) define it as that in which the researcher is present at the scene of action, is identifiable as such, but does not actively participate nor engage in anything that people being observed are doing there. It does not mean that the observer/researcher was never able to interact with the two students that were specifically observed while they were giving their classes and evaluating their students. In fact, the group in which these MA TEFL students were implementing an evaluation/assessment method was one of the researchers' groups, so, the students in this class already knew him as their teacher.

Once the two MA TEFL students' classes had been observed and four of the participants had been interviewed, we proceeded to analyze the data gathered through an adaptation of the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba 1985, based on Glaser & Strauss 1967; Maykut & Morehouse 1994). The reason for choosing this method was that it suited the analysis of data during the data collection stage, as well as later on, when we had already collected the data.

## **FINDINGS**

After having analysed the data gathered from both methods (interviews and observations), six categories emerged: alternative assessment based on experience; realistic tests scores vs. significant learning; improvement on test scores and learning strategies; impact of evaluation on students' lifelong learning; advantages and disadvantages of evaluating students' performance through major and minor assignments, and new learning tendencies consideration. As it is shown below, the findings will be explained according to the category they belong to. In the extracts supporting each category, it seems that after noticing the term alternative during the interview, participants reflected on the way they use alternative assessments.

It is to be noticed that the quotations taken from the interviews are called 'extracts', and when they are taken from the field notes (observation) they are only numbered in the order in which they are presented. Besides, they are coded with the three first letters from the word participant (par) and the three first letters of their corresponding names (mer for Merlina), so, parmer = participant Merlina).

### *Alternative assessment based on experience*

Alternative assessment based on experience means that students did not receive training to implement it. During their teaching practice, teachers consciously or unconsciously know there are different forms to evaluate students as well as to give them feedback. The participant in the first extract seems to follow the instructions provided by coordinators in an educational setting. S/he highlights the importance of helping students to organize their work and have more meaningful learning experiences with materials provided by the same course-books. Nevertheless, teachers might not necessarily depend only on the textbook

as students also need to be motivated. If feedback is adequately provided during these tasks, students' production may be meaningful for them.

#### Extract 001

The process to assess our students should show how they learn and what their abilities are, how they demonstrate what they have learnt and the circumstances in which they learn. This requires alternatives to standardize testing to assess student learning... Today, there are different alternative assessment tasks provided by course-books such as portfolios, video recordings, checklists, journals, and interviews, among others, to achieve adequate, enriching, positive and relevant outcomes from students.

(Parmer)

Nevertheless, Parmer seems to have left aside the opportunity to provide students with advice regarding their learning as s/he underlines students' outcomes and omits the term feedback. This may show that it is of paramount importance to raise teachers' awareness of the need to provide students with constant assessment while they carry out different class activities. This is particularly relevant if they do want to use alternative assessment in its whole dimension as state by the following participant.

#### Extract 002

When I started working as a teacher, I used to evaluate students' performance in the traditional way. Students worked exclusively with a textbook, tests, and exams. Then, students started being evaluated in a formative way as well. Two aims were covered: to train students to take a language certification exam and also to learn for life. Now, I can measure students' performance focusing on what students can do, providing feedback without highlighting their faults. Hopefully, they have a chance to demonstrate improvements in their learning without being limited to narrow questions or a test.

(Parsec)

Parsec admits the fact that s/he has evaluated students' performance in a traditional form and that, at some point, more alternative assessments were incorporated. It was only when students were consciously prepared for two real world demands: on the one hand, they have to be certified in the language and, on the other hand, they need to be competent with a more practical application of what they have learnt of the target language. S/he seems to have succeeded in combining positive test scores with lifelong learning outcomes.

*Realistic tests score vs. significant learning*

This category intends to explore whether test scores really correspond to the language level and knowledge (outcomes) achieved by students. There is definitely an intimate relationship between realistic test scores and significant learning outcomes as expressed by Pared in extract 003. Nobody can deny that a well-designed rubric could allow teachers measure their students' progress at a specific moment of their learning process. Nevertheless, the fact that an exam can be used to provide feedback gives the test a new role. This role needs to be implemented cautiously and consciously to guarantee that students' learning is being meaningful.

Extract 003

Talking about learning outcomes, students' tests scores measure what they have learnt: grammar, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, writing, etc. Realistic scores should be designed in a way that they can show whether students' have improved in a certain skill. But, teachers still need to provide feedback and guidance with the results of a test. So, the relationship between them is the use of tests scores not only to assign a number to the language level of a student, but also to prove that the students' learning has been meaningful.

(Paredu)

Furthermore, for Pared, students may know how much they have improved certain skill with an adequately and appropriately designed score, which has been disclosed. S/he insists on the importance of providing feedback at all times, especially with the students' results in an exam. S/he underlines the fact that assigning a number to the student's performance in an exam is not enough to guarantee her/his learning has been meaningful. The student needs to discuss what an exam reveals about the competence achieved, but at the same time, the student can get ready to take another exam and to apply what s/he has learnt in the real world. Maybe the impact of a score used to give feedback of a realistic task in class, could allow students get better results at exams.

Nowadays, a test should not only be designed with questions or test items. The following participant shows concern regarding the use of other activities that may help students achieve significant learning outcomes. Performance emerges as a key element to prove meaningful learning has been achieved and not only count on what the student is able to memorize.

Extract 004

Well, a teacher may not only base a test on questions. A teacher may include oral or written activities based on real situations where students can demonstrate how capable they are to perform and not only by memorizing all that let them have a good score in a test.

(Parsec)

It cannot be denied that an exam is not usually designed to respond to different learning styles which are deeply connected to the way in which people often respond in

realistic situations such as in job interviews or exams to get a job. Therefore, students need to develop strategies to connect theory and practice and improve test scores and cope with an unavoidable requisite of our society (Commander et al., 2012). Thus, the use of class activities based on real world situations might help them to improve their test scores, although, this idea needs to be cautiously discussed.

### *Improvement on test scores and learning strategies*

This category intends to discuss whether a realistic assessment is in agreement with strategies to perform adequately in real life. Developing learning strategies in students is still a topic in vogue at present (Oxford, 1990). Memorization is a well-recognized strategy, but students definitely need to develop strategies not only to answer an exam but also to sort out real life issues they might face at some point in their lives. Definitely, one of the roles a teacher plays is that of a trainer. S/he could be a trainer for an exam or a trainer for life as expressed by the following participant.

#### Extract 005

This may happen when students have been trained to perform daily situations or situations they can develop by themselves because they have been well-trained in different areas. So, when taking tests, they are able to answer them without problems even if the test content is hard, as they might have developed strategies to answer exams.

(Parmer)

Pared agrees with what Parmer says and underlines the fact that teachers seem to be well aware that tests are designed with different purposes. One of these purposes could be precisely to perform successfully in a simulated context to be able to cope with a real situation, which is an aspect tests should or could also cover. Thus, teachers as facilitators and trainers should design or base their student's learning on certain activities: dynamics, tasks and/or projects similar to activities they will have to handle outside the educational context.

#### Extract 006

If test scores improve, the results on learning strategies may change a lot since according to the type of test, students have to improve learning. If a test involves a performance in real context, students' learning has to be based on activities which involve real life situations and more realistic performances.

(Paredu)

What has been discussed so far is basically that teachers cannot get rid of exams and summative evaluation. But apparently, they can combine both types of evaluations to provide students with a more productive, useful and realistic assessment. If these last aspects prove to be real, students as well as teachers will be getting reading for developing effective lifelong learning strategies.



### *Impact of evaluation on students' lifelong learning*

This category encapsulates an exploration of the relevance of evaluation in students' continuous learning. The impact evaluation may have on students' lifelong learning may affect the students' self-confidence and trust in their teacher's fairness. Then, according to the following participant, there must be a balance between achieving a good score in a test and being able to apply what has been learnt in a real context.

#### Extract 007

First, I've noticed not all the students admit they deserve a certain final grade, because they aren't aware of how well they perform during classes or how good or bad a score in an exam is. So, they think the teacher is a bad person and they don't forget that teacher. Second, I've also witnessed there are students who keep improving in order not only to have better grades but also to take advantage of what they learn in order to apply their knowledge at school or at work. Finally, they have admitted evaluation has made them to know what they are good at in life.

(Parosc)

Nobody can deny that people in general are competitive and interested in getting high scores and receive social recognition. Moreover, everyone tends to blame others for what s/he cannot do. In this respect, sharing or disclosing the rubrics and score criteria could help students understand under what basis they are being evaluated, and the feedback and assessment received could be more fruitful not only for their school time but for their future working life. In addition, by implementing real tasks and projects, students might have a more realistic vision of this competitive world and the standards they might need to reach in order to become competitive in the real world labor market. This idea is also supported by the following participant:

#### Extract 008

Evaluation in long-life learning impacts on the way the learners are always judged through a set of aspects, and they sometimes only get prepared to cover certain characteristics of the performance instead of internalizing knowledge to be able to be productive in real contexts.

(Parosc)

Memorization is definitely a useful strategy when taking mandatory certification or standardized exams; however, internalizing knowledge and learning for life might prove to be more rewarding. It can be said that one way in which more benefits could be reached may be encapsulated in an effective application of alternative assessments.

*Advantages and Disadvantages of evaluating students' performance through major and minor assignments*

This category intends to underpin the benefits and constraints of evaluating students through different types of assignments. Participants were also questioned about the importance of doing major and minor assignments in an EFL classroom. As seen in the theoretical framework, a major assignment could be understood as creating a campaign to protect and save our environment, and a minor assignment as an activity to start organizing the steps to follow in such project. In the same line, the following participant seems to be convinced that students may benefit from challenging tasks and activities in which they can recognize his/her strengths and weaknesses.

Extract 009

I consider the more challenging an activity or project is, the more students prove themselves to be able to do something, which is an advantage to know what area they are good at or what aspects they need to keep working on. They can discover something they didn't know about themselves.

(Parsec)

Furthermore, feedback needs to be provided to guarantee that the tasks and activities carried out have been successful and meaningful and that autonomy has been promoted. Moreover, self-efficacy should be encouraged as students realize their effort results in a clear, practical and effective outcome. They may get outcomes that can eventually help them to obtain other valuable outcomes, as shown in the following extract from a field note.

010

It seems that with major assignments, students could prove that they acquired all the knowledge and were able to perform an accurate outcome, but they also need to count on their teachers' feedback. With minor assignments, students keep working more and developing more practice, so that students may have a better performance at the end.

Nevertheless, the roles of the teacher and the peers as well as the feedback are essential in alternative assessment. If students are not prepared to ask for help, accept corrections and look for solutions, they might benefit from this type of assessment.

Assessment is only one of the several factors a teacher has to take into account when giving classes. Other factors are the learning strategies mentioned in the previous category and the learning styles mentioned by the following participant. The way assessment is provided must also respond to the way a student learns. Teachers must be aware of these two aspects in order to address the assessment a student needs according to the way s/he learns, how challenging the task is and how to reconstruct ineffective strategies to learn or to cope with specific academic issues.

011

A disadvantage may appear when a teacher doesn't take into account all learning styles when asking for an assignment, or based on what the students are able to do because this may make some students to get frustrated because they don't know how to cope with challenging stuffs.

What has been said, so far, implies a lot of work from the part of the teacher, since s/he needs to effectively play different roles in the educational setting. With teachers' such overload of work, alternative assessment runs the risk of being ignored again, as expressed by the following participant.

Extract 012

In major assignments, students only employ their short term memory to memorize information for a final test. In minor assignments, it is a lot of work for the teacher to evaluate many assignments and distribute percentages.

On the one hand, traditional assessment also involves a lot of work, as teachers have to grade exams and assign a number to the students' performance. In addition, this type of work may become stuck in its ways. On the other hand, alternative assessment demands constant training from the part of teachers (Estrada et al., 2016) in order to provide students with major and minor assignments, in vogue at present. The application of effective assessment methods also depends on how open teachers and students are to new learning tendencies as well as their interest, response and vision.

#### *New learning tendencies consideration*

This category explores the degree in which teachers try new types of assessments. The idea of having a new vision regarding the type of assessments teachers use in their classes to provide their students with feedback is briefly underlined by the following participant.

Extract 013

Evaluation processes could vary depending on the education standards of each school and its goals. However, combining both traditional and alternative assessments could be effective. For example, presentations could be interesting and appropriate to assess the improvement of students' performance while giving emphasis to a specific grammar point. They could also show students' strengths and weaknesses during the task. They also demand constant monitoring and feedback, which can be quite time consuming.

(Parsec)

Parsec states the importance of students' presentations as a class dynamic and a possible form to evaluate and assess students. A practical task can be given with the use

of real world language, but as EFL learners, students can also share knowledge and give feedback on grammar points among other linguistic skills.

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The outcome could be evaluated through vocabulary tests adapted to what they learnt. Moreover, the outcome could be evaluated through activities in which the learner can employ the knowledge acquired in a real situation.

Teachers still need to go beyond traditional types of assignments and try more realistic ones such as the design of a YouTube channel, an ecological campaign or a blog, in order to help their students, get involved in the culture of the target language community. It must be pointed out that it is a process that needs to be developed cautiously, and implemented after being planned, taking into account all the factors that have been mentioned along this section such as score and rubric criteria disclosure, feedback, performance and real world projects and tasks, among others.

## CONCLUSION

Summing up, it may be affirmed that teachers found alternative assessment and evaluation methods useful and relevant for EFL students' learning. These teachers identified that they were able to provide students with more realistic and meaningful tasks, which make their learning process as well as their performance in real world situations more successful. However, there are several obstacles they need to overcome before they are able to truly apply this type of assessments. For example, some teachers find it difficult to deconstruct or unlearn what they have acquired through theory or modelling; they tend to evaluate their students the same way they were evaluated when they were students. Therefore, one of the options teachers have is precisely to turn disadvantages into advantages. That is, they may start combining traditional and alternative assessments (Fig. 1) not only as a way to fulfil an educational policy for making decisions, but to gradually move towards alternative assessments. This has the purpose of providing students with a tangible description of the level achieved, and the necessary evidence to provide feedback and enable them to use the acquired knowledge in real situations and in Lifelong learning as expressed in the following chart.

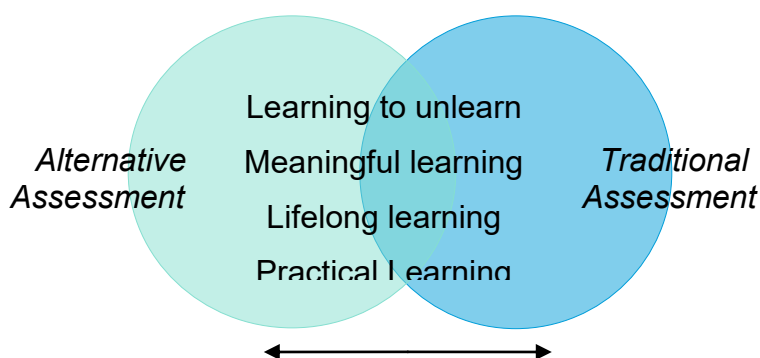


Figure 1. Overlap of Alternative and Traditional Assessments

In other words, teachers, in general, can try alternative assessments to start scaffolding students' ways of learning, so that they can assimilate new knowledge in a more realistic form and receive more constructive feedback. Figure 1 above intends to show [arrows in opposite directions] that the dependence on or imposition of traditional assessments could gradually be reduced. Thus, we must emphasize the importance of making teachers aware of the fact that alternative assessments have been employed long before, and have proved to be beneficial, realistic and useful for teachers and students. Moreover, alternative, authentic or practical assessments could be applied in a more systematic way and in accordance with traditional forms of assessments, such as standardized exams. Consequently, exams, in general, could turn into a tool to provide feedback, to promote more effective assessment and to enhance meaningful learning to go beyond the educational context. If this becomes real, then students will be able to develop competencies to apply when taking mandatory exams and to use them in order to achieve a successful personal career.

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### APPENDIX 1 Interview guide

- What do you think the relationship between realistic tests scores and significant learning outcomes is?
- Based on your experience, how may improvements in tests scores represent significant learning outcomes?
- Based on your experience, how can improvements in tests scores be the result of improved learning strategies?
- What do you think the impact of evaluation in general on students' long life learning is?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of evaluating students' performance with major and minor assignments? (Comics, magazine & tale/ time-lines: dinosaurs, animes, sports & discoveries)
- Considering story-telling, micro-learning (learning capsules & bites) and gamification: new learning tendencies, how could the obtained outcomes be evaluated?

Adapted from Lopes (2015)



# TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ENGLISH STANDARDIZED TESTS USED AT A BA IN ENGLISH

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## ABSTRACT

Evaluation and assessment play an important role in the language learning process, teachers, then, need to find out the best way to measure students' progress. The purpose of this research was to explore the teachers' perceptions and possible proposals about the English standardized tests used in a public university in the State of Veracruz. Interviews were carried out for collecting data to find out to what extent the standardized tests used are effective to measure students' progress from the teachers' perspectives. During this inquiry, four teachers were interviewed using a qualitative method. The findings showed that there seemed to be two opposite points of view. On the one hand, there is the belief that the exams are effective, but still they need to be improved. On the other hand, the other belief is that tests are inadequate as they are not accurate and might not reflect the students' real level of proficiency. Despite these contrastive ideas, based on the discomfort of the professors, some suggestions arose so as to raise awareness of this situation.

**Key words:** assessment, evaluation, formative, perceptions, reliability, standardized, summative, tests, validity, washback.

## INTRODUCTION

People study English for different purposes as it has become highly needed for academic purposes as well as for personal growth. For this reason, there is a need for well qualified teachers to provide appropriate training and assessment to those learners. One important issue, related to the learning process, is the assessment and evaluation. The former, centers on teaching and learning issues, while the latter, focuses on grades and scoring. Therefore, teachers need to be informed about the different kinds of assessing and evaluating their students' learning progress. However, some difficulties may arise. Especially when choosing the correct procedures in order to fulfill students' learning process needs as teachers need to adjust their teaching to the syllabus and the objectives of the institution where they work. According to Hughes (2003), it cannot be said that there is the best testing technique to be followed, every institution has specific needs and objectives so special tests; there is no the best testing technique as each institution requires specific kinds of tests, and such a test, then, should be one that measures accurately the abilities one is interested in, has a beneficial effect on teaching, and is economical in terms of time and money. Hughes (2003) also discusses that testing will

depend on the purpose they are designed for, that is to say, whether we want to measure language proficiency, or diagnose students' levels etc.

The use of standardized testing has become popular with teachers to measure the abilities and knowledge of a specific subject. However, it has not been proved that they are the best way of presenting students' language learning. Besides, not all teachers take part in the design. It has also been seen that many students have unsatisfactory outcomes according to the pre-established scores. Consequently, different opinions and beliefs come up the teachers and students regarding examination and in most of the cases the opinions seem to be not very positive. Bachman ( p. 291) states that "language testing occurs in an educational and social setting". Then, it is very important to be aware of the fact that teaching and testing are linked and that they should be integrated for the sake of the testing system and everything that it embodies: the teacher, the learner, the institution.

This research took place in a BA of the English language in a public university in Veracruz. This program has students in three main areas: Teaching, Translation, and Literature. For the language class, students are evaluated with standardized tests, which aim at measuring their abilities with the English language. However, these exams do not seem to be completely accurate as sometimes the results may not represent the students' actual language abilities. Despite the students' discomfort with their grades, this inquiry focused on the teachers and how they feel about these exams. Therefore, this research seeks to find out how teachers perceive the effectiveness of the standardized exams when measuring the students' progress.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This paper intends to illustrate the teachers' perceptions towards the standardized tests in order to find a way to improve the students' evaluation. A main objective is to identify the areas of improvement teachers suggest regarding their perceptions of the standardized test.

## **MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION**

The question that guided this research was:

How do the teachers at the English language B.A. Program perceive the standardized tests?

## **SUB-QUESTIONS**

**The following are sub-questions:**

To what extent are they satisfied with the results that these exams give?  
How much do they agree with their students' results as passing or failing?

Do they agree with the marking scale used to grade students?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Here, the concepts of evaluation, assessment, and formative and summative assessment are discussed. Then a review of language testing is provided as well as definitions of validity and reliability and a scope of standardized test. Finally, it provides an overview of the evaluation issues in a language-learning environment, such as backwash.

### *Evaluation and assessment*

During their lifetime, most people are evaluated in one way or another, especially in educational institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to define two main concepts: evaluation and assessment. To evaluate is a process, which makes judgments, checks the worthiness or progress of something, and depends of the purposes given. Kizlik (2017) mentions that “Inherent in the idea of evaluation is ‘value’. When we evaluate, what we are doing is engaging in some process that is designed to provide information that will help us make a judgment about a given situation” (para. 6). Assessment, according to Kizlik (2017, para.5), is “a process by which information is obtained relative to some known objective or goal. Assessment is a broad term that includes testing”.

Both, assessment and evaluation stand on their own. While assessment emphasises the outcomes of learning and teaching by providing useful information to improve both processes, evaluation focuses on grades replicating classroom components different from the course content and mastery level; it may include discussion, cooperation, assistance, and verbal ability. Evaluation and assessment are quite different in terms of objectives for a specific lapse of time. Kizlik (2017) distinguishes that what teachers do at the end of a unit is testing, but they assess the progress of a whole year with tests. Yet, both try to analyse and verify the learning and teaching progresses. The data gathered, especially from assessment can help to modify and propose actions for assuring students’ learning or improve the evaluation itself.

### *Formative and summative assessment*

There are two prominent practices to assess students’ learning advancement: formative and summative assessment. These include different kinds of tests, for instance, the standardized tests. Garrison and Ehringhaus (2013) state that summative assessments are usually implemented to check what learners know and do not know in a specific point of time. They are associated to state-run assessments but are administered in district and classroom programs as well; some examples of them are the state assessments, district benchmark, end-of-unit and end-of-term or semester tests and the report cards grades (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2013). On the other hand, formative assessments are part of the

teaching and learning processes; they are integrated in the lessons and give information to make adjustments while these processes happen. These regulations on time ensure students successful in targeted standards-based learning aims. Some formative strategies are criteria and goal setting, observations, questioning strategies, self and peer assessment and student record keeping (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2013).

### *Language testing*

How students are evaluated is different in terms of examinations and, each examination has its own features and purposes. As a result, professors pursue specific guidelines and take into account some factors regarding society, culture and policy to design these exams. Educational Testing Service (ETS) (2009) describes some factors that may influence in the professors' making-decision: diverse linguistic backgrounds, varying levels of proficiency in English and their mother tongue, varying degrees of formal education in English and in their mother tongue, and varying the exposure to standardized tests and variation in degrees of acculturation.

To avoid misunderstandings, it is necessary to define the words test and exam. Tests are short exams that a professor gives to his or her students when the lesson finishes, it is used to check the level of students' understanding of the lesson and it is not as formal as an exam. An exam is a formal test, which checks students' knowledge of a number of lessons; the term is typically used in the written English language (Koshal, 2011). For the purpose of this research, these words will be used as synonyms. There are many types of examinations to measure language skills such as diagnostic, achievement, proficiency, placement, etc., each of which has its own purpose and features to measure the language mastery of learners.

Hughes (2003) distinguishes diverse approaches, claims that testing is direct when demands that the aspirant performs accurately the skill intended to measure, the tasks should be as authentic as possible. On the contrary, indirect testing tries to measure the capabilities that underlie the skills in which the test is interested. Another dichotomy is discrete point and integrative testing; the former refers to test a single element at once, item by item, in a series of items, and each one tests a specific grammatical structure. The latter demands from the individual a combination of several language elements in the completion of a task (Hughes, 2003). The final and more interesting dichotomy is the norm-referenced vs. criterion-referenced testing, the norm-referenced testing tells about the student's performance in reference to others; it does not tell directly what he or she can do in the language. In contrast, the purpose of the criterion-referenced tests is to classify students due to their ability to perform some task or tasks satisfactorily.

### *Validity and reliability*

Examinations need to be competent; they must have specific features to be considered as valid. Hughes (2003) states that a test is considered valid if it measures precisely what it

aims to measure; this is known as validity. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) explain that validity assumes that when a test is made, it has an intention to measure something that is “real” and that validity concerns to discover whether a test “really does measure” what is proposed.

To construct validity it is necessary to have some evidence from the experience, Hughes (2003) points out two forms in sequence to show their importance in solving language-testing problems. The first is content validity, which refers to the content of the test; to be valid it must establish a representative model of the language abilities or structures with which it is meant to be concerned. The second form is criterion-related validity, which “relates to the degree to which results on the test agree with those provided by some independent and highly dependable assessment of the candidate’s ability” (Hughes, 2003, p. 27).

Another essential characteristic that exams need to consider is reliability; this concept is defined as the consistency of test marks or scores through facets of the tests (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). It means that tests should afford almost the same results from the test takers, even if they took it at different hour or day. What testers must do is construct, manage and mark tests in manner that the scores acquired on a test a specific moment are probable to be quite similar to some which would have been obtained if it had been administered at a different time (Hughes, 2003). For this reason, Fulcher and Davidson (2007) state that to guarantee the quality of reliability, when designing the test items, these should provide further information regarding the ability of test takers. It needs to ensure that answers to single items are independent on the answers to other items having good facility values and discrimination as well as sufficient items.

#### *Standardized tests*

The use of standardized tests in schools has increased greatly. These types of tests are more prominent in the public school system. These tests are used to evaluate learners’ knowledge, to check their learning progress and to verify the success of a curriculum. Weaver (2011) states that the standardized tests offer data that helps support four critically significant tasks for professors and the public. The first is to recognize the training needs of individual students; thus, professors can answer with effective, targeted teaching and proper training resources. Secondly it is to judge students’ knowledge in essential basic ability, challenging standards and measure their progress during a period. Thirdly it is to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs. The last task is to monitor school for educational accountability.

However, a standardized achievement test is questionable; Weaver (as cited in Standardized Assessment, 2000) explains that it is a test that is created by standard procedures and it is administered and scored in a constant way for all test takers. It might be said that the result of this test tends to be reliable, and that is why they have become more and more popular. Plenty of opinions have come up –positive and negative— about using the standardized testing. Criticism usually centers on linguistic biases versus

minorities, in the methods, which may not work for all kinds of learners and the harmful reinforcement of lower performing learners (Weaver, 2011).

There are some advantages that can be found in the tests. For instance, standardized tests guide teachers helping them to define what to teach and when to do it; is usually complemented by a collection of established standards or instructional framework. Tests are objective, developed by specialists and each question undergoes a strong process to eliminate bias. Standardized tests give precise comparisons among sub-groups including facts on ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special needs to promote programs to increase scores in these sub-groups (School and Child Care Search Service, 2013). In contrast, the disadvantages are that standardized tests evaluate learners' performances on a specific day and do not consider outer factors. Also, they can induce stress in teachers and learners. These tests might result in many professors simply "teach to the tests"; students' whole learning potential might be hindered (School and Child Care Search Service, 2013). Equally, Chomsky (2015) says that professors must teach to tests ensuring the destruction of any significant learning process. It means they are not allowed to be creative, imaginative nor attending the individual learners' needs.

Given these points, it can be said that standardized testing has numerous benefits that help to analyse what teachers and schools are doing for improving education. Although this may be true, standardized tests are strongly criticised; it can be pointed out that has several limitations and disadvantages, both for teachers and students. This can lead to a negative effect in education.

### *Backwash effect*

Tests influence the teaching and learning processes in one way or another. Hughes (2003) states that backwash is the influence that the tests have on teaching and learning, on the educational system and even in society. This effect can determine the way in which the professor teaches. That is, tests commonly rule what professors do and what students expect from their language lesson (Sánchez, 2009). The backwash effect can be beneficial or harmful (Hughes, 2003). Sánchez explains that if an exam is considered as significant, whether the stakes are high, the way tests are planned can dominate all teaching and learning activities. If the test content and the test techniques have inconsistency according to the aims of the course, it is possible to be harmful backwash.

Then, there is a tendency that professors teach only for the test, leaving aside other important aspects to improve learners' skills. Sánchez (2009) claims that the teaching practice should be created rendering to students' needs instead of just training students to be successful in the evaluation process; there should be a negotiation of the meaning in the target language. The previous advice can lead students to have a meaningful learning, to improve their language skills and avoid the harmful backwash effect.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is focused on knowing how teachers perceive the role of the standardized exams at the English Language B.A. of the University of Veracruz. With this paper, it is expected to answer the research questions about the perceptions teachers have when they test their students with the standardized exams that a committee of teachers designs. It may be a difficult situation to make decisions about students passing or failing through an exam teachers are given. However, there seems to be two opposing views regarding these exams. The qualitative research was chosen because this paper is expected to show teachers' perceptions regarding the standardized exams used at this program as well as the results students obtain.

For the purposes of this study, the qualitative approach was the most appropriate to understand teachers' perceptions about the standardized tests as it tries to analyse people's behaviours, attitudes and beliefs shared among them in their everyday life, to understand or solve a problem. It is said that qualitative inquiry (QI) is a soft option, but "In fact, QI is anything but a soft option – it demands rigour, precision, systematicity and careful attention to detail" (Richards, 2003, p. 6). Richards (2003) states three aspects of QI: the fact that experiments or surveys will only take us so far because they are not designed to explore the social world. It is a person-centred enterprise, and the investigation may have profound effects on the researcher.

### *Context*

This research took place at the Language Department of the University of Veracruz, a public institution located in the south of Mexico. The English Language B.A. consists of different courses, which include six levels of English. The English courses are evaluated through an standardized exam which is designed by DEXE for the words in Spanish: *Departamento de Exámenes Estandarizados* which is a committee that is in charge of all the evaluation process: from designing the exams to giving the grades. Some native speaker professors participate in the layout and the appropriateness of the exam items. Teachers only check a number of tests depending on the number of students they have in their courses.

As can be seen, the teachers' participation is to teach the course following the course book whose contents are used as a reference to design the tests. Teachers teach two hours a day –having between eight and ten hours per week, check exams and give the exam revision after each partial.

Tests are given three times a school term; one test takes place in the middle of the course, the second one at the end of the course; and the finals two weeks after the course is over. The first two exams include grammar and vocabulary items. The time given to answer is, in average, one hour thirty minutes. The final exam is divided in two parts. The first part is a written section which includes four sections: English language in use,

listening, reading and writing, and the time given is around two hours thirty minutes. The second part is the speaking test, and it consists of a ten-minute interview to a pair of students who are asked some personal information as well as a situation which they have to perform.

### *Participants*

The interviewees were four teachers, one female teacher and three male teachers. They have worked in the English B.A for more than nine years. There were one native speaker of English and three Spanish speakers who graduated from this same program. Three of them have an MA in language teaching and one of them holds a PhD in Linguistics. They were selected because they have experience with the English language courses, especially the tests and the impact they have in the students.

Participants will be referred to by giving them pseudonyms to protect their identity. Carolina is a non-native full time teacher who has worked for the English B.A during ten years. Carlos is a non-native full time teacher as well; he has worked for the English B.A during twenty-five years. Ralph and Eduardo are also full time teachers. The former is a native speaker who has worked for over forty years and the latter is a non-native speaker who has worked for nine years.

### *Data collection method*

The qualitative research embraces different traditions, paradigms and methods that help researchers to accomplish their objectives. Kohlbacher (as cited in Gillham, 2000) emphasises that qualitative methods focus mainly on the kind of evidence –what people tell or do- that will allow the researcher to understand the meaning of what is happening. Its great strength is that it can illuminate issues and bring to light possible explanations.

Interviews were used for this research as they illustrate the human behaviour, thoughts and feelings and they can generate useful information about lived experience and its meaning (Mora, 2012). Seidman (2006) also highlights that interviews offer access to the context of people's behaviour to understand the meaning of that behaviour. For the purpose of this research, three main questions with some follow up questions were used to know more about the topic we were exploring.

### *Research procedure*

The semi-structure interview was piloted with only one teacher to see the feasibility and appropriateness of the questions. After that, some adjustments were necessary. For example, question number one was modified as to be more specific in terms of length of teaching in the U.V. The interviews were organized considering the teachers' schedules as they were working long hours and the school calendar had some days off which interfered with the dates arranged. When the interviews were completed, it was necessary to



transcribe them for the analysis. The data was organised in categories in order to present the findings, which were written and discussed based on the theory considered in the literature review to support the interviews.

### *Data analysis*

After gathering the data, it was analysed to construe the information and shape the findings. A careful description of the data and categorisation are important steps in this process (Kohlbacher, 2006). In a qualitative inquiry, data were analysed differently from the quantitative approach as it requires particular techniques. For example, Kohlbacher (as cited in Cassell & Cymon, 1994) specifies that qualitative techniques emerge from phenomenological and interpretive paradigms; being on constructivist approaches where there is no clear-cut objectivity or reality.

For analysing the data, the Qualitative Content Analysis was used as the case study suggests. According to Kohlbacher (as cited in Mayring, 2000), it is an empirical, methodological and controlled analysis of texts inside the context of communication, succeeding rules and models, without rash quantification.

Kohlbacher (as cited in Mayring, 2000) explains that qualitative content analysis procedures as follows: first, the text is paraphrased, abstracted and reduced. Second, the explanation is scanned in reference to the total context. Finally, the structuring whose main goal is to filter out a particular structure from the material. The text is structured conferring to content, form and scaling. In fact, it is a set of techniques from which the researcher can choose and adapt to his or her research question (Kohlbacher, 2006).

## **FINDINGS**

After analysing the data five categories emerged and they are presented as follows: 1) Teachers' views about the evaluation; 2) Teachers' perceptions about the English standardized tests: first impressions; 3) Factors influencing the teaching and learning processes; 4) Criteria to grade students: perceptions about the scale used to grade the tests; 5) Improving the tests and the assessment.

### *Teachers' views about the evaluation*

Discussing evaluation is complex. In addition, not all teachers think the same about, and what is more, their practices may vary, for example, Miguel says that "*the evaluation is subjective and relative*". Another participant agrees that the evaluation is a process with no real outcomes. Miguel explains that students and teachers can have feedback from each other but sometimes it is not given. Therefore, teachers must take into account the most suitable practice to assess students such as the formative and summative assessments. According to the data, one participant said that he uses different tools to assess students.

*The evaluation is not only an exam, of course there are exams but there are also quizzes, presentations, reading reports and these different tools give me a broader picture of what I want the student to assimilate, learn.*

As can be seen, the formative assessment is used to obtain information about the students' learning progress. Teachers can put into practice some tools and methods in the classroom and there are several strategies that are part of the collection of good training (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2013). Miguel said that here are factors having a negative impact on education, for this reason, some teachers prefer practicing other methods. He tries to use alternative methods, such as gamification.

*I do not think that the "IS" tool is an effective tool because it is a contradiction that a country ranked 54th place in the PISA exam, has young people who win international events... These factors are having a negative impact on education. I really like the idea of projects that students work on their own projects, animés, documentaries. I'm looking forward to exploring "gamification" as an alternative or evaluation.*

However, these new methods sometimes are quite difficult to incorporate because students have been evaluated through the standardized exam for years. They are used to it and there is a lack of maturity which makes it difficult to try new ways. Therefore, sometimes learners cannot understand new methods and practice self-evaluation. Miguel explains:

*...the student does not understand. He also wants to see a number and it is not a number; it is a process in which he has to practice self-evaluation as well. It is a conditioning, it is pure behaviourism. Maturity is a crucial factor for the student to self-evaluate. Perhaps that maturity does not exist but we have not promoted it either.*

Other factors that we found that seem to affect the learners are motivation or lack of strategies to study. Some teachers believe that students cannot manage the assessment and the evaluation properly because they do not have the proper strategies to face the exams resulting in low grades. In some cases, teachers overgeneralise the fact that students lack strategies as they hardly pass the exams. For example, David suggests that:

*Students can't handle it because they simply do not know how to study, their strategies are really poor; apart from that their motivation problems and the low language levels.*

As can be seen, teachers complain not only about the evaluation system but they also perceive themselves as part of this failure. On the one hand, teachers comment that some students may not have the strategies to take a standard exam which makes them

obtain low grades. On the other hand, they seem to believe that despite the fact that there are other alternatives to evaluate the students, teachers avoid them because they suppose students are not ready for them.

*Teachers' perceptions about the English standardized tests: first impressions.*

Here, some teachers' perceptions about the English standardized tests will be discussed. All participants have taught in this university for longer than 15 years, which means that they are familiar with the tests and the B.A.'s objective. Two of them promoted the arising of the tests and how they have evolved through the years. And, as the data suggests, there are positive and negative positions when it comes to the exams. For example, Carolina thinks that the tests are acceptable and they have many advantages and only one disadvantage:

*The good thing about the standardized test is that it measures your progress in general, the level you are achieving... they know what they saw and what to study and then he can be more identified with the test and probably do it better. They are more controlled in terms of creating, what is known as a cking. ...as it is more general sometimes it is difficult to the student not seeing clearly what he saw in class, has trouble identifying the contents in other contexts; that would be a small disadvantage.*

Standardized tests are suggested to have some disadvantages. For example, two participants, Miguel and Eduardo think that the tests have limitations. For example, they mentioned that the exams are not proficient and the different styles of teaching are not reflected on them neither are the learning styles.

*I think they are very deficient. They have many limitations. You cannot evaluate students in a standardized way if you did not teach them in a standardized way. There are many ways to teach and those different styles are not at all reflected on the standardized test.*

Students might not pass these exams but it does not mean that they did not understand the classes or they are not skillful enough to pass. Countless external factors play an important role in the test performances. Standardized tests may not consider the diversity of learning styles and economical or emotional factors. Miguel supports these ideas:

*...we are not taking into account other factors. "Why don't you memorize?" Because you did not have breakfast, it means financial, emotional, social factors are involved when it comes to the standard exam and the results it brings about.*

As illustrated, the perceptions teachers have regarding the standardized exams are both, positive and negative regardless their position in this process. On the one hand,

they think the exams are positive as they help control what each teacher does in class. However, others think there are other factors that interfere with the process such as financial social problems on the side of the students, for example.

#### *teachers' perceptions about the design of the tests*

The data showed other perceptions in respect to the tests. These are related to its design. In the first place, David and Miguel agree that teachers promote that students only memorize instead of providing tools to master the language. On the other hand, students do not have efficient learning strategies which results in poor learning, then, they easily forget.

*I've been telling teachers what we've been doing for years what we're promoting is a system where by students don't really learn because they don't study properly. If they're doing is memorizing. They forget that later, they won't use effective learning strategies. That's the biggest problem.*

Miguel and David think that tests are a kind of hybrid; they are neither achievement tests nor progress tests. They are a combination of grammar, vocabulary and the communicative skills. Teachers agreed that these exams are not the kind of tests they proposed when they were planning the curriculum of this B.A. They conclude that the exams are something strange and out of context. This is because of the hybrid format and in some cases the contents are not what is seen in class. Miguel says:

*...in the middle of the 90s someone mentioned this idea of standardization and I took it up and promoted it; standardization is normal in Europe. The standardized examinations which were a great idea at that time we had nothing else, have been turned into a Frankenstein. Standard examinations were devised for another curriculum. That's what we did and once again we're stuck with these standard exams.*

*In the end, the tests are a very strange hybrid of what a "progress" test and "achievement" test. I'm not evaluating an activity or the student to be aware of that, one follow up that helps him/her realize and has self-correcting, ... Our exams are a simulation of what those international examinations are, which are a huge business because they cost a lot of money and it is an imperialist imposition.*

On the contrary, participant Carolina thinks that the design is effective and students can practice for a certificate examination:

*The structure seems good to me. Besides, they prepare you for a certificate examination. I think the design is good...*

It can be seen that while only one teacher thinks the design is effective and it helps students to practice for certificate examinations. Most teachers think the design of the tests is not accurate but incomplete. They seem to complain that it is a mixture of different exams or simply copies from other organizations which results in inconveniences for the students.

### *Factors influencing the teaching and learning processes*

There are factors influencing the teaching and the learning processes, for example, the time established to cover the contents of the course, the syllabus or program, the design of the exams, the strategies used to teach and learn, etc. Together with the layout of the exams, sometimes teachers cannot find good examples of exercises that can help students to be ready for the test. Each activity has its own features and students should be able to recognize them. Carolina explains that:

*...sometimes I try to find exercises of the same type as those that will be in the test in order for them to be more familiar at the time of the test.*

Another factor related to the design is that activities or tasks should not only focus on grammar or vocabulary, they should consider the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. That is why, it can be said that the tests may not reflect neither the students' accuracy nor their proficiency of the language. Besides, the time and the contents of the textbook have some impact on the teaching. David argues the following:

*There are lots of very nice activities, but they're time consuming, and when you try to do them you end up getting behind. You end up focusing mainly on grammar/vocabulary. The whole thing is based on that task. What about the skills, how are they tested?*

As mentioned above, it is essential to say that validity and reliability are important in the design of the exams. And, as can be noted, David says that there are problems with testing the four skills. What is highlighted here, is the fact that the standardized exams do not test the four skills of the language; then teachers focus more on grammar and vocabulary during the courses.

*"Effective test": true or false?*

Most schools use standardized tests because these tests try to measure students' abilities and knowledge about certain subjects. In this case, these tests measure students' language abilities. However, one disadvantage of using standardized tests is that teachers may only teach for the test so the test decides what happens to them. Most of the participants agree with this issue:

*at's another ailment; the teacher ends up teaching what he/she believes will be the contents of the test and what he/she thinks it is necessary for students to pass the test, rather than teaching to develop skills.*

*We've had an unfortunate phenomenon that we get students ready for the exam and not for life... the professor only teaches for the exam and then the student forgets...*

This seems to be the biggest issue regarding tests; they have a negative backwash effect on the teaching and learning processes because students might not have a meaningful learning and teachers may be limited. X says the following:

*It is not "lifelong learning"; it is not "meaningful learning". It is a negative impact; it means that everything you learned is eventually forgotten after it was learned because you did it in order to pass an exam.*

To sum up, as it has been illustrated, there may be a general discomfort with how the exams direct teaching. These teachers seem to agree on the fact that they are teaching students to take the exam rather than promote meaningful learning in the class. Their main goal which is to teach the contents of the books involving the language skills is left behind in order to help students pass their exams.

*Criteria to evaluate students: perceptions about the scale used to grade the tests*

When grading, some questions and doubts arise. The student's grade is at stake and in the English Language B.A. the scores of the standardized tests are the criteria which decides if students pass to the next level. Additionally, one extra point from a portfolio is added to the final grade. According to Carolina and David the scale is at discrepancy, Carolina says it is good and David says the opposite, as shown below:

*I consider it has been made very carefully and professionally. They are more modern ways of adding up the scores. I think it is fine... it is measured in a fair and equitable way and it gives more scores to some specific skills.*

*The scale is quite flexible because in the end it is adapted. If items do not work, you remove them...*

However, participant Eduardo thinks that teachers should have more influence in the decision-making of the final grade apart from the portfolio:

*It should be modified so that the person teaching the course has some influence on the final grade as a complement of the standardized test. The test is scored 90% and the teacher 10%. It is little.*

The grading system used can affect learners in a bad way. Sometimes they are divided into intelligent and not intelligent in relation to their scores. In relation to this, David said:

*I really don't worry too much about the grading system. It's the way it is here in Mexico. It's hard to change that because the universities authorities expect to see a number grade on the report card.*

#### *Improving the tests and the assessment*

Throughout this chapter, we have seen the perceptions from the teachers about the tests and how they influence teaching and learning. There are some problems and it is necessary to make some improvements, for instance, concerning the design of the tests, the curriculum or the assessment itself. David said the tests can be improved in the following:

*It could be better. We could experiment with other forms, for example, open-close tests... The close test is a test of your actual ability to handle English and that's what I want because it is not in the book.*

Teachers also commented that they need to be involved in the evaluation as they were before. They said that the assessment can be improved in the following:

*...promote the teacher being co-responsible of the grade, taking into account what was taught and how and seeing the standardized test as another tool from the different tools used to evaluate, not the only one.*

*I would like to participate in order to make a study as a pre-intermediate English teacher to make a comparison, checking that all the contents are covered or not and then I would advocate so that what was seen in class is more reflected.*

In the case of David who has been involved in the development of the tests for many years, currently he is not taking part in the design of the tests. He agrees on having teachers writing tests but considers that not all teachers are capable of doing it.

*...teachers can go ahead if they like and write exams. But I can guarantee you of one thing, they'll be a complete mess with few exceptions. Most teachers here aren't got enough English to be able to design one of those exams...*

#### *Teachers' final comments, reflections, and proposals*

Participants have some reflections and proposals to improve the standard exam. One of these reflections is related to the way students are evaluated, some are either positive or negative. For example, Carolina argues that:

*... the standardized tests are more advantages than disadvantages. I'm from the 80s plan. I remember that the tests were made and administered by my professor; however, not many of us failed.*

Miguel, for example, suggests that the methodology to assess students has to be autonomous and self-reflective. He strongly believes that teachers and students have to work in a collaborative way:

*The teacher has to be a model of values; I cannot be an imposing teacher. In that sense, he/she has to be fairly honest and work trying to respond to his/her students' learning styles, truly work collectively and collegially. This does not happen, one standardized test is simply a straitjacket used to get raw data.*

When it comes to the proposals, they believe that assessment and teaching can be improved by ensuring students meaningful learning. Miguel suggests not using examinations and teaching students suitable vocabulary for their career:

*I want to propose not using exams, opening two English pre-intermediate sections. I would state "in this course there are exams and in the other course there are no exams". ... if students want to be kindergarten teachers, their vocabulary will be different to the ones who want to be college or high school teachers, their approaches and the types of groups that they will be using...*

Additionally, participant Miguel says that the evaluation is polemical and it is everywhere in our lives; it is part of human beings.

*There are PhDs in assessment and evaluation and they do not have answers, the evaluation is quite subjective, very controversial. It is everywhere in our lives. We evaluate relationships and we evaluate jokes. It is inherent to the relative, subjective and changing character of the human being.*

Given these points, the perceptions, ideas, proposals and even criticism from the teachers are highly needed to understand the role that the standardized tests are playing in the English language B.A. Now, there is a piece of evidence, which may help to face the difficulties that might arise the next years. As can be seen, this research has presented some issues that have been hidden and, hopefully it might bring about the changes that are needed for the sake of the students and the B.A. itself.

## **CONCLUSION**

The main objective of this research was to know the teachers' perceptions about the English standardized tests that are administered in the Language School. The findings show that teachers think tests have many advantages and are beneficial for students.



However, some areas should be improved. They also show that teachers have negative perceptions of exams and they believe that tests are not as good as they should be. They also said that the tests have many limitations. The structure is not accurate and exam results do not reflect the real language abilities of students.

In the same way, teaching and learning are affected having a negative backwash effect; teachers seem to be forced to teach for the test. In other words, they must cover the contents of the books and there is not enough time to enhance productive skills such as writing and speaking. In consequence, students do not improve all the skills properly and they fail in the evaluation. Additionally, students' performances are affected by other factors, such as motivational, emotional and economic problems, which are not considered in this type of tests.

For those reasons, teachers think that standardized tests today are out of context and other methodologies should be implemented to promote students' autonomy and maturity. They also suggest the use of other media and resources from the internet. Another relevant issue discussed was the scale used to grade the tests. Teachers think that it is not appropriate and some of the aspects considered in the criteria to evaluate students should be revised. Despite the result obtained, some limitations can be mentioned, for example, for the literature review. It was difficult to have updated information as there are not many studies about the standardized tests used in language schools. Second, it was difficult to contact participants whose teaching experience in the B.A could be useful for our research, but many of them had busy schedules.

As a last comment, this research should be complemented by looking at other areas that help consider whether the use of standardized tests to measure students' abilities is appropriate for this program. It also might be necessary to consider some modifications to the exams and the criteria to evaluate to ensure meaningful learning. Evaluation is a huge issue that researchers, teachers and students should be aware of. It is necessary, then to continue studying this phenomenon and including students' opinions. This way, there might be more valid information to take action to improve this situation.

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## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research sub-questions	Follow up questions	Spanish
<p>To what extent are they satisfied with the results that these exams present?</p>	<p>How long have you been teaching here in the U.V.?</p> <p>What levels of English do you usually teach?</p> <p>How long have you been teaching these levels of English?</p> <p>What is your opinion about the evaluation in general?</p> <p>What do you think of the standardized tests?</p> <p>Do you think that standardized tests influence your teaching? In what way?</p>	<p>¿Cuántos años tiene de servicio aquí en la U.V.?</p> <p>¿Qué niveles de inglés imparte? ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha impartido estos niveles de inglés?</p> <p>¿Qué opina sobre la evaluación en general? ¿Qué opina de los exámenes estandarizados?</p> <p>¿Cree que los exámenes estandarizados influyen en su forma de enseñar? ¿de qué manera?</p>
<p>How much do they agree with their students' results as passing or failing?</p>	<p>What about the layout of the tests? What do you think of its design? Do you think they can be improved? What aspects?</p> <p>Would you like to say something else?</p>	<p>¿Qué piensa del diseño de los exámenes? ¿qué piensa de su estructura?</p> <p>¿Cree usted que se pueden mejorar? ¿en qué aspectos?</p> <p>¿Le gustaría comentar algo más?</p>
<p>Do they agree with the marking scale used to grade students?</p>	<p>What is your opinion about the scale used to grade the tests?</p>	<p>¿Qué opina de la escala que se usa para calificar los exámenes?</p>

### **SECCIÓN III: FORMACIÓN DE PROFESORES DE LENGUAS**

# ANALYZING THE EFFECTS OF EFL TEACHERS' CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON THEIR PRACTICE

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## SUMMARY

Language teachers' continuing professional development has undergone a constant dynamic which has become evident in the offer of a wide variety of professional training workshops. The question to this phenomenon is whether these courses have an impact on teachers' daily practice and help them to become more efficient ELT professionals. This inquiry aimed at examining the effectiveness of in-service training courses. A qualitative approach was used to study the impact of in-service training courses on the teachers' professional development by analysing teachers' insights on workshop participation. The findings that emerged from the data collected from interviews and researchers' journals revealed that the effectiveness of the above-mentioned courses is perceived as limited. In spite of some worth mentioning pedagogical implications, a realistic view of practices and a positive sense of teachers' self-efficacy, there is also evidence of dissatisfaction as well as some difficulties to fulfil professional expectations. Consequently, a series of suggestions to enhance satisfaction and guarantee the achievement of expectations are given.

**Key words:** CPD (Continuing professional development), practice, professional teacher, satisfaction and training.

## INTRODUCTION

In the recent decade, public universities have made the effort to professionalise their teaching faculties. One way of accomplishing such objective is through the planning and implementation of courses to keep teachers updated in their knowledge fields as well as to help them contribute to their own contexts in a positive way (Rogoff, 2003). Nevertheless, examining the effectiveness of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) training courses has become of paramount importance in different countries as they may have a significant impact on their professional daily practice (AL-Wreikat & Abdullah, 2010). Given that the EFL is a rich field, some universities offer development courses at the end of every term. Teachers at the University of Veracruz are invited to take a wide variety of courses in different areas that can contribute to the improvement of their professional practice. Teachers can enrol in up to two different courses twice a year. However, the offer and evaluation of the effectiveness of these courses depends exclusively on a particular Department of the UV and there seems to be a lack of research conducted on this phenomenon. This study was focused on identifying teachers' perceptions towards those continuing courses. The concepts of professional development

courses, teachers' training courses and continuing training for teachers are used indistinctly along the report.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In this section we present the research questions that led our study: What do teachers think about the benefits and challenges of professional training courses? How does participation in professional training courses benefit and challenge teachers' current professional practice?

## **OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of this study was, then, to identify the benefits and challenges of teachers' professional training courses according to the teachers who have taken them. To achieve the before-mentioned aim, it was necessary to analyze the way in which the implementation of such professional training courses has influenced teachers' current practice.

## **CONTEXT**

In recent years, public and private institutions have taken actions to professionalise their teachers continuously; the University of Veracruz (UV) is one of them. At the Language School, teachers have been offered a wide variety of courses that aimed at encouraging their professional growth (Caena, 2011). The UV course offer is open to all teachers. This study was focused on identifying how language teachers perceive the development courses they have enrolled in.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT**

This section has been divided into six subsections: The importance of development; Defining Perceptions; Advantages and Disadvantages (of taking development courses); Personal Dissatisfaction; Personal Satisfaction; Daily Practice improvement and Lifelong Learning Perspective.

### *The importance of Continuing Professional Development*

Continuing professional development (CPD) courses are an important aspect of school improvement. School improvement is based on staff competence and on relevant training sessions where novice and experienced teachers can learn, clarify, evaluate, reflect on, create and propose alternatives to improve daily teaching and learning practices. In this respect, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) interpret teachers' professional development as "structured professional learning" (p. 2) that is based on the increasing acquisition of new knowledge as well as innovative practices in their field that enhance and improve their students' learning outcomes. They relate *structured professional learning* to the teaching

and learning professional growth. This may have a positive impact on their students' learning process.

Altun (2011) agrees with what Darling-Hammond et al. state regarding CPD as he affirms that this type of courses helps teachers fulfill their different professional roles in their ever-changing teaching and learning contexts in which they work. However, according to Altun (2011), these change processes are not always successful, as teachers may find them irrelevant and tend to forget most of what they have experienced. This means that the concept of "development" is a two-side-road. On the one hand, development is seen as the fact that any teacher has some expertise to share with her/his colleagues through coaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; McAleavy, 2016). On the other hand, if leadership and motivation in general fail in the search for teachers' high-level training and development, the benefits of CDP will be limited (Altun, 2011; McAleavy, 2016). In sum, development may be understood as the constant improvement of teachers' daily practice and performances through adequate and relevant training to overcome never-ending challenges.

### *Defining Perceptions*

To this inquiry, the term "perception" is employed as teachers' opinions and views on their role as trainees in professional development courses. This definition is based on the interpretation Carless (2006) gives of perceptions in education; these may be interpreted as people's viewpoints in social contexts. In addition, McDonald (2012) affirms that perceptions are unique individualized experiences. Furthermore, these can only emerge from the knowledge people attain from their surrounding world. Thus, perceptions may be interpreted as teachers' opinions and views in their roles as professionals and in the different contexts in which they perform as such.

According to Lopez (2008), perceptions give rise to attitudes. In addition, perceptions as well as misperceptions may allow individuals to construct a reality, which may eventually evolve. Yilmaz and Aydin (2015) add that perceptions can be positive or negative and may be influenced by different motives. Then, teachers' attitudes towards professional development courses in their field may vary depending on an endless series of factors. As Lopez states through the views and opinions (Attitudes) teachers have about the relevance of professional training courses, the impact these courses may have on "the teachers' roles, work patterns, status and identity" (Factors) may be identified (Ibid: p.8). Obviously, such impact may bring out some advantages and disadvantages.

### *Advantages & Disadvantages*

When referring to Continuous Professional development, it seems important to identify advantages and disadvantages of taking teachers' professional courses. On the one hand, through professional training courses, teachers are given ideas on how to improve their teaching practice. Continuing courses intend to enable teachers to gain more



knowledge and change their practice for the benefit of their learners (Bando & Li, 2014). However, in addition to updating courses, teachers need to cope with administrative duties, work overload and lack of relevant professional development workshops (Sandlund et al., 2016). That is, if the contents and practices of the continuing course do not relate directly to the elements teachers are in contact with at work, teachers are not likely to enrol in them. Teachers might see those courses as a waste of time and experience personal dissatisfaction.

### *Personal Dissatisfaction*

A factor that administrators might not like to listen is when training courses do not fulfil teachers' expectations. According to AL-Wreikat and Abdullah (2010), some teachers particularly refer to their disappointments regarding the relation between the title of a training course and its content. Teachers also highlight the importance of receiving more direct feedback from trainers. In addition, some teachers find it difficult to get rid of previous schemes in order to try new ones as they hardly count on mentoring support (Hobson et al., 2009). This means that in spite of being interested in taking courses to continue their professional development and become up-dated, at the end, teachers seem to rely on safer traditional teaching techniques rather than try more learner centeredness pedagogy (Juhasz, 2015). Teachers seem to prioritize their work safeness over their personal and professional satisfaction.

### *Personal Satisfaction*

Professional training courses are apparently an opportunity for teachers to enhance collaboration. According to Caena (2011), professional training courses may also increase teachers' learning, satisfaction and effectiveness. A teacher who feels satisfied with the quality of work s/he is delivering is more likely to be a more productive teacher. This sort of teacher also has a better perception of her/himself (Tschannen-Morana & Hoy, 2007), and this can have a positive effect on their students' learning process. In this respect, Calderhead (1996), Day (2002) and Hargreaves (2005), amongst others, agree that teachers are usually perceived as experts both in their field and pedagogy and they are constantly looking for efficacy either for themselves, or their students. They also suggest that most teachers are likely to be looking for job satisfaction and confidence, which may be acquired in training courses. Thus, they may adopt a cooperative and professional attitude, which facilitates the development of tasks and their participation in training courses. This may benefit the school community in which they work as such courses can contribute to the improvement of the teachers' daily practice.

### *Daily Practice Improvement*

On the one hand, teachers' desire to professionally improve in their daily practice is linked to their willingness to accept innovation, ability to control stress and commitment (Karimi, 2011). Teachers' development as in CPD can also be enhanced by their own experiences

in the classroom (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) day after day. Thus, when teachers produce and observe satisfactory results in the short term, they improve; a healthy circle is created. Nevertheless, teachers find difficult to apply what they have learnt in training courses (Kurihara & Samimy, 2007). There might be several reasons for this: teachers have a tight syllabus to cover in a limited time, they work in unsuitable or poor conditions, and they do not have enough support from the institution to apply new ideas, among others. Therefore, the whole effort to implement the learnt innovative ways of working relies entirely on the teacher, who must find the way to incorporate what s/he learns in courses. In this way, teachers will be able to observe that training course do help them in improving their performance as EFL instructors (AL-Wreikat & Abdullah, 2010). This makes evident that teachers should not only focus on ways to encourage students' lifelong learning, but on their own lifelong learning as well.

### *Lifelong Learning Perspective*

Teachers need to visualize professional development in the long run term. They need to see this type of courses as a way to adapt to constant changes rather than compulsory academic events (Caena, 2011). They also need to consider different factors such as teachers' experiences and generational differences (Juhasz, 2015). It is, therefore, of paramount importance that teachers have a positive attitude towards the suggestions they may receive in courses and be tolerant and patient with their own acquisition pace process to gradually incorporate that new knowledge into their daily practice. This has to be done in such a way that this learning practical application can continue along their professional career ensuring personal and professional satisfaction. In this respect, Estrada et al. (2016) suggest the development of a friendly atmosphere considering teachers' professional development and emotions as essential factors at training courses to ensure agreements. Consequently, the perceptions on the impact teachers' professional training courses have on their daily practice needs to be more documented and more deeply analysed.

## **METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

This research was qualitative, based on a case study method. When conducting qualitative research, data is often obtained through open-ended questions and observations of the individuals that give information about their own work and views (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). These techniques were chosen as they are enough to triangulate the information, among other different techniques stated in the qualitative paradigm. In this particular case, we analysed how teachers perceived their professional development based on the training courses offered by an institution of higher education and qualitative research is appropriate to explore perceptions. This section has been divided into three subsections: Case study, context and participants and data collection techniques.

### *Case Study*

We conducted a case study within the qualitative paradigm because it allowed us to obtain the reasons why a phenomenon took place as well as the processes it followed; thus, we used 'why' and 'how' research questions (Lopez, 2016; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2003) in order to ask our participants about their perceptions regarding the benefits of taking training courses. For the purpose of this case study, language school teachers were asked to express, in their own context (Yin, 2003), their views regarding the development courses they are offered to take at the end of each term.

### *Context and Participants*

This study was carried out at the Language School of the UV. The Language School offers a BA in English, a BA in French, a BA distance program in ELT, an MA in French and an MA in English. For the purposes of this study, four academics from the BA in English and two from the distance program were chosen (aged 35-54; three male and three female; one English and five Mexicans): most of them have been interested in attending professional training courses; in fact, they have all been peers of the researchers of this study in these courses. Some of these participants are experienced and others novice teachers who work for the Language School in different areas of knowledge related to ELT. Participants' characteristics should only provide a general impression of the way teachers perceive training courses, regardless of their years of experience or nationality.

### *Data Collection Techniques*

We, the researchers of this study, played the roles of participant-observers (Adler & Adler, 1987; Yin, 2003) in a recent course taken by us and other teachers. The participant-observer's role demanded deep contact and intimacy, so we became involved in the setting and observed it. We, as participant observers, observed our colleagues during the course and then asked some of them to participate in this study at random. We arranged appointments to conduct interviews with those colleagues who openly expressed their points of view regarding the relevance of the training courses they had taken in an informal chat. In the meantime, we were able to keep journals of the observations we made during the development course lessons.

### *Data Collection Processes*

First, we kept journals of observations we conducted during different training courses in the past year and during the training course we took with the participants who were interviewed for this study. We kept a record of our observations in a journal: participants' attitudes, views and opinions about the course. This observation notes were used to confirm what participants had expressed during interviews (Lopez, 2012). The interviews were the main source of data. They consisted of open-ended questions to explore the participants' opinions about CPD courses in which they had been recently involved.

After, we carried out the interviews with six colleagues. We reached a saturation point as there was nothing else to record (Kvale, 1996, p.102). Finally, the data was analysed and organised into categories. For ethical reasons, we used initials to protect the identity of the participants (Cohen et al, 2000). Through the analysis and comparison of our participants' opinions and the notes in our journals, we explored, triangulated and tried to make sense of what the whole data reflected.

## **FINDINGS: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS**

This section has been divided into five subsections, which correspond to the categories that emerged from the analysis of the data. The most salient categories that emerged were: *perceived advantages of teachers' training courses*; *Observed teachers' professional development benefits on students*; *perceived disadvantages of teachers' training courses*; *Suggested ways for training courses improvement* and *Recognized teachers' development Impact*.

### *perceived advantages of teachers' training Courses*

The most recurrent answer regarding the benefits of professional development courses were the ones referring to teachers being up to date in their field. They wanted to acquire new and more specialized knowledge on teaching and learning methodologies to improve their daily practice as it can be observed in the following two extracts. In addition, values such as responsibility, commitment and partnership also emerged as factors enhanced by this kind of courses. Therefore, teachers' interest in knowing and experimenting with new pedagogies was because they were concerned and aware of their duties when playing the role of trainee.

001

These courses help us to be updated regarding all the teaching and learning umbrella; that is, professional development courses enhance teachers' responsibility. Us teachers are committed to education and want to cover every single student's need. Plus, by taking these courses, we might be able to share information on what is happening in our classrooms with other colleagues; it could be beneficial to share teachers' pedagogical knowledge.

(INF/LS)

In addition to the moral matter, participants were also concerned on how to sort out the constraints their students may face when learning a foreign language, and therefore, they needed to evolve and improve their subject matter as well as the pedagogies they could use in the EFL context. Today, students are encouraged to overcome different issues (lack of economical support, inflexible timetables, traffic or commuting problems, among others) and keep a constant learning along their lives: they have to become autonomous; however, teachers also need to continue developing professionally speaking in order to cope with new challenges, implement new teaching

techniques and provide students with more tools in the EFL context, as expressed by the following participant:

002

Professional development is essential not only for teachers but for everyone who does want to keep up with the new trends in our specific areas. This professional development would be of great assistance when we find specific issues to solve. I really think that humans are always in need of change and looking for new aspects of our professional lives would be part of that change. Thus, it is important to take advantage of all the professional development courses we can enrol in and try to make the most of it.

(INF/LC)

In extract 002 we can see that participants may become more conscious of the roles they are expected to play during change if they reflect on what it is missing in their professional development. According to Ben-Peretz et al (2003), the exposure of gaps between the realities of teachers' professional lives and their perceived images of themselves is important for the promotion of awareness concerning the nature of teaching, their roles and the impact of teachers' training courses in their daily practice. On the contrary, a less romantic view could be the fact teachers also want to upgrade their qualifications to be more competitive in the labour market as expressed next.

003

Professional development courses allow teachers the opportunity to develop and update their knowledge and competencies, which helps them improve their practice. They provide knowledge on relevant topics. They also help teachers' CV's, which in turn help them have more job opportunities. Finally, they provide a space for teachers to interact, to bond with each other and collaborate.

(INF/BN)

As observed above, participant BN agrees on the fact that training courses allow professional development to happen as they may increase teachers' expertise and competency; however, s/he also identifies a more instrumental advantage in taking development courses as they may improve teachers' qualification to obtain a better post or even job. What is more, s/he also considers there is a collaborative element that may occur during this course; this is very useful for the institution as teachers from different knowledge areas can benefit each other through this interaction. Although the following participant gives flow to the narrative that has been expressed by others, s/he makes once more the connection between values and professional development in the educational setting when s/he expressed that training courses are an opportunity to listen to practical forms to sort out students' real learning constraints. During the observations,

we listened to teachers sharing their views and opinions about institution requirements such as taking development courses.

004

If it is about "improving" our approaches to teaching, I'd rather go for "developing" our skills for teaching. In this respect, workshops are a good opportunity for teachers to come up with ideas and discuss teaching and learning phenomena.

(INF/LS)

This participant also brings us back to the fundamental reason why teachers take professionalisation courses, which is to improve their daily teaching practice, but it also adds the element of using training courses to analyse what is happening in their teaching context and find alternatives together. S/he seems to be leading us to the fact that teachers' professional development should be beneficial for their students' learning process.

#### *Exploring Teachers' Professional Development Benefits on Students*

Participant LS considers that a positive impact that his/her professionalization can have on her/his students is to model an example of professionalism to follow. In addition, teachers are able to prepare students for facing real life situations avoiding a negative back wash effect. This last remark underlines the fact that students are not only prepared to take an exam but to deal with real life events.

005

It (impact of professionalization) has favoured their (students') communicative skills, willingness to work, motivation and to a certain extent, they are more focused on lifelong learning than being successful at passing standardised exams.

(INF/LS)

Furthermore, teachers notice the importance of creating a positive rapport with their students because this is something they will try to create in the future in case they become teachers. They will also develop certain aptitudes such as being collaborative, creative and critical thinkers, among other characteristics, as they develop competencies to sort out communicative as well as social issues. Providing feedback to students can have a two-sided impact: on the one hand, teachers may become encouraged to give each other peer assessment (Sandlund et al., 2016); and, on the other hand, through their own experience on the topic, teachers may enhance 'peer assessment' among students.

006

There are four main aspects in which teachers' professional development courses benefit students: First of all, by helping learners develop more critical thinking and problem-solving skills; secondly, by building rapport with them and among them; thirdly, by helping them collaborate and learn from everybody. Finally, these courses tend to foster peer feedback.

(INF/CT)

Collaboration, then, emerges as a key value that can be encouraged at teachers' training courses, which in turn may have an impact on students' development. This element also helps teachers to prepare students for working with other people regardless of their backgrounds and personal differences, which actually happens in any given context. They may become more sensible to evaluate alternatives to sort out problems. We do not always work with the people with whom we feel more comfortable. However, training courses may also bring some disadvantages.

#### *Perceived Disadvantages of Teachers' Training Courses*

Although teachers expressed their interest in participating in professionalization courses, they also described negative aspects in relation to those courses. The aspect most teachers mentioned in the first place was time management. The time factor is with no doubt crucial nowadays as teachers may easily get worn out due to a constant increase in roles played inside their educational setting and in the duties these roles bring along:

007

Time is one of the disadvantages of teachers' professional development courses. We are overwhelmed. We've got a lot of roles to play as teachers this day. One of the disadvantages of these courses is that they might be time consuming. Professors can invest time and effort on their training, but planning and the different teacher's roles could be impacted negatively. I sometimes have to miss lessons in order to attend conferences, forums, courses and other events in order to train myself in the field and students complain about it. I have had to keep a balance among all the different roles I play, but to be honest; I've always focused my energy in the classroom.

(INF/VR)

The extract above is rich in expressing the disadvantages that training courses may have. Participant VR is concerned with the work load teachers need to face along with taking the courses because the school administrative and academic demands and processes do not stop. They have even increased. Teachers must decide whether to comply with their duties or miss a good course that might not necessarily be offered the following term. In addition, if the teacher were able to find the time to attend a course, this course might not be as fruitful as expected. Therefore, administrators need to organise

the courses well ahead to guarantee not only the effectiveness of the content but the availability to take it. The following participant also highlights the importance of facilities.

008

Sometimes the equipment is not available, and/or the classroom is not appropriate or well suited for the courses.

(INF/CT)

The informants do not speak openly about dissatisfaction as expressed in the written literature regarding professional development courses; however, they do underline the fact that they feel frustrated. Frustration is caused by the lack of time, a wider variety of courses offered, the subject matter and even the teacher's lack of skills, or even knowledge to transmit relevant information.

009

We do not have much time to take such courses; not as many as we need though. Another issue has to do with the topics covered in these courses. Sometimes we feel that we need a specific course, and that one is not offered. A third issue (touchy subject, I may add) is the facilitators of the courses. We may be well-versed in our specific areas, but that does not necessarily mean that we can pass on the knowledge to others. I mean, picture a course about specific software; the facilitator of the course may explain everything as if we are experts in this field, but the truth is we aren't. So, we feel kind of frustrated because we don't get the most of the course, and when we have to do the tasks we can feel at a loss.

(INF/LC)

The participant-teachers identify some disadvantages of training courses offered by the institution such as the need for specific courses and specialized instructors (009). It is important to say that they intend to take them in the future though. It would appear that, professionals as they are, these teachers think they can still benefit from the courses offered at some extent. Teachers even gave suggestions for improving the courses in the following section.

#### *Suggested Ways to Improve Teachers' Training Courses*

Participants pointed out that course contents should be related to different knowledge and or subject matter areas. This can interest more teachers because, recently, courses have apparently been focused on aspects related to the new educational model and have been imposed by the institution. Thus, training courses must to be based on teachers' needs, which may involve a wide range of topics and also vary from one teacher to another. Finally, disseminating information about the course is essential.



010

An important improvement would be to generate more courses on a variety of areas of interest and to make the information available to all teachers.

(INF/BN)

The above participant agrees on the idea of having a wider variety subject matter courses and adds that teachers should also be given more time to participate in different courses. It may also be convenient to attend several courses at the same time, so teachers could explore the area in which they might be more interested in gaining expertise or extra knowledge.

011

I need to give myself the time and opportunity to explore different courses. I think it is important to be well-versed in our area of expertise, but it is as important to give us the chance to know new things.

(INF/LC)

Teachers seem to be well-aware of what they need from courses; they need more specialised and varied courses, perhaps offered in both shifts – morning and afternoon – to have more opportunities to attend them; teachers recognise the importance of their taking risks when it comes to working with different areas of knowledge. This can be very useful as some of them say that they have been pleasantly surprised when they have taken courses that do not seem to be so interesting or so related to their areas (OBV01). While observing classes, teachers constantly expressed their interest in acquiring new teaching methodologies and in getting involved in more collaborative work (Hargreaves, 2005). Furthermore, they think the institution should provide optimal technical and physical conditions for the courses.

012

By upgrading the equipment (Update) and by providing appropriate spaces for the courses (e.g. a conference room).

(INF/CT)

Up to now, teachers have expressed their concern regarding their continuous professional training. This teachers' interest was observed and expressed openly in the courses and in interviews; however, what participants express orally seems to have more impact as when they referred to advantages and disadvantages. They mentioned that there are advantages and disadvantages as teachers may become more aware of their teaching context and their students learning process in order to be up to date regarding the final content, which refers to the competencies developed in students as well as solid moral values. However, the fact that any process demands steps is highlighted in the following section.

*Recognized e ac ers' De e lopment Impact*

Participants ward the importance training courses have had in their professional development. They are able to apply new methodologies as they probably take those courses which they believe will help them to improve their teaching practice or will help them to sort out a particular situation in which they are not being as successful as they would like to. It would appear that teachers who take constant training courses may be more interested in their professional development.

013

The impact these courses have had on my teaching has been the most meaningful outcome I can tell during the last five years. I think I've learnt and developed techniques to employ in my context.

(INF/DN)

Nevertheless, if teachers want to respond to new teaching and learning methodologies, they need to be more skilful handling technology. This is something administrators should take into account. Training teachers in the use of technology to respond new world demands, to be up to date and to make the best of materials to cover different students' interests, needs and learning styles. Using technology should not be seen only as a way to answer exercises but as a way to support students in gaining expertise in productive skills such as writing.

014

I think all of them (training courses) have given me something I have used in my classrooms. However, if I have to mention courses that have had an impact on my practice, I would say the ones regarding the use of technology, the ones that have to do with the writing skills, and the ones that have to do with research processes.

(INF/LC)

Furthermore, a novice teacher may see professional training courses as a way to reinforce their sense of belonging to the academic community. This may be linked to the idea of having a social representation as a teacher. This involves interpretation and construction of social reality, the construction of individual and group identity and, finally, the direction of behaviours and social relations. Researchers involved in professional identity explain that it refers to two things: on the one hand, the way teachers perceive themselves as teachers and what factors contribute to these perceptions. On the other hand, the characteristics that make teachers members of a defined group (Beijaard et al., 2000, Huberman, 1993) as expressed by the following informant.

015

I have only taken one course but it had a very positive impact on my identity as a teacher and on my engagement in the profession.

(INF/CT)

As part of the teacher's individual and professional development, the following participant affirms that her/his development impacts her/himself and her/his students positively. This participant even suggests that individual professional development should be as a topic for future research. This particular interest brings to light an issue that is shared by a community: fostering lifelong learning for teachers.

016

Lifelong learning is supposed to be the objective of each professor regardless the branch of study. I'd say that my professional development has enhanced students' awareness of what learning a language really implies: time, commitment, responsibility, discipline. Furthermore, they seem to be aware of the way they learn because I always try to trigger their curiosity. As a matter of fact, I would have to do research in order to discover the real impact my professional development and performance has on students.

(INF/BN)

In sum, professionalization courses were found to be directly interwoven with the development of the teacher as a whole. We thought of this as the teacher's development triangle where three dimensions would appear to interact simultaneously: teacher's professionalization, which includes all the knowledge a teacher can obtain through different sorts of courses; teacher's emotions, which can occur every single moment of teacher's work (Yin, 2015); although the term *emotion* per se does not appear in the text, they are implicitly expressed by teachers especially when they referred to satisfactions and dissatisfactions; furthermore, teacher's values, which result from all his experiences along her/his career (Yin, 2015). Therefore, it can be concluded that the whole teacher requires triangulating her/his professional development, emotions and values as explained in the following diagram.

Figure 1. Teachers' Development Triangle.



(satisfaction and dissatisfaction) (responsibility, commitment and partnership)

The diagram above intends to represent the fact that teachers' professionalization is in constant synergy in their careers. Thus, teachers' lifelong learning in their subject matter must respond to their needs, which are shaped by the changes in technology, education and society in general; however, this professionalization must be grounded on the teachers' recognition of their own perceptions of their surrounding world, emotions and values.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Teachers' in-service training is thought to be embedded into teachers' professional experience. Results demand an in-depth analysis of teachers' daily practice to avoid simplifying relevant academic issues. This demands responding to challenges based on the benefits of in-service training. On the one hand, professional training courses must be based on teachers' real needs as this is essential to overcome particular issues such as what they and their students need regarding their interests and the demands of a more complex educational system; on the other hand, teachers need to be supported to count on better distributed academic tasks so time stops being a constraint and turns into a tool to help teachers manage their various responsibilities such as a continuous lifelong learning in their areas of interest to overcome new challenges; moreover, the varied phenomena expressed by teachers can have resonance in other classrooms and must be explored and disseminated within a community of teachers with a growing shared identity. Finally, a teachers' needs analysis to respond to teachers' more specific and more realistic professional development interests has to be conducted by the department in charge of analysing and approving the training courses within the university. Consequently, exploring trainers' points of view is suggested as further research.

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# FORMER IMMIGRANT STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES VS. THEIR SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCE AT THE BA IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative research explores and examines former immigrant students' expectations and experiences concerning their learning process at University, studying the BA in English Language. This study was carried out at the school of languages of a public autonomous university in southeast Mexico. The school has a flexible curriculum that encourages autonomy on the part of the learners who may choose from a wide range of languages to learn, in addition to their degree. The research study took place over a period of 22 weeks in the spring term. The participants were a group of former immigrant students who had attended school in the U.S. and who are currently studying a BA in English Language in Mexico. The data provided by the interviews suggests that the participants are aware of the advantages that having acquired English as second language, gives them. They assume they are capable and motivated students. However, they face cultural, social, linguistic and academic challenges that need to be overcome if their expectations of success at school are to be met.

**Key words:** Immigrant students, return migration, cultural shock, expectations, challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (2010), 17 of every 100 immigrants who resided in the United States, have returned to Mexico in the past twelve years (2012). In fact, owing to various causes, more Mexicans have returned to Mexico than migrated to the United States in recent years (Linthicum, 2016). When these families return to their native country, they often bring their children back with them. These children have formerly studied in the United States and are likely to have a sound command of English. Therefore, when they arrive in Mexico it may seem sensible to take a BA in English Language as their chance of being successful at it is assumed as a foregone conclusion. However, when these students begin their BA studies, they may face difficulties such as the realization that their expectations were unfounded, cultural shock, social challenges and weak skill development, as it is assumed wrongly that being fluent in the language is enough to be proficient. Proficiency implies more than speaking. In other words, in addition to the linguistic challenges that mastering a foreign language poses, the students may face social challenges as well; they may also have difficulties with adaptation and integration; and consequently, motivation may decrease or be lost



completely if the students' expectations are not fulfilled. Therefore, it is important for the student to succeed and overcome the cultural and linguistic barriers in order to maintain his/her motivation. This qualitative research explores and examines former immigrant students' experiences and expectations concerning a BA language learning process.

## **RATIONALE**

For a former immigrant student arriving back in Mexico from the United States, studying an English B.A. appears to be the right thing to do since they are already fluent in English. However, when you have spent a large part of your life living abroad, clinching a degree in English language implies much more than speaking the target language well. It involves fitting back into a culture whose social norms, education system, history, and even language may not be familiar to someone who has just come back and needs to readapt to a culture they only knew when they were young children.

Not surprisingly, there is little research on these former immigrant students. This is likely due to the prevalence of a view of Mexico as a country that sends, rather than receives, students (Hamann, Zúñiga, Sánchez, 2010). These students are largely invisible because both the American and Mexican education system, as well as other government agencies have conceptualized international migration between the two countries as largely from Mexico to the United States (Hamann et al., 2010).

There is a limited number of articles and publications on the subject of reverse migration. Besides, research available only deals with United States-born Mexicans. Former immigrant students coming back to Mexico are scarcely taken into account. Brittain (2005) states that:

The experiences of Mexican students in the United States have been well-documented throughout the years, but the bulk of the studies have failed to recognize the importance of the sustained links some of these students have with Mexico. Most of the current research on immigrant students has focused on the experiences that are directly related to the cultural and linguistic discontinuities they experience with the American mainstream culture. (p.1)

It may be safely assumed that former immigrant students have potential for developing fully as university students; yet, teachers do not know how to exploit that talent because of the cultural and linguistic barriers students sometimes have trouble breaking. At the BA in English Language this study focuses on, there is not much awareness of the different types of students the school has and their previous backgrounds, which might hold back students' full potential. Therefore, this research seeks to give voice to former immigrant students. This might encourage teachers to become aware of their students' situation and help them cope efficiently with the learning process at university.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Return migration is a growing movement. Owing to this, the term transnationals (similar to immigrants) shifted meaning to include a variety of people (workers and students), experiences, and connections. Transnational students have many similarities with immigrant students and are a key factor in this investigation. Return migration is defined as the movement of immigrants back to their homelands to resettle (Gmelch, 1980). According to Gmelch (1980), the topic of migration, in general, should be treated as a system, in which “both stream and counter streams” (p.136) should be studied. In other words, research should be carried out on the two societies (Gmelch, 1980). However, it appears that not much has been researched about people who return to their homeland. Instead, studies are mostly concerned with what happens in the receiving country, which is usually well developed, instead of the sending country, which is often rural and less developed (Gmelch, 1980). Gmelch (1980) observes that most of the migration scenarios focus on people who originally migrated to industrialized countries, notably northern Europe and northeastern North America, who have returned to their less developed homelands. A case in point that appears to be very common is that from the United States to Mexico.

Despite the fact that Gmelch’s work (1980) was written almost forty years ago, migration is still an ongoing and growing movement. In a more recent study, Brettel and Hollifield (2000) point out that the United States has one of the highest waves of migration, representing 9.8% the U.S. population, which is 26.3 million people. Things have not changed much since the year 2000. According to the International Migration Report (United Nations, 2013), almost 60% of the 232 million international migrants lived in the developed regions. Likewise, 60% of originated from a developing country. Moreover, the report (United Nations, 2013) also highlights that “between 1990 and 2013, Northern America recorded the largest gain in the absolute number of international migrants” (p. 2). Brettel and Hollifield (2000) state that, almost 14 million children under the age of 18 who live in the United States are immigrants or have immigrant parents.

Gmelch (1980) points out that there can be many causes that lead immigrants to return to their homelands. Villegas Torres and Mora Pablo (2017) points out that generally immigrants return to their countries for personal or economic reasons while some others simply get deported. Migrants generally move from small places to a more developed society. Although, their desire to move is their free choice, it is strongly motivated by financial issues, unemployment and other related causes. However, their decision to return is not always self-originated; for example, deportation seems to be a subject of great importance in the United States today. Marshall (2016) states that, between 2009 and 2015 more than 2.5 million people have been removed because of immigration orders, which does not include the number of people who returned voluntarily. Gmelch’s research (1980) suggests that a large amount of migrants return to their homelands because of their families. Migrants also give other reasons that motivate them to return such as, “love of

homeland” (Gmelch, 1979, 1980). Whatever the reason immigrants return to their homeland, the fact is that migration in general, and return migration as well, is a phenomenon that is growing day by day and affects both sides of the border. Since 2005, thousands of them are coming back to Mexico, and those who were born in the United States are coming for the first time to their parents’ homeland to register in Mexican schools (Zuñiga, 2013). Transnationalism has thus become a key factor in comprehending migration (Kilinc, 2014). Additionally, Kilinc (2014) states that migration is a continuing phenomenon, hence the relevance of carrying out research on this matter.

### *Transnational and immigrant students*

Students who have attended school in the U.S. and are now studying back in Mexico are known as transnational students. Transnational students are those who return for long periods of time and may eventually return to the United States. These students find themselves frequently traveling from one country to the other (DeWitt, 2016). In Cave’s opinion (2012), whether the student is a transnational or a former immigrant, there are high chances they will return to the United States in the future. Therefore, it is important to understand these students’ perceptions of their own situation because their education and/or job opportunities may have an impact on both countries (Borjian, Muñoz de Cote, Dijk, & Houde, 2016; Dreby, 2010).

Many researchers have coined other terms to refer to transnational students. For instance, according to Pollock and Reken (2001), transnationals may be similar to “Third Culture Kids”: “a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture” (p.19). McCaig (1992) developed a similar concept named “Global Nomads” or “Domestic Nomadas”. According to Stultz (2003), domestic nomads are people who have not left their country, but who live inside different cultures at the same time. These groups have thus been labeled as a result of the huge migration flow into the United States. It may be safe to assume that what all these groups, including former and immigrant students have in common is that the majority share the same needs and face similar challenges (Stultz, 2003).

Hamann (2001) developed a different category for transnational students: sojourners. Hamann (2001) defines sojourner students by comparing them with students who have come to settle for a long time. Sojourners are noticeable because they stop attending school because of relocation (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009). A similar issue happens with immigrant students who study in the United States; they suddenly disappear because they return to their native countries. Transnationals, like immigrant students, face the challenge of reintegration when they arrive to the new country (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009).

Zúñiga and Hamann (2009) state that there are many children who attend school and are involved in the transnational movement of people between the United States and Mexico. Weiss and Chaltelt (2011) state that Mexico is seen as a country of origin, transit and destination for different types of migrants with different backgrounds. Each year

millions of people, including young students, come and go over the border (legally and illegally) making Mexico and the United States one of the busiest border crossing in the world (Weiss & Chaltelt, 2011). Jang (2010) states that “transnational students live a cross cultural and highly mobile lifestyle” (p. 137), as “we interact deeply with various cultures and relocate frequently between more than one country and cultural environment” (Shields, 2009, as cited in Jang 2010, p.137).

### *Reverse cultural shock*

We as a society like to be thought of as being part of something. As a whole, humans are social by nature, belonging is fundamental (Levett-Jones & Lathlean, 2007). When an immigrant travels to the United States, they take their culture with them and their children, who are at a young age when they start to acquire a sense of belonging to a culture. As children grow up, they begin to acquire language and culture (Grosjean, 2013). Culture is one factor in the way a person identifies within society or within the world (Stultz, 2003). According to Jang (2010), it can give a person “identity, confidence, and belonging” (p.140). When a person has lived among a culture for several years, they can start to display similar behaviors and associate similar ideas (Jang, 2010).

There is a growing number of school-aged children who grow up in more than one country and culture (Jang, 2010). When arriving to a new country, the challenge goes beyond becoming fluent in the language of their new country; they need also to relearn cultural norms (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009). Jang (2010) expresses the view, giving her personal experience as an example, that when a person comes to a new country, their scenario of culture, societal standards, and way of life, is different. Likewise, when a person has lived for many years outside their homeland, they may face another cultural shock, better referred to as reverse cultural shock, when they return.

As Gaw (1999) states, “reverse culture shock is the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time” (p.83). Reverse culture and cultural shock come natural when you arrive to a different culture (Jang, 2010). When former immigrants return to their home culture, their perceptions have changed; they have acquired a second culture (Jang 2010). The immigrant student tries to merge two cultures into one, which is not easy (Matlick 2002). An example of this is provided by Enloe (1986, as cited in Gaw, 1999), who points out that reverse culture shock is something that a group of children experienced while returning to their homeland in Japan. Problems such as “school phobia, adjustment to home country social expectations, social rules, customs, fear of rejection, ridicule for being “foreign”, and performance anxiety” (Gaw ,1999, p. 88). These students lived in the United States and had very little contact with their original culture. In a similar research paper that discusses Japan’s returnees and other transcultural challenges of the late 20th century, Willis, Onoda and Enloe (1994) state that:

Where a person went, the type of education they received, the degree of acceptance they had abroad, and the degree of their integration and as

simulation in joining the foreign culture all make for a kaleidoscope of individuals. Moreover, the numbers of returnees in any given situation (are there many? Are there few?), their academic ability if they are students, and, perhaps most important, their class background, are all important cues for understanding specific impacts that are taking place. (p.111)

In other words, there is not one single individual identity but multiple ones that are shaped by our experiences in life, our interactions with others, and our openness and willingness to be part of a foreign social groups. When considering the issue of return migration, several factors—these different identities, their level of education, the social class they identify with, and whether it is just one, a few, or a large number of them—that must be taken into account to determine the effects that they will have on the returnees themselves

### *Educational Shock*

Education is seen as a universal right and a key element in society (Bárcenas, 2015). According to Hamann, Zuñiga and Garcia (2010) and Booth (1941), Mexican schools form a society, meaning that during education, students share more than a classroom. School becomes the students' new environment, where they interact with classmates and learn through experiences (Dewey, 1990). Mexican schools not only prepare students for the future, but also instill national pride and loyalty to the country, which may help them form an identity later on (Hamann, Zuñiga & Garcia, 2010). In a similar way, American schools also promote patriotism and loyalty to their country. Students pledge allegiance to the flag and are taught parts of the constitution, thus making the US one of the most patriotic countries (De Greco, 2014). Hamann, Zuñiga and Garcia (2010) advance the view that it can be confusing for students who have lived on both sides of the border to deal with patriotism while belonging to two cultures.

However, the American and Mexican education systems are not the same in other aspects. According to Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix and Clewell (2000), in schools, the American educational system focuses on helping children develop English language and literacy skills, good study habits, shared understanding about academic expectations, and appropriate student behavior. In middle school, students are divided into blocks where they study up to eight classes per day. The structure of most American schools has not changed since the 1950s (Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). Whereas in Mexico, the main purpose of the education system is to help students achieve a high degree of study, pursue a degree and give students' vocational training (Hopkins, Ahtaridou, Matthews, Posner, & Toledo Figueroa 2007).

Hamann et al. (2010) asked 72 Mexican born students who had had U.S. school experience how they would compare US schools to Mexican schools. 64% answered US schools (in general) seemed better. Villegas Torres and Mora Pablo refer that, in their study, the return immigrants' perception of Mexican schools was described as negative

when compared with American schools. However, in Brittan's research (2005), Mexican children shared that they perceived American schools were easier than those in their countries of origin. Some children had negative perceptions about the quality of education in the United States because they felt they were not learning anything new; they also said they felt American schools were "easy" (Brittan, 2005). Either way, it may appear that an educational mismatch leads to difficulties for former immigrant students. American schools are not the same as Mexican schools, thus, there is an education mismatch (Hamann et al., 2010).

Zuñiga and Hamann's (2009) findings show that Mexican teachers claim students who have had former US school experience have literacy problems in Spanish. Teachers claim these students have problems with phonetics, writing, and expressing their ideas. They also have difficulties with Mexican history and geography (Zuñiga & Hamann, 2009). In other words, student who have had previous US school experience seem to face an educational shock. Former immigrant students have to adjust to different teacher profiles, teaching techniques, schools environments, schools subjects and classmates.

### *Acculturation*

Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) defined acculturation as "those phenomena, which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. (pp. 149-150)

According to a research study conducted by Prieto, Sagafinejad and Janamanchi (2013), acculturation is a "process of becoming" (p. 290) used to a different culture, through different types of practices which may build new character traits and ideologies. According to a more recent view by Berry (2005), acculturation is both a "cultural and psychological change" (p. 698) which alters behavior at an individual level and involves a collective state of mind at a group level.

Acculturation happens when a person is exposed to and surrounded by a dominant culture other than their own. Acculturation can be developed in different places but mostly in schools. Schneider, Stevenson, and Coleman (1993) explain in their research how schools are the dominant social context for young people of school age. McCarthy's (1998) results suggest that the process of both adaptation and acculturation occur in schools where cultural norms are portrayed. Research by Prieto et al. (2013) suggests that an immigrant's acculturation level is associated with the amount of time spent in the host society and experience gained in the American education system. Nieri (2012) points out that inside schools students interact in different ways. Some interactions are by choice, for example during recess, lunch-break or on playgrounds. Others are established by school when students share a classroom or are assigned a class assignment in a pair or group. Even if the students have made an election over the social

context they wish to be part of, the interaction with other already acculturated students is unavoidable (Nieri, 2012). Nieri (2012) adds that:

When a less acculturated youth attends a school with a large group of more acculturated students, he or she may become more acculturated to American culture and do so more quickly than a similar youth in a school with a large group of less acculturated students. (p. 463)

Nieri's (2012) research suggests that immigrants tend more to adapt to English rather than reinforce their native language. Furthermore, Nieri (2012) suggests that:

Less acculturated youths will have less opportunity to practice their language of origin and more opportunity to use English through their interactions with the more acculturated youths, who by definition prefer English. The larger the more acculturated group, the more its members will interact with each other, reinforcing their level of acculturation—that is, their preference for English. (p. 464)

In other words, the younger you are when you are immersed in the new culture, the faster and easier the process of acculturation will be. This is the result of richer interaction with peers and more contact with the target language.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

One main research question was established:

How do former immigrant students' expectations relate to their subsequent experiences at the BA in English Language in the specific context of the school of languages where this study was carried out?

In order to answer this question, three sub questions were designed:

- What were the students' expectations before entering the BA?
- What difficulties did the students face during the B.A?

What advantages or disadvantages does the students have regarding their former immigrant experience?

## **OBJECTIVES**

This research aimed to explore students' responses to the experience of studying a BA in the English language. Furthermore, it analyzed the students' different encounters with obstacles, such as cultural shocks, skills development (their strengths and weaknesses), social challenges and social response.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research study employed a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was considered to be more appropriate owing the fact that it was important to understand the participants' perceptions, expectations and experiences. This is exactly what qualitative research studies. Its main purpose is to interpret social interaction and behavior (Aneas & Paz Sandín, 2009). It explores a phenomenon that is new and has not been studied (Ospina, 2004). To build a new meaning, the researcher must be subjective (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Qualitative data adds rich detail and illustrates (Ospina, 2004). This methodological framework analyses beliefs, experiences, values, feelings and perceptions (Manson, 2002). It attempts to understand a specific situation rather than explain it (Ospina, 2004). It is aware of social reality (Manson, 2002) and seeks to discover how students see reality and make sense of the world; in other words, it aims to understand the experiences, attitudes and interactions of people (Pathak, Bijayini & Sanjay, 2013). In addition, quantitative research has a natural approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Lincoln and Guba (2000) state that "this means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.3).

### *Data collection and analysis*

Semi structured interviews were used to obtain specific information regarding the students' expectations and subsequent experiences on the English B.A. They allowed the researcher to obtain credible information in a standardized manner (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Through the interviews opinions and perceptions of the interviewee were gathered (Alshenqeeti, 2014). By means of interviews, the researcher attained a more personal relationship and was able to ask direct questions to the interviewees (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). It also allowed the interviewee to give direct explanations as the participants had the opportunity to narrate their direct experiences (Alshenqeeti, 2014). I carried out seven interviews in total, one with each participant. All of the interviews were individual and were recorded, subsequently transcribed and analyzed.

By means of the interviews, different perceptions of the participants' own lives were collected and analyzed. The narration of a persons' life became natural in this inquiry. Interviews offered an opportunity to obtain specific information directly from the students' words (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The interview style was somewhat conversational. If at any time during the interview the researcher felt another question was pertinent or redundant, the question was adapted as necessary. This method turned out to be appropriate as the interviewer had the opportunity to talk face to face with the interviewees and explore their former experiences and present reality.



The analysis approach was based on aspects of Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is based on coding followed by constant comparative analysis (Willig, 2013). The main characteristic of coding, in general, is that it is very descriptive (Willig, 2013). Coding consisted in adding descriptive labels to certain words or phrases that came from the interviews (Willig, 2013).

The second main feature in Grounded theory is constant comparative analysis. At this stage, the researcher must be able to identify the differences between the categories in order to see if there are subcategories (Willig, 2013). By means of constant comparative analysis, not only did the researcher have to create subcategories, but also re-order them and put them into smaller chunks of meaning (Willig, 2013).

### *Context*

This study was carried out in a Mexican School of Languages. The city where it is located has a large population of foreign students. The population of students is characterized by its diversity. The school is home to many exchange students, as well as foreign teachers who are native speakers of English. The university educational system is based on flexibility to achieve full development. The students are able to select the time schedule and contents, according to their professional interests and personal characteristics.

### *Participants*

For this research seven students were selected and given pseudonyms to protect their identities: Melissa, Victor, Erika, Mario, June, Sally, and Nelly. They all lived and studied in the United States at an earlier stage in their lives and have spent a significant number of years in the United States. Their ages range between 21 and 23.

- Melissa is a twenty-three year-old student currently registered in one of the advanced English courses, spent eleven years living in the US. She was taken to live in the United States at the age of five. She studied elementary, middle and part of high school there.
- Victor is a twenty-two-year-old student currently registered in one of the last elective courses, spent three years living in the US, where he studied fourth and fifth grade at elementary school and sixth grade at middle school.
- Erika is currently studying her eighth semester on the BA, she is twenty-four years old. She had lived seven years in the United States before returning to Mexico.
- Mario is a twenty-one year old student, currently studying the eighth semester, lived almost seven years in the United States where he attended part of Elementary school, all of middle school and part of high school.
- June is a nineteen-year old student, currently registered in one of the advanced English courses. Her family left Mexico when she was five. She spent

around nine years living in the US, where she studied kindergarten and all of elementary and middle school.

- Sally is a twenty-one-year-old student spent eight years living in the US. She arrived at the United States at the age of six and returned at the age of thirteen. There, she studied elementary school and up to seventh grade in middle school.
- Nelly is nineteen years old and currently studying an advanced English course on the BA. She was born in Mexico, but was taken as a baby to live in Canada for 10 years.

As can be observed, at the time of this study, they were all studying a BA in English language and were very close to completing their degree. Thus, they could all talk from experience as they had spent at least three years in school and had lived through different incidents they could share. It must be highlighted that they all have a sound command of English (certified B2 level).

## **FINDINGS**

In this chapter, the findings of the research are presented. The data from the interviews conducted with the seven students, at the time studying the BA in English Language, have sorted into five categories: Cultural problems when arriving to Mexico, Students' expectations before taking up the BA, Social Challenges in Mexico, Difficulties students face during the English BA and Students' current expectations.

### *Cultural problems when arriving in Mexico*

Most of the participants indicated that when they came back to Mexico, they disliked returning to their native home. They had made up their mind that their home was in the United States and not in their native country. The participants had been living a significant period of time in the US; thus, when returning, they claim, they were not familiar with the Mexican culture. According to most of the students who were interviewed, they were unfamiliar with certain cultural aspects such as language, history, education system, certain behavior traits and the environment in general.

Victor, who did part of middle school and high school abroad, pointed out that his problems were mostly language related. Even though Spanish is his first language, he felt he lacked some important knowledge of grammar points in Spanish, and his pronunciation sounded different from that of others,

They said I had a funny accent.

Erika, whose experience living in the United States comprises high school and middle school, stated that she was unaware of important Mexican historical events and behavior traits in Mexico:

Things like the wars... everything that has to do with history and geography, I really didn't get any of it... the first time I remember there was this one lady... when you say "hi" you usually shake hands in the US... but here everybody comes and hugs you and kisses you on the cheek...it's my personal space.

The data suggest that since the participants lacked certain cultural elements when they arrived back to their hometowns; this could have made them feel they did not belong to their homeland. Some participants felt as if they lacked a sense of identity because of the mixture of the two cultures. They do not feel identified or more comfortable with either culture. Mario, lived a third of his life in the United States where he completed practically all of his basic education, shared the following:

I don't have a lot of ...knowledge of the history of Mexico, maybe that would be like something that makes feel I don't have an identity with my country. I don't feel like that identified with another culture but I feel like I'm not very very... patriotic... very nationalist ...compared with other people here.

It may be safe to assume that the participants faced reverse cultural shock when they reintegrated back to their native culture. The participants were unfamiliar with the basic cultural aspects of their own culture. In the interviews conducted during the research, 6 out of 7 participants said they had difficulties adjusting to the new culture. The only one who did not face such difficulties had lived less time in the United States in comparison with the others. The length of time they experienced in the United States led to an acculturation process. The participants were immersed in the American culture, so they adjusted and integrated to that new society.

#### *Students' expectations before taking up the*

The data point out that the participants are aware that English is not their first language but they feel more comfortable using it. According to some of the participants, when it comes to everyday tasks such as doing homework or even just reading simple instructions, they feel they understand them better in English. Exposure to the language took place at a young age for them, so they feel English comes easier for them.

Melissa, who spent more than half her life living and studying in the United States, explained she was raised around English natives since the age of five, went to Elementary school where all of the classes were in English, and everything that was explained to her was in English. Thus, she feels she understands it better than Spanish:

Sometimes I have considered English to be my first language even though it's not, because I guess it was more what I was raised on... Sometimes when I buy things, like electronics or something and I want to know how to use it, I read the Spanish instructions... I'd rather turn it to the English side because I feel I can understand it more.

In the case of something as important as choosing a degree, most of the participants were aware of their high level of English; thus, they felt a BA in English would be a no brainer. In addition, the participants were aware that as their time goes by in Mexico, they will start to lose some of their English pronunciation and fluency, owing to the fact that they do not practice as much here as in the United States. Erika is aware of the fact that has started to get confused with both languages or forgets the meaning or pronunciation of a word she already knows:

You usually don't speak English in the streets ... because people stare... If you don't practice it, it just disappears... sometimes I lose the pronunciation of words.

It appears that another reason why the participants chose this BA is that they wanted to conserve and exploit the language they had already acquired. Victor explains:

I didn't want to lose the language, I realized that when I got to Mexico, I didn't have the same amount of opportunities to practice the language as I did back there... so that's why I chose to study the BA because I knew that here I was going to have the opportunity to keep on practicing the language.

In addition, the participants believed that at BA in English they would find people like them who had also lived in the United States. This would make it easy to relate to their classmates. This is the case of June, who completed all her basic education, from kindergarten to middle school across the border:

I also thought, there is going to be more people that also speak English, so, why shouldn't I go there and meet them, and probably feel more comfortable around people that have lived a life like you.

The expectations regarding the BA appear to have been high for the participants: they expected to be able to speak English all the time inside and outside the classroom, and with classmates. In addition, they also believed that their command of English would open future job opportunities would open to them, a perspective they share with all their other classmates. As Victor stated:

I chose it because of the job opportunities that it had to offer, it looked like something good.

## *Social Challenges in Mexico*

When arriving in Mexico, it seems that the participants faced different types of social challenges. The data revealed that the participants felt they were treated differently because of their origin. During English exams, the former immigrant students were asked to sit away from the other students so they were not able to copy from them. Teachers also asked them questions to make sure their own answers were correct. This kind of behavior made them feel different. Conversely, the data show that sometimes the participants felt ignored in English class. Erika said that her English teacher knew she had studied in the United States and assumed that she knew English well, so she was not asked to participate:

Teachers ignore you because they think you already know... all these rules I did learn them at some point but I forgot them... to be in the BA you need to know all these rules ...because you need to be able to explain them to someone else.

In addition to teachers treating former immigrant students differently, it appears that these students, occasionally, face bullying from other classmates and teachers. Sally left Mexico being a child and came back as a teenager. She shared that she faced serious verbal abuse from a teacher because he could not accept he was sometimes wrong:

I had problems with an English teacher... he started stalking me in school... my mom... went to the SEP. The problem I had was an activity... he said it was wrong... I talked to another teacher and she said we both were right. Everyone knew I lived in the United States and I think he got mad because I told him it was wrong.

Others were bullied by teachers because they did not know certain aspects of Spanish. Melissa stated she was bullied by a teacher because she had grammar problems in Spanish:

She told me how could I have studied this career if I didn't know my own maternal language, how would I expect to be a good professional...I think instead of telling someone you can't do it, you should be like "Oh, look, you should do this and be better at this" ... maybe they should actually support students instead of bringing them down.

The participants were also made fun of by their peers. Because of their American accent. Juno shared that her classmates teased her because of it, and the way she pronounces and writes some Spanish words.

People are like “Oh no, you don’t even know how to speak well” and they used to make fun of me because I didn’t know how to write Spanish very well... I felt very bad and cried sometimes.

Nelly, who was taken to Canada in her very early years and stayed there for a decade, faced a similar situation:

I’ve had some bullying for how I speak Spanish because sometimes I forget to conjugate words...when I do they all laugh.

Sometimes speaking English in a Spanish speaking country can be considered as an act of gloating or showing off, as if you knew more than a person who just speaks Spanish. Some participants stated that they were afraid of letting their classmates know they had lived in the United States because they would be teased. Melissa shares that when she arrived at the BA, she did not want anyone to know she could speak English, but it was noticeable owing to her accent:

When I first got here I didn’t tell anyone I knew English, I didn’t want to because I didn’t want to be treated differently...I didn’t really want anyone to know because... there is people that are like “oh, she’s a showoff”... there was girl in my class... when her little group heard me speaking... they started acting meanish.

Erika experienced a similar situation. When asked where she had lived, she would stay quiet in order to avoid people treating her differently. In addition, she limited her participation in class. For example, she did not volunteer answers to some questions even though she knew them in order not to appear as a “showoff”

They said I was pretending to be better than them because I knew English. I... zip my lips and stay quiet until I’m asked directly.

Teachers and classmates can be annoying, the participants expressed, because they are frequently asking English related questions and using them as examples. Nelly complained:

They think I know everything but I am not a walking dictionary.

Juno pointed out that being asked frequently to translate something can be stressful:

There’s a point where people keep and keep asking and asking you and asking you, that gets on your nerves ...and it just gets you like pissed, “...why can’t you just open up a dictionary and look up the word.

Juno is definitely annoyed by the fact that her classmates and teachers often seemed to make little effort to try to find things out by themselves. They could not be bothered to look words up in a dictionary and they found it much easier to just pester her with questions every time they had a chance.

### *Difficulties students face during the English BA*

The data revealed that the participants faced challenges with certain subjects related to grammar and academic writing. The participants acknowledge that this is due to the lack of contact with Spanish. Mario is aware that speaking Spanish is not the same as knowing about the language:

Grammar in Spanish, because... I didn't learn Spanish like others did... I had problems with... the grammar in Spanish...you're going to learn another language but if you don't know your own language, how are you supposed to learn another one? I lived in the United States for seven years and... I was never taught Spanish as a native... we never saw those type of rules...

Erika states she gets confused with both languages. She finds herself using Spanish structures in English sentences:

Spanish, Spanish and Spanish... grammar was really difficult...I'm very bad at grammar. Spanish because I wasn't really used to the language... I was used to hearing it, not to writing it... and everyone knows it, but I don't...Grammar because I haven't been in contact with this writing grammar a lot because when I went to this Mexican system school... its getting confusing now because of the structures, Spanish... the structures of the sentences are in one way and then in English, it's in another way.

Melissa states that she had difficulties when she was introduced to the Mexican education system. When asked why, she said:

I think is because of the same reason that I didn't grow up here... because obviously living in Mexico when you go to Elementary or Middle school, they are not going to teach you English punctuation or grammar, they're going to focus on what you speak which is Spanish and the same thing happened in the US, all I learned was in English so when I came here I was like "what is this?"

When studying in the United States, the curriculum focuses on English and American History. There are some things in common with the Mexican education curriculum, e.g., Mathematics and Science. However, it is those subjects dealing with social studies and language that can be stressful to anyone not growing up and studying in Mexico as they are unfamiliar with them.

### *Students' current expectations*

The data suggests that, in spite of it all, the participants are satisfied with their experience at the BA. The participants expected to learn cultural aspects and they have. They feel the BA promotes cultural richness regarding the Anglo-Saxon culture. However, some of them, like Melissa, feel that the BA needs a bigger variety of disciplines:

I expected a little bit more...at first I thought that translation was going to have to do something with interpretation... I heard some other classmates "...this BA needs more" ... other classes or other choices.

Mario feels his expectations have been satisfied, but he also feels there could be more options:

I think there should be more subjects in the field of interpretation.

The participants feel they have some advantage in certain aspects of English: they have acquired a native-like pronunciation; they also have greater fluency and good speaking skills; they are able to speak English in a natural manner similar to a native, their listening skills are already fully developed, and they have been practicing their writing skills from a young age. Melissa, for one, shares she feels at an advantage because of the writing abilities that she has been practicing since elementary school:

We started with things like writing short stories... writing for me is not difficult at all... I used to see other classmates and they would be like "we have to turn this paper in"... one day before I would write everything.

Some of the participants were also able to advance to higher levels because of their knowledge of English. That is the case of Sally:

I didn't take all of the English classes...I had that opportunity since I knew the language.

Since they are aware of the advantages they have, the participants may be more motivated to pursue a degree in English as they feel that having acquired the target language in an immersion environment offers them some benefits.

### **CONCLUSION**

Most of the participants, former immigrant students, were taken to the United States when they were very young—Nelly was only a baby, Melissa and June were five years old, Sally was six, and the others were school children. Even at that age, they were aware of the



difficulties they had living abroad and had to struggle through the same phase of adaptation while arriving again to their homeland. Likewise, they are also aware of the challenges they have to face, and the difficulties they have to overcome in order to succeed in their BA.

The participants at first had the impression that studying a language they were familiar with would be easy. Although, the participants are aware of the abilities they have concerning English and feel motivated to keep on studying their degree, they have come to realize that to be fully proficient in a language is not enough to speak it and understand it. They have also become aware of the fact that in order to speak a second language, it might be necessary to first learn their own. Cultural and academic points can be essential in order to master a language.

The participants faced reverse cultural shock as they were not familiarized with their own culture. It may also be true that they faced an educational shock. They were used to different types of subjects in the American education system; entering the Mexican education system without any proper academic knowledge of Spanish might have produced that shock. The data show that former immigrants who spent the most time out of their native country had a more difficult time adapting than those who had only spent a few years in the United States.

This research paper focused only on Mexican returnees coming back from the United States, but migration is a worldwide phenomenon, happening in different countries. We know the fact that this study has some limitations due to the small number of participants that contributed to this case study. We must warn the readers that our findings cannot be generalized and may not be applicable to other contexts. Different participants, methodologies, and environments may yield different results. Therefore, more research is needed in order to help return immigrant students adapt to our educational system, learn more about themselves and others like them. Increasing awareness of these students' background, perceptions and experiences will also help teachers understand them better; not only their skills but also their needs. Academic institutions might also benefit from this because they would have a great understanding of former immigrant students and the diversity they can bring to the academic institution. Inserting former immigrant students' experiences into the research agenda may help future generations cope better with the struggles they might face at school.

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# UNA MIRADA A LA PRÁCTICA DOCENTE: EXPERIENCIAS DE UN PLAN DE ESTUDIOS

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## RESUMEN

Un plan de estudios es el documento oficial donde se plasman las concepciones filosóficas y pedagógicas que orientan la formación de los estudiantes en un determinado programa educativo. La Licenciatura en Idiomas de la Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco planteó una investigación con el fin de cotejar la relación entre lo establecido en el plan de estudios y la práctica docente. El estudio fue descriptivo con una orientación mixta, tomando en consideración el programa de la asignatura, el encuadre y horas clase video-grabadas de tres profesores del campo disciplinar de Lengua Inglesa. Se analizaron los dos primeros elementos según sus posturas teóricas en el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas: conductista, cognitivista y constructivista. La práctica áulica fue analizada en términos del grado de centralidad asignada al docente y al alumno en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje así como la contribución al desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa. Como resultado, se registró la congruencia entre el programa y los encuadres con tendencias predominantemente constructivistas. No obstante, se encontró una discrepancia entre lo estipulado en los documentos y lo que se observó en la implementación en el aula. Las prácticas áulicas de los profesores mostraron una orientación tradicional conductista que se reflejó en el papel dominante del docente en el tiempo de habla y el modo de interacción así como el énfasis en los elementos lingüísticos y la exactitud en el uso de la lengua. Por ende, se concluyó que las metas del Plan 2010 no se estaban concretando al nivel más importante, que es en el salón de clase. La exploración de la congruencia entre estos tres elementos arrojó información valiosa para comprender parte de lo que acontece dentro de la marcha del Plan 2010.

**Palabras clave:** práctica áulica, teorías de aprendizaje de segundas lenguas, enfoque basado en tareas, alineación curricular

## INTRODUCCIÓN

Para la Educación Superior la calidad de sus programas es una exigencia derivada de las políticas educativas tanto nacionales como internacionales. Las instituciones superiores tienen el compromiso de formar egresados capaces de responder a las necesidades sociales con una formación integral y competencias profesionales indispensables, incluyendo el manejo de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación, conocimientos de la propia y otras culturas así como el dominio de una segunda lengua.

Estas exigencias han obligado a las instituciones a replantearse sus propios modelos educativos y establecer estrategias para lograr la calidad. Según Arríen (1995, p. 5), “La calidad de la educación se hace realidad en los aprendizajes cualitativamente relevantes,” lo que ha cambiado el paradigma de enseñar para convertirlo en el de aprender, en otras palabras, una educación más centrada en el estudiante. Tünnermann (2006), otro estudioso de la educación, argumenta que además de centrada en el aprendizaje, la educación de calidad precisa de un currículum contextualizado y la participación de los actores en el proceso educativo.

Ante este panorama, la Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco (UJAT) ha asumido el reto de adaptarse a los nuevos tiempos y a partir de 2004 cambia su modelo educativo y lo funda en tres ejes estratégicos: formación integral del estudiante, centrado en el aprendizaje y currículum flexible. A su vez, el Modelo (UJAT, 2011) estipula la necesidad de un seguimiento y evaluación de sus planes y programas que sirva como un acto responsable de una institución educativa, lo cual provee retroalimentación para su mejora.

La Licenciatura en Idiomas es uno de los programas educativos de la UJAT, que inició en 1990 y a la fecha ha formado a sus estudiantes a través de tres planes de estudio. El último de ellos, el Plan Flexible 2010 rescata de los anteriores la formación de estudiantes con un excelente manejo de los idiomas extranjeros que se imparten: inglés y francés o italiano, que pueda ser comparado y reconocido a nivel internacional mediante la directriz del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas: aprendizaje, enseñanza y evaluación (MCER) (Consejo de Europa, 2004). En concreto, los estudiantes del Plan 2010 de la Licenciatura en Idiomas requieren alcanzar el nivel B2 (usuario independiente) del mismo documento al momento de egreso. Dada la importancia de lograr esta meta, se organizó una comisión para dar seguimiento al desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa del idioma inglés.

La Tabla 1 muestra las metas a alcanzar en el campo disciplinar de Lengua Inglesa de la Licenciatura con base en los contenidos de los programas estructurados de manera que los aprendizajes pudieran ser equiparados con los niveles del MCER.

Tabla 1. Equivalencia entre las asignaturas y los niveles del MCER

	Asignaturas	Nivel	Número de horas de instrucción requerido
1.	Introducción al inglés	A1	Approx. 90 - 100 horas
2.	Inglés Básico	A1-A2	
3.	Inglés Pre-intermedio	A2	Approx. 180 - 200 horas
4.	Inglés Intermedio	A2-B1	Approx. 350 - 400 horas
5.	Inglés Intermedio-avanzado	B1	
6.	Inglés Avanzado	B1	
7.	Perfeccionamiento del Inglés	B2	Approx. 500 - 600 horas

El seguimiento al desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa del inglés en los estudiantes se llevó a cabo mediante la aplicación de los exámenes estandarizados de la Universidad de Cambridge, Inglaterra, en dos momentos: después de acreditar la asignatura de *Inglés Básico* con el fin de verificar si los alumnos habían alcanzado el nivel A2 y al final de la asignatura de *Inglés Avanzado* para conocer si habían logrado el nivel B1. De esta manera se intentó constatar el logro de las metas establecidas en el Plan 2010. Los resultados de la primera generación fue que sólo el 31% de los estudiantes aprobaron el primer examen y el 61%, el segundo examen.

Estos resultados alarmaron a la comisión y al mismo tiempo les llegaban reportes de una fuerte disparidad en las prácticas de los profesores de inglés en términos de horas clase concretadas, contenidos cubiertos, actividades realizadas y formas de evaluación.

## **JUSTIFICACIÓN**

En búsqueda de un camino para comprender cómo se estaba materializando el Plan 2010 en marcha, lo que primeramente orientó a la comisión fue el señalamiento de Stern (citado en Johnson, 1994) sobre la necesidad de examinar lo que acontece en el aula para entender cómo y porqué una lengua se aprende o frecuentemente no se aprende. Al mismo tiempo, la comisión consideró la postura de Long (1984) quien critica aquellas investigaciones cuyo objetivo es solamente conocer el resultado del aprendizaje de los alumnos sin estudiar el proceso de cómo lo establecido en el plan de estudios y el programa fue implementado en el aula. Ésta a su vez se orientó de Lynch (1996) que expresa la importancia de cotejar lo establecido en el plan de estudios oficial y la práctica docente de los profesores para verificar la congruencia entre estos elementos del proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje. Asimismo, hace resaltar la significatividad de separar una planeación de una ejecución, ya que lo que se planea no necesariamente coincide con lo que sucede en el salón de clase.

Entendiendo que es el docente quien interpreta el plan de estudios y ejecuta su plan de clases, se hizo necesario estudiar a los profesores de inglés de la Licenciatura, en otras palabras, conocer cómo ellos entendían los objetivos y metas de los programas y qué actividades concretas implementaban para el logro de dichos objetivos. Así la comisión emprendió al estudio para explorar la relación existente entre el programa de estudio y la práctica áulica de los profesores del inglés dentro de la Licenciatura en Idiomas. Al mismo tiempo, se consideró otro elemento intermedio, el encuadre como un producto de la planeación del docente. Es una práctica instituida en la carrera la elaboración del encuadre y la presentación del mismo al grupo al inicio del programa con el fin de que el docente y sus alumnos construyan la aceptación y el compromiso en relación a los lineamientos del curso (Zarzar Charur, 2003).

Como el objetivo principal, el estudio sobre la práctica docente intentó explorar si el programa de estudio de inglés, los encuadres y la práctica áulica de los profesores de inglés eran coherentes o en caso negativo, cómo se relacionaban esos tres elementos.



Además se esperaba que el estudio arrojara las posibles causas que originaban el resultado no satisfactorio en el aprendizaje de los alumnos, así como daría a conocer las necesidades de desarrollo profesional de los docentes en términos de sus conocimientos teóricos, metodológicos, instrumentales y actitudinales que les permitirían orientar su práctica docente dentro del aula. Aparte, el estudio cobraría importancia en el sentido de ser una primera aproximación a las prácticas reales de los profesores de inglés en el marco de la Licenciatura en Idiomas desde su creación.

## **MARCO TEÓRICO**

Esta investigación sobre la práctica docente se consideró como parte de la evaluación curricular ya que permitía determinar cómo se desarrollaba un proceso educativo con sus avances y logros del currículo mediante el proceso enseñanza aprendizaje a nivel del documento, el proceso y los resultados (Díaz Rojas, 2013). También, es en parte un análisis de la alineación curricular, que es la relación entre el currículo escrito, el impartido y el evaluado (Olivo Rodríguez, 2010) aunque el caso particular del estudio sobre la práctica docente no trataba la parte correspondiente a la evaluación. Según Mohammed y Sidek (2015, p. 120), “cada currículum está basado en la orientación teórica particular sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la lengua, por lo que la consistencia entre los componentes curriculares se infiere a través de examinar el alineamiento de la orientación teórica en el currículum diseñado, implementado y logrado”. El estudio en cuestión intentaba analizar este alineamiento entre la fundamentación teórica del currículum, el enfoque en el programa, y los actos instruccionales con la premisa de que los elementos de distintos niveles en un currículum deben relacionarse coherentemente para lograr la meta de este último.

Para la revisión de los documentos, el programa de inglés y los encuadres de los profesores, se consideraron tres orientaciones teóricas en el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas: conductista, cognitivista, y constructivista con sus indicadores. Éstas se conceptualizaron quedando establecidas de la siguiente manera:

**Conductista:** El alumno aprende por medio del acondicionamiento. Responde a los estímulos realizados por el profesor. El alumno participa poco en el desarrollo de sus estrategias para aprender, en iniciar una interacción o negociar el significado de los aspectos de la lengua que está aprendiendo (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Richards & Rogers, 2014).

**Cognitivista:** Esta teoría considera de vital importancia los procesos mentales que intervienen en el aprendizaje, en este caso de una lengua. El conocimiento parte de las experiencias previas y el alumno es un participante activo en el proceso de aprendizaje con el uso de las estrategias. (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Richards & Rogers, 2014).

**Constructivista:** Desde la perspectiva constructivista, el aprendizaje se da mediante la construcción de conocimiento por parte del aprendiz quien participa

activamente en este proceso dinámico que comprende la dimensión cognitiva y la social. En la primera el aprendiz reorganiza la información nueva con base en el conocimiento con que él cuenta y en la segunda, interactúa con otros para la solución de problemas. Este enfoque enfatiza el aprendizaje centrado en el estudiante. En la postura constructivista social, resalta la importancia de la interacción en el aprendizaje de la lengua, que se deriva del diálogo entre el aprendiz y el otro que cuenta con el conocimiento superior al aprendiz. Este proceso de interacción conocido como andamiaje se da en el caso del salón de clase entre un alumno con el profesor o con sus compañeros que tienen un mejor nivel de manejo de la lengua (Richards & Rogers, 2014; Willis & Willis, 1997).

Alineado con el Modelo Educativo de la institución, el Plan de Estudios 2010 de la Licenciatura en Idiomas se fundamenta principalmente en la teoría constructivista del aprendizaje. En el mismo documento, las prácticas relacionadas a la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del idioma inglés en la Licenciatura requieren apoyarse en el enfoque basado en tareas. Es un enfoque instruccional que se desarrolló a partir del enfoque comunicativo (Plews & Zhao, 2010; Richards & Rogers, 2014). Varios autores han definido el concepto de tarea (Van den Branden, 2006) y coinciden en los puntos que es una actividad cuya atención primordial radica en el significado (meaning) y es para lograr un producto o propósito de comunicación (Willis & Willis 2013). Otros autores expanden el concepto base con sus contribuciones como Ellis (2009) quien enfatiza el uso propio de los recursos lingüísticos y no lingüísticos por parte del aprendiz. Skehan (1996) agrega su idea de que la tarea es aquella que se relaciona con las actividades reales en la vida de los estudiantes.

Algunos autores distinguen dos modalidades del enfoque: la versión fuerte y la débil. En la primera los contenidos instruccionales de un programa están organizados en el formato de las tareas con el propósito comunicativo mientras en la segunda las tareas son parte importante del curso; sin embargo, están insertadas en su programa, permitiendo así la integración de los contenidos estructuralistas con el uso de tareas (Ellis, 2009; Skehan, 1996). En la Licenciatura en Idiomas, la práctica apoyada en el enfoque basado en tareas debe entenderse como aquella enseñanza integrada con las tareas como unidad organizacional para la planeación de lecciones de clase, en lugar de que su programa esté diseñado con las tareas como unidades de organización.

El enfoque basado en tareas se fundamenta en las teorías de aprendizaje de la lengua como la hipótesis de la construcción creativa, la teoría interaccional, y el constructivismo. Es un enfoque centrado en el estudiante (Van den Branden, 2012). Se considera que el aprendizaje es un proceso creativo de los involucrados, en donde los errores son vistos como parte del aprendizaje. En la comunicación se privilegia el significado. El aprendizaje se da mediante la interacción entre el trabajo conjunto de los alumnos que se prestan a la negociación del significado y a una serie de modificaciones que se dan con la intención de lograr la comunicación entre los sujetos. Como se explicó

anteriormente, así se da el andamiaje entre los participantes que tienen distintos niveles de conocimiento.

Cabe mencionar que las prácticas de la planta docente de la Licenciatura muestran las características de una variedad de enfoques y corrientes metodológicas de la enseñanza de inglés. Por lo tanto, para el estudio de la práctica docente, se consideraron dos posturas para facilitar el proceso de análisis de datos: la práctica centrada en el docente y la práctica centrada en el estudiante.

La primera muestra las características del conductismo, o sea el aprendizaje se da a través de la transmisión de conocimientos estables y predeterminados. Por lo que la experiencia de aprendizaje gira alrededor de los hechos, conceptos y contenidos tipo enciclopédicos. Se presentan los elementos lingüísticos aislados, se practican uno por uno desde lo fácil hasta lo difícil como recomienda el libro de texto. La memorización la repetición de los diálogos y las oraciones tienden a dominar en las clases. El docente juega un papel dominante en el proceso pedagógico en donde los estudiantes asumen un papel pasivo de recipiente de información. Se corrigen frecuentemente los errores cometidos por los alumnos, ya que se prioriza la exactitud más que una interacción con sentido. Les permite a los estudiantes experimentar solamente una variedad limitada de tipos de discurso, entre los cuales el más común es Iniciación/Respuesta/Evaluación (IRE) en donde el docente dispara una pregunta, un alumno le responde y el docente proporciona una evaluación a la respuesta. El discurso escrito es para practicar los puntos gramaticales específicos en lugar de atender a los contenidos (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Nunan, 1999).

En la práctica centrada en el estudiante, el conocimiento es una construcción personal y así el estudiante juega un papel protagónico, quien tiene su propia motivación de aprender, por lo tanto muestra su iniciativa en y control sobre el proceso. Las experiencias de aprendizaje se basan en la identificación del problema y la búsqueda de su solución a través tanto del trabajo individual como colaborativo. La relación docente-alumno no es uni-direccional sino al profesor le permite jugar distintos papeles según las necesidades derivadas de la clase y de los alumnos. Su rol principal es aquél que facilita el aprendizaje de sus estudiantes. El docente y los estudiantes tienen una responsabilidad compartida en el proceso del aprendizaje (Alzubi, 2013).

El lenguaje de entrada es modificado para que sea más simple y comprensible para los alumnos con el uso de apoyos lingüísticos y no lingüísticos. El significado es más importante que la forma. Se prestan a la clarificación del mensaje, la negociación del significado, uso del trabajo en pareja y grupal en busca de una mayor cantidad y variedad en la producción de la lengua. Mediante la inclusión de anécdotas, trabajo colaborativo, materiales auténticos como periódicos y programas televisivos, se introduce una variedad de tipos de discurso. En caso de trabajar con materiales auténticos, el docente acude a las estrategias instruccionales para que sus alumnos comprendan el sentido aunque no logren entender todas y cada una de las palabras o estructuras gramaticales. Además de los contenidos lingüísticos, los alumnos practican un rango de características

sociolingüísticas y funcionales de la lengua a través de la interacción (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Nunan, 1999).

## **PREGUNTAS DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

¿Cuál es la relación que mantiene el programa oficial de inglés del Plan 2010 de la Licenciatura en Idiomas con los encuadres y las prácticas reales de los profesores que están a cargo de las asignaturas de inglés en términos de las tendencias teóricas?

## **METODOLOGÍA**

El estudio se realizó de julio 2013 a diciembre 2015 y fue descriptivo con una orientación mixta, enfocado a los profesores del campo disciplinar de Lengua Inglesa. Inicialmente se contemplaron aquéllos que se encargaban de *Introducción al inglés*, *Inglés Pre-intermedio* e *Inglés Avanzado*. Sin embargo, sólo se limitó a trabajar con tres profesores de *Inglés Pre-intermedio*, de quienes se logró conjuntar los tres elementos necesarios: programa de la asignatura, encuadre y horas clase video-grabadas.

Ante la necesidad de llevar a cabo el análisis del programa de estudio y los encuadres, se determinaron los indicadores de las tres posturas teóricas en el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas anteriormente mencionadas: conductista, cognitivista y constructivista. Esto se logró tras la revisión bibliográfica con la colaboración de cinco investigadores, cuatro especialistas en el área de enseñanza de inglés y una experta en educación.

Asimismo, el proceso de análisis inició con la búsqueda de palabras, frases u oraciones que concordaran con los indicadores distintivos de las tres posturas teóricas. Los investigadores trabajaron individualmente como primera fase, registrando las unidades lingüísticas como evidencias de la tendencia de la teoría de aprendizaje. Se terminó con la identificación de la teoría más dominante a la menos representada. En seguida, los investigadores compararon los resultados del análisis con sus evidencias para alcanzar un consenso. El proceso de análisis consistió en las etapas de codificación, categorización, comparación y conclusión (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Para analizar la práctica docente de los profesores, se optó por el uso de la observación de clase. Según Allwright (2014, p. xvi), esta técnica “es esencialmente un procedimiento de registrar lo que sucede en el salón de clase para que después pueda ser estudiado, sea por motivo de la capacitación docente o la investigación”. Al mismo tiempo, la observación fue indirecta con el uso de video-grabadora debido a que el hecho de dejar el instrumento en los salones de clase sin la presencia invasiva de los observadores incrementaba la posibilidad de captar la ejecución de los profesores de manera más natural (Reid, 2012). Aunado a lo anterior, la observación permitía al investigador registrar lo que el docente hacía en lugar de lo que él decía que hacía

(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), y de esta forma elevar la validez y autenticidad de los datos.

Dicha observación fue semi-estructurada, teniendo un marco con las características: la práctica centrada en el docente y la práctica centrada en el estudiante, sin predeterminar las categorías sistematizadas de análisis. Por lo tanto, se buscaron aquellos criterios que posibilitaran operacionalizar las características de las corrientes teóricas a lo observable en el salón de clase de inglés. Se consideraron los siguientes ejes, los cuales fueron indicadores para valorar el grado de centralidad asignada al docente y al alumno en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje así como la contribución al desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa (Wajnryb, 1992):

i.El tiempo que el docente (*teacher-talking-time*) y el alumno habla (*student-talking-time*)

Para determinar el tiempo de habla del alumno, se tomó en cuenta el lapso en el cual éste utilizaba el inglés en las actividades. No se incluyeron aquellos momentos donde los estudiantes respondían a las preguntas del profesor para revisar sus conocimientos previos. Entendiendo que en el aprendizaje de lenguas, es el alumno el que debe estar activo utilizando la lengua en lugar de que el docente domine la clase con su exposición limitando así la participación de los aprendices.

ii.El propósito de la actividad

Al observar los videos de los profesores, se valoró la orientación que muestra cada una de las actividades realizadas durante las sesiones clase en término de su propósito, en otras palabras si una actividad era para promover la exactitud (*accuracy*) o la fluidez (*fluency*).

Cabe aclarar que para el desarrollo de la producción oral, se necesita enfocar tanto la exactitud, o sea qué tan correctamente se produce la lengua como la fluidez, que tiene que ver con la velocidad y la carencia de pausas, titubeos y repeticiones innecesarias. Para que los alumnos lleguen al estadio en donde puedan expresarse natural y fluidamente, ellos requieren de prácticas considerables a través de actividades que les permitan trabajar con los otros para lograr el propósito de la comunicación. Además estas actividades son consideradas más efectivas para el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa mientras más interacción promuevan en término de la negociación del significado.

iii.El modo de organización

En este eje se identificó en quién recae el protagonismo de las actividades realizadas, o sea si una actividad estaba controlada por el docente (*teacher-directed*) o llevada a cabo por los alumnos (*student-directed*). Para que se logre el aprendizaje de lenguas en el salón de clase bajo el enfoque más actual como el comunicativo, el alumno necesita tener

la libertad de tomar la iniciativa y el control del proceso de aprendizaje en lugar de responder solamente a las instrucciones del docente.

#### iv.El tipo de actividad con el modo de interacción

Las actividades, al mismo tiempo, fueron analizadas en término del modo de interacción, tales como docente-grupo, estudiantes en pareja o equipos, etc. Las actividades requieren de una organización adecuada. Si se trata de una exposición, el docente se dirige al grupo entero mientras el role-play se maneja comúnmente en parejas o tríos. Se considera que los trabajos en parejas o equipos pequeños producen más oportunidades a los alumnos de iniciar y controlar la interacción y desenvolverse en la negociación del significado.

El análisis de la práctica docente se llevó a cabo sobre las clases video-grabadas correspondientes a una unidad del programa, la cual llegó a sumar 22 horas clase en total. Primeramente, se realizó el análisis individual por cuatro investigadores del área de enseñanza de segundas lenguas. En la segunda fase, los investigadores se reunieron para comparar los resultados del análisis, corroborar las evidencias proporcionadas por cada uno para fundamentar su decisión y finalmente alcanzar un consenso.

## **RESULTADOS**

En el resultado del análisis del programa, se concluyó que la tendencia más presente fue la constructivista. En el programa existía un gran peso en las actividades comunicativas, dando énfasis a la práctica de interacciones significativas y la práctica de prototipos de intercambios sociales. Asimismo, existían actividades significativas por descubrimiento, mediante las cuales el alumno llegaría a la comprensión y construcción del conocimiento. La segunda fue la teoría cognitivista con una influencia menor. El programa contenía algunos aspectos cognitivos como el aprendizaje de estrategias para aprender y la integración de conocimientos declarativos y procedimentales. No se encontraron evidencias que avalaran rasgos característicos de la teoría conductista. En el análisis de los encuadres de los profesores, el resultado fue el mismo que el del programa. Es decir, la tendencia más pronunciada en los encuadres fue la constructivista, la segunda fue la teoría cognitivista y la tercera y última fue la teoría conductista.

En cuanto al análisis de las prácticas áulicas, la Tabla 2 muestra la duración de cada sesión de clase en minutos y segundos, el tiempo en el cual los alumnos utilizaron el idioma en minutos y segundos, el porcentaje que ocupó este tiempo dentro de la sesión total, y el promedio de porcentaje asignado al habla de los alumnos por profesor. Se registró que el porcentaje del tiempo de clase en el que los alumnos tuvieron oportunidad de hablar y llevar a cabo las actividades por su cuenta tuvo un rango del 0 a 57% de la totalidad de clase. El promedio del tiempo asignado a los alumnos por profesor osciló de 14.5% a 22.3%.

Tabla 2. Tiempo de habla de alumnos

	Total de sesión (mins. / segs.)	Tiempo de habla de alumnos (mins. / segs.)	% del tiempo de habla de alumnos en cada sesión	% del tiempo de habla de alumnos por profesor
Profesor A				20.4
Sesión 1	100.12	23.21	23.3	
Sesión 2	78.54	15.43	19.9	
Sesión 3	80.07	14.21	17.9	
Profesor B				22.3
Sesión 1	102.19	7.02	6.9	
Sesión 2	96.18	9.25	9.8	
Sesión 3	84.53	12.57	15.3	
Sesión 4	89.01	50.44	57.0	
Profesor C				14.5
Sesión 1	81.10	10.28	12.9	
Sesión 2	81.04	28.35	35.3	
Sesión 3	80.41	19.39	24.4	
Sesión 4	82.01	0	0	
Sesión 5	81.21	0	0	

Cabe aclarar que el elevado porcentaje del tiempo de habla de los alumnos en la Sesión 4 del Profesor B se debió a una actividad en donde 13 grupos de alumnos hicieron role-play entre un vendedor y compradores en una tienda y mientras un grupo actuaba, el resto de la clase solamente lo escuchaban. Si se eliminara esta sesión como inusual, el porcentaje de habla de los alumnos en las sesiones observadas habría sido de 0 a 35.3%. Así, el promedio del tiempo asignado a los alumnos por profesor se modificaría a un rango de 10.7% a 20.4%.

Referente a los tipos de actividades, los tres profesores tenían tendencia de seguir paso por paso las que el libro de texto proporcionaba, en lugar de organizarlas por su cuenta. Dentro de la variedad de actividades observadas en los videos, una de las más comunes y prolongadas fue la enseñanza de un punto gramatical que llegó a ocupar el 71.5% del tiempo total de una clase del Profesor C. Otra fue la enseñanza del vocabulario para describir lo que la gente vestía. El Profesor B dedicó su Sesión 3 completa a esta actividad con un mínimo de explicación pero con numerosos ejercicios en donde los alumnos respondían y revisaban las respuestas con la conducción del docente.

Una etapa de clase observada frecuentemente en los videos fueron las preguntas de exploración (*eliciting*) de los conocimientos previos de los alumnos, sean de índole personal, experiencial o gramatical. Particularmente el Profesor C fue quien más las

utilizó, un máximo de 16 minutos en su Sesión 1. Además, las instrucciones para las actividades y los ejercicios fueron largas con mucha información y frecuentemente confusas por falta de precisión.

En término de la interacción, la más frecuente fue el docente dirigiendo a la clase. Se pudo generalizar que excepto el tiempo de habla de los alumnos, todas las sesiones fueron manejadas por el docente en control del grupo entero. Por ejemplo, durante la Sesión 4 y 5, el Profesor C utilizó este modo de interacción durante toda la clase.

La enseñanza del punto gramatical fue compuesto de un patrón de interacción con tres tiempos: la explicación o instrucción del docente, la realización de ejercicios gramaticales por parte de los alumnos y la revisión de las respuestas por ambas partes. En algunas clases como la Sesión 4 del Profesor C, este patrón de interacción se repitió varias veces en el 71.5% del tiempo total de la sesión.

A pesar de que los profesores seguían al libro de texto que contenía una variedad de actividades con la intención de atender tanto la exactitud como la fluidez en el uso de la lengua, ellos mostraron una fuerte inclinación a los elementos lingüísticos al nivel de palabra u oración, dando énfasis a la exactitud en la producción de los alumnos aun en los momentos de las actividades menos controladas.

En la actividad diseñada para el desarrollo de la fluidez en donde los alumnos serían guiados hasta producir un discurso individual, ésta no fue explotada respetando la intencionalidad del libro sino fue tratada como parte de una secuencia de ejercicios. Como esta actividad, se observó que a los profesores les interesaba cumplir con los ejercicios del libro de texto y del libro de trabajo sin que dieran un tratamiento propio para convertir las actividades en más comunicativas y significativas para los alumnos.

Cuando el docente preguntaba al alumno sobre los sucesos de su vida personal, estos momentos también terminaron por ser dominados por el docente y se convirtieron en la sesión de pregunta y respuesta corta, sin que cobraran las características de un dialogo más libre y conducente a la promoción de fluidez.

Con base en los resultados, se identificaron tres aspectos significativos en el desempeño de los profesores estudiados.

#### *a) Práctica centrada en el docente*

Las prácticas áulicas de los tres profesores mostraron una tendencia tradicional conductista dado el papel dominante del docente en el tiempo de habla, el modo de interacción y la naturaleza de las actividades que se orientaban a los elementos lingüísticos y la exactitud en sus usos.



En la clase tradicional donde el docente dirige la instrucción, se presume que la participación de los alumnos ocupa una tercera o cuarta parte de la sesión (Bailey, 2001). Bajo esta asunción, las clases implementadas por los tres profesores resultaron ser más centradas en el docente. En las clases video-grabadas, se observaba el protagonismo del docente, quien daba las instrucciones, hacía las preguntas de revisión, decidía qué alumno respondía, explicaba los puntos gramaticales, organizaba los grupos de trabajo, y revisaba las respuestas de ejercicios una por una. Él se mantenía muy activo y provocó la reducción de las oportunidades en donde los alumnos pudieran practicar el uso de la lengua que aprendían. Barua (2008, p. 2) recomienda que “el tiempo de habla del docente dirigiendo al grupo entero depende de los factores como el tipo de estudiantes, el horario de clase y el tema de la lección; sin embargo, no se debe rebasar el 30% de una sesión ni no mayor de 10 minutos seguidos”.

En estos videos, fue dominante un solo patrón de interacción, el docente dirigía al grupo. Casi siempre quien iniciaba la interacción era el docente. Las pocas veces que el alumno la iniciaba eran para hacer preguntas de gramática o vocabulario. La interacción entre el docente y el alumno siempre fue uni-direccional del docente hacia el alumno sin ser expandida a una más cercana a la conversación. El discurso predominante en las clases fue del nivel palabra u oración.

Para lograr el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en los alumnos, se espera reducir el tiempo de habla del docente y promover la participación de los alumnos (Hall, 2011), así como crear una variedad de interacciones para que los estudiantes comuniquen y negocien significados (Tsui, 2001). Allwright y Bailey (1991) opinan que la interacción en el salón de clase la crea el docente junto con el grupo de estudiantes, ya que sus contribuciones son cruciales para que dicha interacción se de exitosamente y una lección logre su propósito como un evento social. No obstante, las prácticas observadas mostraron características discordantes a lo que se recomienda en el área de la enseñanza de inglés. No es infundado pensar que una escasa cantidad asignada al habla de los alumnos, la interacción constantemente controlada por el docente, un ambiente de una mínima posibilidad de intercambiar discursos con un sentido propio a los hablantes serían obstáculos para el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa de los alumnos.

#### *b) Práctica basada en el libro de texto*

En la Licenciatura en Idiomas, se tiene seleccionado un libro de texto para la instrucción de las asignaturas del campo disciplinar de inglés. El libro de texto ejerce un papel predominante en los contextos educativos de todo el mundo y todos los niveles a pesar de que ya existen materiales audio-visuales y la tecnología de información y comunicación (TIC) (Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011; Tok, 2010). Es una herramienta extremadamente útil para los docentes en muchos sentidos. Les permite organizar los contenido de un curso considerando todos los aspectos de la lengua (Çakır, 2010). Les provee los materiales necesarios para la clase, tales como imágenes, fotos, ejercicios, listas de vocabulario, materiales de audio o video (Tomlinson, 2001). Por lo que le ayuda a funcionar en el salón de clase aunque no tenga tiempo de preparar la clase. Aparte, apoya a los alumnos en su

estudio independiente. Entre los profesores de inglés en la Licenciatura, la adopción de un libro de texto es una manera de uniformar los contenidos de enseñanza cuando interviene un número considerable de docentes en la misma tarea de enseñar el inglés a una gran cantidad de alumnos.

A pesar de los beneficios que brinda el libro de texto, las clases implementadas por los tres profesores mostraban el lado negativo de su uso: enseñar el libro en lugar de una lección. Se observaron frecuentemente clases basadas en actividades del libro de texto sin que ellas fueran convertidas por el docente en más comunicativas y significativas para los estudiantes.

Retomando la relación identificada entre el programa de inglés, los encuadres y la práctica real de los profesores mediante este estudio, se logra obtener parcialmente el proceso de cómo se concreta el planteamiento del programa oficial en el salón de clase. A pesar de que los profesores elaboran sus encuadres siguiendo estrechamente al programa, sus prácticas están distanciadas de su planeación plasmada en los encuadres. El hecho de haber encontrado la información tomada literalmente del programa en estos escritos puede ser un indicio de que los profesores no necesariamente elaboran sus encuadres con base en una reflexión e interpretación propia de la intencionalidad del programa, sino su prioridad es cumplir con la obligación institucional. Puede que esta situación no les ayude a reconocer una incongruencia entre su planeación y ejecución.

Çakır (2010) explica que los profesores, muchas veces, son renuentes a adaptar el material didáctico como el libro de texto a las necesidades de los alumnos debido a la falta de tiempo provocado por la carga excesiva de trabajo por una parte y por la otra, el libro de texto les da la seguridad de que su instrucción cumple con los requisitos pedagógicos y administrativos. De esta manera los maestros ya no asumen la responsabilidad de tomar decisiones diariamente sobre qué enseñar y cómo enseñar, dejando dicha responsabilidad a mano de los escritores y las editoriales del libro de texto. Esto negativamente afecta la calidad del trabajo docente e inhibe el desarrollo profesional de los profesores. Tomlinson (2008) argumenta que los libros de texto no siempre contribuyen a proporcionar las oportunidades para desarrollar y adquirir el idioma como se espera. De alguna manera estos libros inducen al profesor a enfocarse simplemente a los elementos lingüísticos.

A diferencia de las clases que se basaban únicamente en las actividades del libro de texto, se registró una con la idea original del docente para lograr un propósito: descubrimiento de un punto gramatical por los alumnos con la guía del docente. En la primera etapa de la actividad, a cada alumno del grupo le fue entregada una palabra y tuvieron que encontrar a otros tres compañeros para armar una oración, seis oraciones en total en el grupo. Los alumnos trabajaban conjuntamente comunicándose en inglés para lograr la meta de la actividad, no para practicar una unidad de la lengua. Al final de la primera etapa, el docente organizó la información de los elementos constituyentes funcionales de la oración en la forma del patrón sintáctico.

En la segunda parte, el docente guiaba al grupo con sus preguntas para que los estudiantes descubrieran la regla de reordenamiento de las palabras, que fue el tema gramatical central de la actividad. En las contribuciones de los alumnos para encontrar dicha regla, se percibió el elemento de la construcción colaborativa entre los estudiantes en donde el docente participaba en este proceso de construcción, en lugar de imponer su conocimiento del tema. Fue una muestra de que la enseñanza del punto gramatical puede lograr más participación, más oportunidades para practicar el idioma y más ánimo de los estudiantes, que una actividad comunicativa implementada sin planeación y creatividad del docente.

*c) La relación entre lo oficial y la realidad*

El estudio sobre la práctica docente intentó analizar la congruencia entre el programa oficial del Plan Flexible 2010, los encuadres de los profesores y su práctica áulica. Los resultados mostraron que existía congruencia entre el programa y los encuadres; ambos tenían la tendencia predominante de la teoría constructivista. En otras palabras, promueven un aprendizaje donde los alumnos adquieran la lengua a través de actividades comunicativas y donde la construcción de conocimiento mediante el análisis y reflexión de los contenidos es primordial.

No obstante, existió una discrepancia entre lo estipulado en los documentos y lo que se observó en la implementación en el aula. Las actividades en clase no reflejaban las características acorde a la teoría constructivista. Mostraron una tendencia tradicional conductista. En otras palabras, no se estaba materializando en la práctica real los ideales enunciados en los documentos oficiales, o sea la promoción de un aprendizaje centrado en el alumno y el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa.

El estudio de la práctica áulica se limitó solamente a tres de los profesores de inglés que imparten clases en la Licenciatura y así los resultados no se pueden generalizar a la planta docente en su totalidad. Sin embargo, se prestan a la sospecha de que una práctica similar a la de ellos sea más frecuente de lo que se imagina, como en los contextos reportados en numerosos estudios (Kirkgöz, 2008; Orafi, 2013, Zheng & Borg 2014). Ellos reportan la discrepancia entre el planteamiento oficial y la práctica real, puntualizando la enseñanza tradicionalista y la resistencia al cambio de los profesores de inglés en distintos contextos como Turquía, Libia, y China.

Al mismo tiempo, los resultados del estudio coinciden con los de otros estudios que se enfocaron a la relación entre una nueva disposición oficial en la enseñanza de inglés a nivel nacional o institucional y su implementación en el aula. Ellos reportan una variada práctica distante a las intenciones oficiales, que no están produciendo el cambio esperado (Mendoza Valladares & Puón Castro, 2013; Okoth, 2016; Zhang & Hu, 2010).

En el caso de la Licenciatura en Idiomas, los resultados obtenidos del estudio evidencian que los cambios en la práctica docente no se generan solamente con la

actualización de los documentos oficiales. Se requieren además implementar estrategias para orientar las prácticas reales de los profesores de inglés. Éstas deben promover el uso del inglés como medio de comunicación y de interacción social, la participación activa de los alumnos y la transición del papel del profesor hacia un rol de facilitador.

## CONCLUSIÓN

Este estudio fue la primera aproximación a las prácticas reales de los profesores de inglés en la Licenciatura en Idiomas desde su creación. Arrojó información valiosa para comprender parte de lo que acontece dentro de la marcha del Plan 2010 de la Licenciatura en Idiomas. Se puede resumir que las metas del Plan 2010 no se estaban concretando al nivel más importante, que es en el salón de clase. Las prácticas áulicas observadas en el estudio dan cabida a la posibilidad de que los resultados no favorables en las pruebas de inglés aplicadas a los alumnos podrían ser en parte atribuidos a las clases implementadas por los profesores de inglés en la Licenciatura.

No obstante, el estudio se limitó a enfocar solamente a tres de los profesores de la Licenciatura, por lo que los resultados no posibilitan poder hablar de la planta docente en general para afirmar alguna causalidad entre la práctica docente en este contexto y el grado de desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes o por ende el logro de la meta del Plan 2010. Por lo tanto, vale la pena continuar con otros estudios que respondan a la naturaleza de la práctica de otros profesores o que se focalicen a la relación entre la práctica docente y el aprendizaje de los alumnos.

Finalmente, los resultados plantean un reto más a la comunidad académica de Idiomas para un cambio innovador en el ejercicio de la práctica docente y la mejora en el proceso de la formación de los alumnos. Por todo lo anterior, hay necesidad de un desarrollo profesional continuo de los docentes hacia la reorientación y la innovación de sus prácticas a través del fortalecimiento de sus conocimientos teóricos, metodológicos, instrumentales y actitudinales para lograr una coherencia entre los ideales de los documentos oficiales, la planeación del curso y la práctica real a nivel de salón de clase.

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# CHALLENGES FACED BY NON-NATIVE EFL STUDENT TEACHERS FROM THE UV ENGLISH BA PROGRAMME DURING THEIR PRACTICUM

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempted to investigate the challenges that eleven non-native EFL Mexican student teachers experienced during a twelve-week teaching practicum carried out as part of their academic preparation in a TEFL BA. The aim of investigating this topic was to obtain information that would allow the identification of the challenges faced, as well as their possible source or reason. This research, carried out as a Case Study, intended to answer two questions: Firstly, what challenges do non-native EFL student teachers from the UV TEFL BA programme face during their practicum? Secondly, what might contribute to these challenges faced by the participants, from both, their own perspective and the researcher's view? Based on these research questions, this study served two purposes: to identify the challenges faced by non-native EFL student teachers from the University of Veracruz English BA programme during their Practicum, and to investigate the reasons for these challenges. Preliminary results from the data analyzed revealed that the three major types of challenges that preservice teachers face during their practicum are: 1) Classroom management and organisation; 2) Implementation of the teaching knowledge in real scenarios; 3) English proficiency as a barrier for teaching and communication.

**Key words:** Challenges, EFL student teachers, non-native EFL student teachers, practicum.

## INTRODUCTION

The present paper is the report of a case study which sought to make a contribution to the literature regarding the challenges that English BA student teachers from the University of Veracruz face during their practicum, as well as the possible reasons behind them. That is to say, this case study, as a replication-extension of Gan's research (2013), was designed to identify the major challenges that non-native EFL student teachers may experience in their specific teaching practice context.

This exploratory study also intends to address the existing gap in EFL teacher education research, since even though there is noticeable amount of research on teacher learning and development in the general education field, there is less information regarding the practicum experiences undertaken by non-native EFL student teachers. As

above mentioned, this case study is a replication-extension of Gan's research (2013), in which the author used a phenomenological case study to identify the difficulties that preservice ESL teachers faced during their teaching practicum as part of their Bachelor of Education in English Language in a university of Hong Kong. Following Numrich (1996), who was a pioneer on investigating the challenges that preservice ESL teachers faced in real teaching scenarios, Gan's research (2013) shows that it is usual for ESL student teachers to encounter challenges when they face actual teaching settings for the first time. In the same vein, Viafara (2011) and Phairee et al. (2008) comment on similar challenges but in EFL scenarios.

Unlike Gan's (2013) and the just mentioned above authors' studies, this case study is concerned on understanding both, the challenges and the reasons that bring up those difficulties faced by student teachers during their preservice teaching, but this time in a Mexican EFL setting. Furthermore, within the extension of this study, we considered class observation as another source of data and not only interview and reflective journals, as Gan (2013), Viafara (2011) and Phairee et al. (2008) did. Therefore, this study is an exploration and collection of eleven student teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding the challenges they face and the possible causes that trigger these difficulties in their practicum.

Thus, the ultimate goal of this research was to obtain and generate knowledge that could be integrated into the BA subjects related to teacher training and teaching practice, so that the curriculum could be enriched and the student teachers could raise awareness of the real teaching scenarios they might face during their practicum.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

As mentioned before, this case study attempted to investigate the challenges that eleven non-native EFL Mexican student teachers experienced during a twelve-week teaching practicum carried out as part of their academic preparation in an English Language Bachelor of Arts. The intention of investigating this topic was to obtain information that would allow a classification of the challenges faced as well as their possible source or reason.

The target readers of this study are professors and students of any English Teaching BA who could benefit from its findings in order to improve their teaching practice both as teacher educators and student teachers. Our ultimate goal was to obtain and generate knowledge that could be integrated into the BA subjects related to teacher training and teaching practice. This way, student teachers would raise awareness about the reality of the teaching scenario they might face during their practicum, in the first instance, and eventually, during their teaching practice when they start working.

As shown in Gan's (2013) and Viáfara's (2011) case studies, it is common that preservice teachers face different challenges when they are first exposed to real teaching

scenarios. Although the challenges may vary depending on several aspects related to the EFL/ESL school context and the academic background of each student, a good number of student teachers struggle to implement the knowledge they have learnt in their major (teaching career).

The intention of replicating this study in a local EFL context was to attain knowledge that could provide teacher educators and student teachers of English language degrees with better and more effective tools that could help them in the transition between the BA theoretical context and the real teaching situations found in the practicum and field of work.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Despite the constant increase of theoretical development of English language teaching and learning, little attention has been paid to the practical preparation of future language teachers. However, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper, previous case studies that have been carried out on this topic, claim that it is common for preservice teachers to face different challenges when they are first exposed to real teaching scenarios (Gan, 2013; Viafara, 2011; Velez-Rendon, 2002). In order to have a theoretical background for the present study, we are here presenting some relevant information regarding the practicum and the studies underlying it.

### *The role of the practicum*

As Farrell (2007) explains, the practicum has emerged as a common feature of ESL or EFL teacher preparation programs. During the practicum, student teachers are expected to apply, in real school contexts, all the theory and training previously acquired and taken in their university education. Nevertheless, as Velez-Rendon (2002) claims, the practicum frequently becomes a complex process in which student teachers might show concerns regarding their teaching skills and strategies.

Carrying out the teaching practicum not only serves the purpose of allowing student teachers to put into practice their university-acquired knowledge, but it also functions as a way for them to confirm whether they have chosen or not the right career (Phairee et al., 2008). As Gonzalez and Fuentes (2011) point out, the practicum is an important feature in the process of teacher education and it represents an excellent opportunity for student teachers to learn about the teaching profession.

The practicum has been recognised as one of the most important features of the language teacher education programmes, and according to Richards and Crooks (as cited in Farrell, 2007) “many preservice teachers assume that they will be able to neatly translate what they have learnt in their theory into practice” (p. 193), which seems not to be the case in real teaching contexts. The practicum has also been described as a

privileged space to analyse both, the knowledge about teaching and the knowledge required for teaching, in order to make a reflection on what and how teachers know, how and who prepares them and how knowledge is spread from theory to practice (Gonzalez & Fuentes, 2011).

Farrell (2007) has also commented that by the time that student teachers do their practicum, they have spent more time in the classroom as students than as teachers, therefore, preservice second language acquisition teachers attribute their initial beliefs to their own experience as language learners (Busch, 2010). In this regard, Farrell (2007) claims that these experiences could be more influential on how information on teaching is integrated into classroom practices during their preservice teaching than what they have been exposed to in the language teacher education programme. The formal preparation that student teachers receive in their training courses does not match with the actual challenges that the real teaching context or setting demands. This situation leads preservice teachers to disregard the teaching theory while looking for shelter in the teaching practice routines that help them mitigate the worries and difficulties faced (Gonzalez & Fuentes, 2011). Numrich (1996), who was a pioneer researcher regarding the difficulties ESL student teachers face during their practicum, also identified, from the student teachers' perspective, this disconnection between theoretical knowledge and real teaching practice by claiming that "what we may think novice teachers need to learn as they first set out to teach and what they see as most relevant to their needs may be two different things" (p. 137).

This idea of the interaction between the practicum and the knowledge obtained by student teachers during their teacher preparation courses is also mentioned by Stoyhoff (1999), who proposed the first integrated TESOL practicum model in the United States. He considers that with the purpose of preparing self-aware and skilful teachers who can perform an effective teaching practice, the academic and field experiences must be interrelated and complementary parts of a whole, in which ESL or EFL students simultaneously engage.

According to Stoyhoff (1999) there are five main features of a TESOL practicum. First, the practicum needs to be integrated into an academic programme. Second, the practicum highlights a team approach which includes the collaboration of mentor teachers, university supervisors, language programme coordinators and student teachers. As a third characteristic, the practicum is expected to provide intensive modelling and coaching, which is closely related to the fourth feature that entails the integration of systematic observation in an extensive way. Finally, the practicum experience has to be evaluated through student teachers' portfolios which show their cumulative development during the practicum.

As Velez-Rendon (2002) claims, the above mentioned characteristics of a TESOL practicum described by Stoyhoff match the two core approaches to second/foreign language teacher education. The first approach has to do with promoting the

familiarization of prospective teachers with classroom techniques and skills. The second approach relates to fostering an environment where the student teachers can develop their own ideology of foreign language teaching in order to reflect on their own learning-to-teach processes. In the same context, Borg (2011) claims that teacher education programmes have a considerable impact on teacher's beliefs because during the classroom practices they are prone to experience shifts in prior beliefs regarding language teaching and learning.

Although the relevance of the teaching practicum stage is recognized in ESL/EFL teacher education programmes, reviews of literature on second/foreign language teaching and learning by Freeman (2002) and Chiang (2008) indicate that there is a lack of research specifically concerning the beliefs and experiences of student teachers regarding the challenges they face during their practicum, as well as their opinion about the causes that may trigger those challenges.

### *Prior studies*

Some of the papers on this topic are case studies, which focus on the importance of the practicum on the teaching education process of ESL or EFL student teachers. As well, there is some specific research concerning the challenges that student teachers face when performing their preservice teaching or practicum. Most of the qualitative studies on ESL/EFL student teachers' practicum experience have been carried out by using the narrative inquiry as a data collection method. They have been conceived as part of a phenomenological case study approach, which enables the emphasis on the subjects' perceptions and beliefs, along with the meanings they construct from the phenomena under scrutiny.

In the same vein, Gonzalez and Fuentes (2011) carried out a case study in the field of general education in Spain, titled *Practicum in the Learning of Teaching Professionals*. In their conclusions they observe two main points: firstly, the professional knowledge that student teachers gain through the practicum is an ideal framework to evaluate the integration of both, academic and practical knowledge. Secondly, future teachers face the complexity of learning to teach during the practicum because that is the moment when they experience the challenge to merge their preconceptions about teaching with the knowledge acquired in their teaching training programme and with the practical knowledge observed from their teachers. These three convergent elements need to be harmonized while paying attention to the requirements of the teaching environment they are immersed in. The former makes it a challenging task for preservice teachers with little or no experience as educators.

Another interesting case study related to the practicum in an EFL environment was carried out by Phairee et al. (2008), who examined the EFL teaching practicum that occurs in Thailand in three different settings: the first one was a four-year BA programme that offers an additional period for teaching practice; the second one was a regular BA

programme at a public university, and the last one was a short TESOL certification course targeted at foreign people who wanted to become EFL teachers.

In their research, Phairee et al. (2008) point out that the most commonly mentioned difficulties during the practicum have to do with the student teacher's anxiety about their limited English skills and the large class sizes they encounter; although, as a positive feature, they are usually satisfied with the help provided by their classroom supervisors and with the amount of time dedicated to lesson planning and preparation. Other important findings from their study were that students seemed to enjoy teaching in both contexts, with and without the close supervision of expert teachers, but they believed that too much of either is counterproductive for their teaching development. Also, teacher students would normally prefer practical feedback of their teaching performance from the classroom teacher-supervisors than theoretical knowledge from the university supervisors. This fully relates with the previously mentioned lack of connection that student teachers perceive between the theory studied in their programme and the teaching practice carried out in real school contexts.

Viáfara (2011) also carried out a case study aiming to understand how student teachers in Colombia face the specific challenge of using English as the language for instruction in public school classrooms. In relation to the struggle of using English in class and learning motivation, Viáfara (2011) states that student teachers face the challenge of using English to communicate with their students in class as some of them believed that the learners would only understand if Spanish were used for giving instructions or explanations. According to the participants in the study, when using only English, they felt lost and as a consequence their interest and motivation in class might fade away.

An additional relevant case study was conducted by Numrich (1996), who carried out an analysis with novice ESL teachers undertaking a practicum course in a TESOL master's degree programme in a public university of the United States. He found out that other common challenges faced by these student teachers in their preservice were: time management, giving clear directions, responding to students' needs, grammar teaching, and assessing students' learning. In this study, the participants did not mention the use of English language as a challenge because the study was conducted in a native English-speaking context. However, it is important to notice that most of the challenges that novice teachers deal with are similar regardless of their academic level and background.

### *The original study*

The original case study, from which the present research is a replication and extension, was carried out at a public university in Hong Kong by Zhendong Gan in 2013, under the title *Learning to Teach English Language in the Practicum: What Challenges do Non-Native ESL Student Teachers Face?* In his study, Gan investigated the challenges that sixteen non-native preservice teachers from a Bachelor of Education in English Language programme experienced during an eight-week teaching practicum.

His case study collected qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and reflective journals of the sixteen student teachers, with the purpose of obtaining a detailed description of the participants' perceptions of their field-based practicum experiences. As well as in this study, Gan's research attempted to answer two research questions: the first one had to do with the challenges that a group of non-native preservice ESL student teachers experienced during the teaching practicum; and the second one related to the possible issues that contributed to the challenges experienced by the participants. In his findings, Gan (2013) states that the practicum was characterized by a reality shock that occurred as a result of the difficulties in using the pedagogical practices that student teachers were taught in their bachelor's programme, and the lack of classroom management strategies. As the researcher mentions, "this reality shock could destabilize the already anxious student teachers and have adverse effects well beyond the eight-week teaching practicum" (p. 92).

The challenges these ESL student teachers faced were largely related to the use of innovative teaching practices, learning motivation, classroom management, discipline problems, and using English as the language for instruction and communication. According to Gan (2013), when the practicum started, the majority of the student teachers, after having spent more than three years with theoretical preparation, felt properly equipped to teach. However, after the first few days, they realized that it was difficult for them to put into practice the teaching methods and theory they had learnt, and simultaneously deal with the amount of workload that lesson planning meant, especially if they had a class with discipline issues. Certainly, Gan's findings coincide with the results from the different case studies mentioned above. Thus, we can infer that: student teachers seem to face similar challenges during their practicum regardless their academic background, location and school context.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

Having gathered information concerning the topic that intrigued us, the questions that guided the present study are:

- What challenges do non-native EFL student teachers from the UV English BA programme face during their practicum?
- What might contribute to the challenges faced by the participants from both, their own perspective and the researcher's view?

Accordingly, the objectives of this case study are:

- To identify the challenges faced by non-native EFL student teachers from the University of Veracruz English BA programme during their Practicum.

- To investigate the reasons that contributed to the appearance of these challenges

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this section, the research method used, as well as the context of the research and the participants of the study are described.

### *Research Design*

In order to select the appropriate methodology for this research project, three aspects were taken into consideration: the topic of investigation, the aim of the research project, and the type of data to be collected. For this reason, the phenomenological case study design was chosen because it is a suitable approach to obtain knowledge regarding not only the subjects' beliefs, opinions and perspectives, but also the reasoning behind the problems encountered.

According to Merriam (as cited in Gan, 2013), a case is "a phenomenon that is inherently bounded, with a finite amount of time for data collection or a limited number of people who could be interviewed or observed" (p. 97). The focus given to this research topic perfectly fits with a case study because its length was determined by the duration of the preservice practicum of eleven student teachers who were interviewed and observed as part of the data collection cycle.

As Creswell (2014) explains, a case study approach allows the researcher to gather information from different data collection instruments and sources. Therefore, by considering this approach, I was able to obtain specific and detailed information about the eleven participants interviewed and observed with the purpose of analysing the data obtained from all the cases. Hayes (2000) mentions that educational case studies mainly use typical representatives of groups, but they may also provide information on the unique features of particular individuals. For this reason, the participants are classified as a group case study but they could also be analysed as a person case study.

As Richards (2003) mentions, a qualitative approach has the advantage of being a person-centred task and it is therefore particularly appropriate in the field of language teaching. The intention of performing this case study was to generate knowledge based on the experiences and views that student teachers have about the challenges they faced during their practicum.

According to Nunan (2010), case studies involve selecting an instance from all the possible objects and phenomena to investigate, and they are a well-known approach in second language acquisition research. Along the same lines, Shulman (1992) describes



them as a third-person narration which portrays the observations made on the subject given. He also states that case studies can be either registered or displayed events or a set of occasions with the boundaries delimited.

Besides the great advantage that case studies provide when researching about perspectives or documenting events, they also have a relevant pedagogical value. As stated by Shulman (1992) “cases and case methods are employed to teach (1) principles or concepts of a theoretical nature, (2) precedents for practice, (3) morals or ethics, (4) strategies dispositions and habits of mind, and (5) visions or images of the possible” (p.2). Taking Shulman’s statement into account, the value of the present case study is related to “precedents for practice” and “visions or images of the possible”, because the knowledge obtained from the experience of eleven student teachers could function as a precedent to other people immersed in the field of English language teaching. Furthermore, the purpose of it is to make use of that knowledge in order to set the basis for a possible improvement plan in the language teaching practice area for those involved in English Language Teaching degrees whether they are student teachers or teacher educators.

Hence, the present research was entirely a qualitative case study because its main objective was to investigate the perceptions that a group of student teachers had with regard to both, the challenges they faced during their practicum, and the possible reasons behind them. It was carried out from February to May 2017, and it was developed counting on the participation of student teachers who were doing their practicum as part of their English Language degree in a Mexican public university. The three data collection methods used in this investigation were observation, interview and document review due to the fact that they reflect the perspectives, beliefs and opinions of the subjects with respect to the focus of study.

### *Context*

This study was carried out in a group of the four-year Bachelor of Arts in English Language Programme from the School of Languages of the University of Veracruz. The curriculum of this programme was introduced in 2008 and comprises General Education, Discipline Studies (e.g., English language courses, Spanish and English comparative linguistics, English literature, English culture, grammar, phonology, among others) and Professional Studies targeted to teaching and translation (e.g., language learning theories, EFL teaching methodology, teaching practice, translation and advanced literature courses).

In this programme, the students take a mandatory course named Teaching Practice Planning, which requires them to carry out a twelve-week preservice practicum as part of their coursework assessment. The practicum can be done at the school of their choice and it is intended as a platform for students to accomplish two goals: to put into practise the knowledge acquired during the previous courses and to develop awareness of the English language teaching and learning in either public or private schools at any educational level from kindergarten to university in Mexico. That is, the purpose of the

practicum is to provide student teachers with a link to a real teaching context where they can practise their language teaching skills in front of a group under the supervision of classroom teachers and the professor in charge of the Teaching Practice Planning course. The twelve-week teaching practicum is performed during the third year of their degree and it is directly linked to previous subjects such as language learning theories, EFL teaching methodology and assessment.

### *Participants*

The participants of this study were eleven student teachers, who spoke Spanish as their native tongue, and were enrolled in an English Language BA programme at a Mexican university. Nine out of the eleven participants were female. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the participants, except for those student teachers who stated, in the consent form, that their given names could appear on the paper.

At the moment when the present case study took place, all participants were studying the fifth semester of their degree and they had been trained in English language with an emphasis on EFL teaching. Their English BA programme mainly focused on English language and culture during the first two years of the curriculum, and afterwards, they took subjects specialized in English language teaching as well as courses related to literature and translation.

Once we had explained the purpose and procedure of this study, all the students signed a consent form to participate in the three stages of data collection: interview, class observation and submission of their reflective journal, which functioned as document review. All participants completed the interview and reflective journals, but only six of them were randomly selected to be observed during two sessions of their practicum.

### *Data collection instruments*

As mentioned before, the present research is a phenomenological case study with a focus on qualitative data. As Burns (2010) claims, qualitative data collection requires direct interaction with the participants either on a personal basis or within a group. For this reason, the data collection methods chosen were observation, interview and document review. For each method, one instrument was created in order to obtain as much data as possible, and with the intention to triangulate the information gathered.

In the original case study (from which this is a replication and extension) by Gan (2013), only two data collection instruments were used: a semi-structured interview and a reflective journal. However, this case study integrated class observation as an additional tool to explore further the challenges that student teachers face not only from their own

perception, but also from an observer's perspective, that is, the researcher's interpretation of what she observed.

Data was collected during the twelve-week practicum, in a schedule arranged with the student teachers and based on their teaching hours and availability. In the following sections, each method and instrument is described separately.

### *The class observation log*

One of the data collection methods utilized was the non-participant observation, through a class observation log. Durepos, Mills and Wiebe (2010) state that non-participant observation refers to observing subjects without actively participating in the setting and it is used to understand a phenomenon by accessing the community studied, while remaining apart from the activities under observation. As Liu and Maitlis (2010) mention, non-participant observation is frequently applied along with other data collection methods, and can offer "a more nuanced and dynamic appreciation of situations that cannot be as easily captured through other methods" (p. 610).

Only six out of the eleven participants were randomly selected to be observed in two different teaching sessions, with a timespan of three weeks between the first and the second observation. The first observation was carried out in the fourth week of their practicum, whereas the second one was done on the seventh week, closer to the end of their preservice teaching.

With the purpose of scheduling the class observations, student teachers were required to confirm the session with the observer one week in advance. This means that in both class observations, the participants knew beforehand when the observation would take place, so that they could ask for permission from the administrative staff of the school they were teaching at, and make all necessary arrangements. Furthermore, the researcher was also in charge of asking for the necessary authorizations in advance.

The class observation log was created as a simple and flexible format in which the observer could register all the information collected using both, descriptive and focused observation. As Liu and Maitlis (2010) claim, "in a descriptive observation, researchers carry out broad scope observation to get an overview of the setting while in focused observation they start to pay attention to a narrower portion of the activities that most interest them" (p. 612).

Based on these two types of observation, in the class observation log the aspects: class profile, school environment, lesson planning, and class development, along with the student teacher's language performance are part of the descriptive observation. This gave

space to the focused observation of the challenges that the student teachers seemed to be facing during their class session as well as the possible reasons for their occurrence.

For the purpose of collecting information from the observation in the most accurate and complete possible way, the class observation log was filled in throughout the class, and as soon as the class ended I recorded any further comments based on the notes taken.

### *The semi-structured interview*

For this case study, the data collection started with the class observation and it was followed by a semi-structured interview. As Bernard (1988) mentions, semi-structured interviews are often preceded by observation in order to allow the researchers to develop a better understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful questions.

According to Richards (2003), in a qualitative interview the researcher needs to go deeper and to pursue comprehension in all its forms regardless how complex or elusive the communication can be; and to obtain this, it is necessary to establish a relationship with the participants with the purpose of understanding their perception of the context studied.

Particularly related to semi-structured interview, Given (2008) defines it as a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. She also claims that the advantages of using this type of interviews are: on the one hand that the researcher has more control over the topics of the interview than in unstructured interviews; and on the other hand, the research themes can be expanded as much as needed, in contrast to what occurs in structured interviews. Therefore, a semi-structured qualitative interview was selected as a research instrument with the purpose of obtaining a first-hand description of the perceptions and beliefs that each student teacher had regarding the challenges faced and their possible origin. The justification and validity of this semi-structured interview are based on the fact that the eleven participants are a representative sample of the context of this case study: EFL student teachers from the English Language BA carrying out their practicum. As Patton (2015) explains, a sample is any part of the fully defined population and to make accurate inferences, the sample has to be representative. Thus, a representative sample is one in which each and every member of the population has an equal and mutually exclusive chance of being selected.

The semi-structured interview guide contained nineteen questions divided into the following four topics: school context; expectations and school environment; difficulties encountered throughout the practicum, and lastly, academic preparation and ways to overcome challenges (Fig. 1). The first topic mainly contained open questions and its purpose was to obtain as much background information as possible about the school

where the practicum was carried out. On the other hand, the next three topics were open questions, which mainly required the description of events, by using a lead question along with multiple probe questions used or dismissed according to the answers given. The interviews were conducted in a one to one basis to the eleven participants, and all of them were recorded and had an estimated duration of 50 to 60 minutes each. They were scheduled three weeks in advance based on the availability of the participants; and with the purpose of creating a friendly atmosphere for the participants so that this encouraged them to have a more direct interaction with the interviewer, they took place in a small café near the Languages School.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Questionnaire for semi-structured interview</b></p> <p>This semi-structured interview has the purpose of obtaining information that answers the two research questions by analyzing the research issue through four topics.</p> <p><b>Topic 1: School context</b></p> <p>1. Name: _____</p> <p>2. School you are teaching at: _____</p> <p>3. What type of school is it?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>A)</b> Preschool( ) Elementary School ( ) Secondary School ( ) High School ( ) University ( ) Language Centre ( )</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>B)</b> Public ( ) Private ( )</p> <p>4. How many groups do you have?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( )</p> <p>5. How many students do you have in each group?</p>	<p><b>Topic 2: Expectations and School Environment</b></p> <p>1. Mention the expectations you had before you started the practicum.</p> <p>2. Describe how you feel during your practicum</p> <p>3. Tell me about the relationship you have with the people you work with: students, teachers, school principal, administrative staff, and any other people you meet.</p> <p><b>Topic 3: Difficulties encountered throughout the teaching practice</b></p> <p>4. Describe the teaching method you are currently using.</p> <p>5. Describe the topic of your last class and how you taught it.</p> <p>6. Have you experienced any difficulties with your lesson planning and all the preparation ahead of lessons?</p>
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<p>Group 1: ____ Group 2: ____ Group 3: ____</p> <p>6. What age are your students?</p> <p>Group 1: ____ to ____ Group 2: ____ to ____</p> <p>Group 3: ____ to ____</p> <p>7. Days and hours when you teach:</p> <p>Days: M ( ) Tu ( ) W ( ) Th ( ) F ( ) Sa ( ) Su ( )</p> <p>Time: from _____ to _____</p> <p>8. How did you obtain a place to do your preservice in this school?</p>	<p>7. Think of the challenges that you have encountered when teaching.</p> <p>8. From the challenges you mentioned, which is the most difficult to face?</p> <p><b>Topic 4: Academic preparation and overcoming challenges</b></p> <p>9. Mention the subjects from the BA that have been more useful to your practicum.</p> <p>10. Do you think that the teaching training you have received until now in your BA is sufficient to succeed in your practicum?</p> <p>11. Mention some strategies that you have used or that you could use to overcome the challenges faced during your practicum.</p>
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Figure 1. Questionnaire for semi-structured interview. This figure shows the questions used during the interview with the participants.

Another important aspect to mention is that the interview guide was written in English and it was originally planned to be carried out in English due to the expected proficient level of all the participants. However, at the beginning of the interview they were given the option to be interviewed in the language of their preference, English or Spanish. The majority of them answered in English but some of them claimed to feel more comfortable using their native language. During the interview, notes of the participants' most relevant answers were taken along with the audio recording. The participants were informed that follow-up emails or phone calls might be made later on, in case any part of their interview needed to be retaken or expanded.

### *The reflective journal*

The last method of data collection applied was document review, being a reflective journal, an instrument derived from such method, what the participants provided to us. According to Anderson and Carden (as cited in Bretschneider & Cirilli, 2017), document review is defined as a way of collecting data by reviewing existing documents which may be internal or external to a program or organization. Besides, reviewing documents is useful for

answering basic evaluation questions related to the perceptions of participants. Documents may be hard copy or electronic and may include reports, program logs, performance ratings, essays, letters, funding proposals, meeting minutes or any other form of writing.

Document review was successfully included in this case study by using, as an instrument for data collection, the electronic copy of the reflective journal (in English) that student teachers are required to submit as part of the assessment criteria for the Teaching Practice Planning subject. This reflective journal is a 1000-word essay in which they make a detailed description of how the practicum helped them in their teaching development with regard to what they have learnt, the problems faced and the solutions implemented.

Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (2001) define reflective journals as “a first person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries later on analysed for recurring patterns or salient events” (p. 124). The purpose of using a self-reflective journal is to identify issues or challenges that occur in class in order to carry out a self-analysis which might lead to actions to overcome such difficulties. The advantages of keeping a journal were summarized by Richards and Lockhart (1996) who claim that journals can increase the teacher’s knowledge of the way he or she teaches and they serve as a source of questions and hypotheses about teaching while offering direct record of classroom events and experiences which is undisturbed by an outside observer.

As mentioned before, this instrument of data collection already existed because it is part of the evaluation system for the course. However, before the beginning of the course, the professor in charge of this subject allowed a few changes in the reflective journal guideline that would be given to the student teachers. Four questions, fully related to the research objectives of this case study, were added, and the amount of words to write in that specific section of the paper was expanded from 500 to 700.

These modifications to the reflective journal guidelines enabled the researcher to obtain more meaningful information from the document review, because the participants focused a good part of their essay on the challenges encountered and the reasons of such challenges, according to them. The reflective journals were written by the student teachers in the last week of the course, immediately after the end of their practicum, and they were submitted electronically to their professor and to me.

To recapitulate, three methods of data collection were used and one instrument was created for each of these methods: the first method was observation with a class observation log; the second one was interview through a semi-structured interview guide; and lastly, document review in the form of reflective journals written by the participants.

### *Data analysis*

Once the data collection procedures had been completed, the analysis of the data obtained from all three instruments was analysed through two types of methods by using an open-coding system. The analysis process is described below.

### *Triangulation in qualitative research*

As mentioned before, the instruments for data collection in the present case study are: a class observation log, a semi-structured interview and a reflective journal collected from each of the eleven participants.

Based on the number of instruments used, and the sources of the information obtained, it was decided that triangulation was a suitable method for completing the data analysis. Triangulation is defined by Cresswell (2014) as a strategy to ensure internal validity used in qualitative research that involves cross-checking multiple data sources and collection procedures to evaluate the extent to which all evidence converges.

According to Patton (1999), triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods and data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. With regard to the teaching area, Elliot & Adelman (as cited in Hopkins, 1993) describe triangulation as a technique that involves gathering accounts of a teaching situation from three different perspectives; which in a school context could normally be the teacher, the pupils and an observer.

As Patton (2015) claims, triangulation enables to assure the validity of research through the application of a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different types of samples as well as methods of data collection. However, the purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to cross-validate data, but rather to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon. In the same vein, Patton (1999) identified four types of triangulation: (a) methods triangulation, (b) analyst triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) triangulation of sources. From these four types, the methods triangulation and the triangulation of sources were the most suitable for understanding the findings achieved from analysing the data of this case study.

Patton (2015) describes methods triangulation as the use of multiple instruments of data collection about the same topic which is frequently used in qualitative studies as it may include interviews, observation and field notes. On the other hand, triangulation of sources involves the collection of data from different types of people, including individuals, groups, families and communities, to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data. Accordingly, as it has been mentioned, this case study includes three instruments of data collection (observation, interview and document review) from two different types of people (preservice teachers and observer).

#### *Open-coding for data analysis*

As Coffey & Atkinson (2013) claim, the analysis of qualitative data start with the identification of key themes or patterns and this depends on processes of coding data. They define Coding as the process of generating concepts from and with our data in which big amounts of information is condensed into analysable units by creating categories.

Richards (2003) states that there are three different types of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. For the purpose of analysing the data collected in this case study, open coding was used because, as Richards (2003) explains, this process enables breaking down the data in order to categorise, conceptualise and compare it.



For their part, Strauss & Corbin (as cited in Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) describe open coding as the process of: (1) breaking down data into discrete parts, (2) examining these parts closely and comparing them for similarities and differences and (3) asking questions about the phenomena by comparing and contrasting.

Due to the fact that the purpose of analysing data collected throughout three instruments is to look for convergent ideas and discrepancies between the observer's field notes and the participants' spoken and written comments, the best way to identify categories was through the use of open codes generated during the first reviews that focused on labelling and classifying the data collected.

## **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

After considerable revision and refinement, the open codes that emerged during the data analysis were subsequently clustered into subcategories (subthemes) and broader categories (themes) which can be supported by theoretical framework, as well as by evidence from the data. Thus, the preliminary analysis of the data revealed three major themes, which arose from their corresponding subthemes and are numbered here. That is to say, the three major types of challenges (themes) that preservice teachers face during their practicum are:

### 1. Classroom management and organisation

#### 1.1 Lack of classroom management strategies and procedures.

#### 1.2 Students' behaviour

The challenge that was more frequently mentioned and clearly identified throughout the study was *classroom management and organisation*. Based on the observer's field notes, most of the participants who were observed during two sessions of their practicum seemed to struggle with classroom management and organisation. This issue was also mentioned by some of the student teachers in both, the interview and the reflective journal.

Facing the challenge of classroom management and organisation is not exclusive of preservice teachers. According to Sokal, Smith, & Mowat (2003), both novice and experienced teachers consider classroom management to be a high priority and an area of concern.

Regarding students' behaviour, Farrell (2007) claims that the formal preparation that student teachers receive in their training courses does not match with the actual challenges that the real teaching context or setting demands, and student behaviour is one of the topics that are not usually covered in TEFL training courses.

### 2. Implementation of the previous teaching practice

#### 2.1 Insufficient teaching training and experience

#### 2.2 Gap between theoretical knowledge and praxis

The second more frequently addressed challenge was the struggle from the student teachers to implement the teaching practice they had built during the BA into real teaching scenarios. This might be because as Farrell (2007) asserts, student teachers who carry out their practicum have spent more time in the classroom as students than as student teachers.

Relatedly, Gonzalez and Fuentes (2011) point out that the practicum is a very important feature in the process of teacher education and that it represents an excellent opportunity for student teachers to learn about the teaching profession.

### 3. Limited English proficiency

The third challenge has to do with the barrier that the dominium level of English language sets for teaching and communication within the classroom. The probable cause of this challenge appears to be only one: the limited English proficiency from both, the student teachers and the learners. On the student teachers' side, their language skills seemed to stop them to carry out a meaningful class in the target language; whereas on the students' side it seemed to be their limited/inexistent English knowledge at times caused by their lack of interest in the target language.

Language in use as the cause of the third challenge was observed on the open codes that emerged on this topic: language errors from the student teacher, students' language level lower than expected and students' reluctance to learn English.

The data also indicated that some student teachers experience difficulty in speaking English as the main language to be used for instruction giving, class presentation or any further explanation. Most of them actually switch to Spanish in order to provide clear instructions or coherent explanations of language points. This language barrier causes therefore a challenge for student teachers because as Richards (2010) claims, language proficiency is the top skill among the ten basic components of language teaching expertise.

## **PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS**

To translate the preliminary findings into practical knowledge, it was important to process all the information provided by the class observation logs, semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. Thus, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn here. Firstly, the information provided by the triangulation of sources suggests that the three challenges found (*classroom management issues, implementation of the teaching practice, and limited English proficiency*) are applicable to all participants regardless their practicum's context. Secondly, it was observed that some of the abovementioned challenges faced by Mexican preservice teachers can also be found in certain English language teaching contexts portraying non-native student teachers in Hong Kong (Gan, 2013), Colombia (Viafara, 2011), Spain (Gonzalez & Fuentes, 2011) and Thailand (Phairee et al. 2008). Nevertheless, as noted in the literature review, each of those studies have a particular research focus and they do not mention the exact three challenges found in this case study. Lastly, it was interesting to find a mismatch between the observer's and the participants' view regarding the issue of English proficiency as a barrier for teaching and communication. While the observer made comments on the fact that some participants faced serious difficulties due to their low English level, none of them addressed this issue

as something to be personally improved, and they actually blamed the students' lack of communication in English as the main cause to make them hesitant to use English for teaching and communicating.

Therefore, the findings reported in this study imply an urgent need for both, the programme's curriculum and the teacher educators, to discuss the challenges that student teachers face during their practicum and begin the implementation of innovative teaching practices, classroom management strategies and more effective English language learning programmes to ensure a comprehensive preparation for student teachers to succeed in their practicum and in their future teaching career.

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# STUDENT-TEACHERS EXPERIENCES ON PROJECT BASED LEARNING IN A SYLLABUS DESIGN COURSE.

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## ABSTRACT

Initial Teacher Education in English Language Teaching, henceforth IELTE, implies a challenge for teacher educators specifically in the Mexican context as most of the student-teachers are very young or without any experience or education as teachers, most of the teaching experiences they have had are related to be in the classrooms as students, thus these experiences determine the way they perceive teaching. Additionally, student-teachers in IELTE tend to feel particularly frustrated when the pedagogy used to teach them does not have a practical component as it does not allow them to clearly understand the purpose of the content subjects related to the teaching matters. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to elucidate the experience of using Project Based Learning (PBL) with IELTE student-teachers in a syllabus design course. Sixteen student-teachers worked in teams to design a language syllabus by steps, they did the design within a real context reflecting on the experience with their team, classmates and the professor, they were also asked to write a final reflection on the experience. From the analysis of the reflection three themes emerged 1) Working on the project of a syllabus design was significant, 2) Seeing themselves as teachers or in the profession, and 3) Self and the others. The conclusions drawn are that PBL in our IELTE program is an effective method. It supported learning the matters of syllabus design as it contextualized the subject content, and the student-teachers could realize that theory has to be interpreted according to their local educational settings of practice. Through reflection, the student-teachers revisited the whole process they followed when designing a syllabus, they could notice that interacting within the real context, themselves and the others, their learning was worthwhile. Moreover, implementing the use of PBL in designing a syllabus enhanced our cognition on how a sociocultural approach of teacher education might support the professionalization of our Mexican English language teachers since they are in early stages of teacher education.

**Key words:** Project based learning, reflection, second language teacher education, sociocultural approach in teacher education.

## INTRODUCTION

Certainly, being a professor in IELTE becomes a challenge when we try student-teachers to construct knowledge from theory to practice. Most of us struggle trying to find suitable approaches and techniques for student-teachers to grasp, get and use the subject matters

of teaching. IELTE plays a significant role in the perception of the professional and personal lives of teachers. Entering into the reality of schools and classrooms is a shock or the so termed "*reality shock*" (Veenman, 1984, p.143), what they have studied in their IELTE programs does not make sense with what they encounter in the reality. Therefore, there should be emphasis on the knowledge base they receive in their initial education programs and the pedagogy used with them to connect English Language Teaching (ELT) theory and the reality of teachers inside educational institutions.

Student-teachers do not perceive the utility of the subjects, predominantly when they are fully lecture/theory oriented without any practical application in real context as stated by Farrell (2016) "very few" teacher education programs are concerned with "how teachers can put into practice what they have learned". (p.98). Then we, teacher educators must find ways to support student-teachers to develop real life application of pedagogical content or i.e. "A persistent challenge for language teacher education is to create learning/teaching opportunities that foster the development of L2 teacher pedagogical content knowledge" (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p.11).

One prominent construct to support our teacher education challenges mentioned above, relates to the perspective that knowledge is situated, meaning that it takes place when apprentices participate in the so termed *communities of practice as social processes* (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The application of the former perspective to our field implies that a community of practice provides opportunities of constructing teaching knowledge by having the experience of being actively participating in it, as much as student-teachers participate in the community of practice of Second Language (L2), as much as they develop knowledge about teaching and its subjacent activities.

In this article we present the findings on using PBL and reflection as an opportunity to foster student-teachers' meaningful learning experiences in real context, and as a tool for situated learning within a sociocultural approach of teacher education. PBL has been widely used to teach languages and content knowledge and it has also been researched and documented as a hallmark for effective learning (Thomas, 2000). However, there is little research on using it in IELTE as useful to encourage and evaluate student-teachers' professional development during the process of learning the subject matters of ELT. Additionally, this article intends to contribute to the need of documenting studies or research on understandings about the participation of teachers in communities of practice as stated by Freeman and Johnson (1998) in their article "Reconceptualizing Knowledge-Base of Language Teacher Education."

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### *A sociocultural approach in teacher education*

In 2009, Burns and Richards stated the need to formulate inquiry on how to educate English teachers since English became the global channel of communication and the

demand of efficient teachers increased. This fact has been a challenge for language teacher educators, leading them to formulate enquiry on the same matters as Bailey (2001) affirms:

English is taught by a variety of people around the world-trained and untrained teachers, native and non-native speakers. Effective English learning depends to a large extent on appropriate teaching. Therefore, research questions arise about appropriate initial teacher preparation and the continued professional development of teachers throughout their careers. (p.609)

In trying to answer the former enquiry, one of the most prevalent theories that has been generating understandings on initial and continued teacher education, is the sociocultural theory.

Therefore, the theory that frames this paper is related to a sociocultural approach in teacher education, this approach focuses on the perspective on teacher learning by Johnson and Golombek (2016), whose pedagogical stance is based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human cognition. Within this perspective, human cognition develops when individuals interact socially and internalize knowledge by using mediation tools. In this line L2 teacher education sees "learners of L2 teaching through direct social interactions (teacher-teacher educator interaction) and cultural artifacts (theory and research, i.e., academic concepts instantiated in books, articles, curricular materials, assessments), and through the internalization of ways of talking about language, teaching, learning, and students" (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p.7).

Continuing with the same perspective and from the same authors above, L2 teaching education programs are optimal opportunities for learning the teaching matters, especially when instruction is purposeful and well organized in a way that student-teachers can accommodate *academic concepts* into real-life situations and real-life situations into *academic concepts*. This is possible by interacting externally in the real teaching life to collect experiences and incorporate them to the academic concepts mediated by teacher educators and ways for systematic learning, so the results of this type of instruction is the production of *true concepts* used in teaching life. i.e. "When [student] teachers begin to use true concepts as tools for thinking (psychological tools), they begin to see classroom life and the activities of teaching/learning through new theoretical lenses" (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p.5).

Similarly a socially-situated perspective (Freeman & Johnson, 2001) acknowledges that the process of learning to teach is socially negotiated; therefore, it has been conceived as an endured process that is the product of participating in the communities where learning and teaching take place. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), a community of practice is where social learning occurs; for that, it must have three essential components: the first, a community of practice has an identity based on the



specific interest, occupation or discipline of the participants. The second, it is focused on the interactions that are established by the members of the community; such as sharing, establishing and maintaining relationships with others, and learning from each other. The third is that the members have to be practitioners with experiences that can be shared and used by the participants of the community. Novices enter a community of practice and they move further by interacting with experts there, this type of interaction is named Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), meaning that the learners move from the periphery or the surroundings to the center of an activity or occupation.

Then, we consider that learning the matters of second language teaching is socially constructed and negotiated in a community of practice, including situated learning and implying that living the experience in context is more fruitful than accumulating knowledge.

Hence, this article is framed by the sociocultural perspective (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Student-teachers should be early exposed to use psychological tools to mediate their mental activity for developing lifelong learning professional abilities to support the development of expertise on L2 syllabi design, mediated by interacting with the existing theory, the experts and real context, named a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Within this framework we find PBL as a purposeful activity for engaging student-teachers in a sociocultural approach as described next.

### *Project based learning*

Boss, Larmer and Mergendoller (2013) define Project based Learning (PBL) as a teaching method that promotes students effective learning of significant knowledge and the development of 21st century competencies through the influence of deep and factual questions to obtain precise products and learning tasks. From this definition and according to the same author, PBL encourages high levels of engagement because students have solid reasons to know as they are driven by the challenge to achieve a task for solving real life problems, this resulting in meaningful and lasting knowledge.

Implementing PBL should include 8 essential elements: 1) Significant content; the matter should be important for students and adopted from academic subject disciplines; 2) Focusing on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation; 3) In depth inquiry: students have to be involved in such a manner that they create questions to be solved by using resources; 4) A driving question that guides the students to the task they have to complete; 5) Need to know, meaning that students need to know and grasp theory and principles to create a product with curiosity and inspiration; 6) Voice and choice: students are given the opportunity to decide on some characteristics of the product and the management of the activities and the time to complete them; 7) Revision and reflection: the students are given feedback to improve and reflect on what they are

learning; 8) Public audience: student should present their product to a different audience to classmates and the teacher.

Some of the results of using PBL are that students engage in their own community and encourage students to master academic knowledge by practicing the following: critical thinking, valuation of sources, investigate with experts and expand their information literacy skills.

Regarding PBL in Second Language Teacher Education, Roessingh and Chambers (2011), describe their experience on using it at undergraduate and graduate levels, in the Faculty of Education of the University of Calgary. They remark that PBL has been used in this context as an approach to promote “good communication skills, creative and critical thinking skills, and a mindset for problem solving and innovation in a world that is increasingly complex and unpredictable” (p. 60). As a result, the implementation of PBL in second language teacher education requires 8 principles:

**1. The Instructor Requires Content Area Expertise and Pedagogical Competence.**

This principle underlines that the instructor must be knowledgeable of two essential aspects: the subject matter under study and the pedagogical organization of the tasks that integrate a project.

**2. Instructional Design is Learner Centered and Flexible.** It refers to the involvement of activities centered on activating learners’ previous knowledge and experiences which are shared in collaboration to promote the construction of new understandings on specific learning points required by the learners.

**3. A Central Question(s) or Problem Focuses and Provides the Catalyst for Learning.** A problem or a set of questions have to be stated to generate some sort of difficulty to motivate students learning.

**4. Teaching and Learning Objectives are Explicit.** The teacher and the students must have a clear idea on the whats and the hows expected, they guide the direction for creating the conditions of the teachers and learners’ understanding of the subject matter.

**5. Learning Tasks are Authentic and Engaging.** The tasks must be according to the learners’ interest, experience and knowledge to accommodate the learning process.

**6. Instruction is Mediated and Integrated.** This characteristic refers to the perspective that learning takes place from one’s cognition and from the others, at this point mediation and support are required to construct and validate knowledge.

**7. Promotes Critical Reflection and Higher-Order Thinking Skills.** To achieve these skills, learners have to be challenged by the tasks and work on reconstructing prior knowledge to reshape it according to the context, in this manner students apply high order

thinking skills and develop critical thinking when they analyse, synthesize and evaluate content related knowledge, which represents a movement from knowledge to comprehension.

**8. Continuous Assessment and Monitoring of Learning.** The evaluation of projects should include formative and summative assessment, but other forms can also be used to evaluate what learners can do; one alternative form is self-reflection since it supports continuing learning.

These eight elements have guided and informed the pedagogy of PBL in L2 teacher education in the context mentioned above. Additionally, the authors report that using PBL has been successful as it provides opportunities to develop professional expertise within a collaborative setting where gaps in learner knowledge are addressed. Their experience on using a PBL approach has helped undergraduate and graduate teachers to develop knowledge, skills, competencies, and disposition to move from plain practice to a situated practice over time.

This pedagogical approach focuses on creating opportunities for learners' interaction to live, discuss, generate and share knowledge. Transformation of themselves and the others occurs when learners engage in a social and academic dialogic interaction sharing and negotiating their different perceptions of the world, culture, background, knowledge and experiences. Dewey (1916) emphasizes the nature of knowledge as a social activity, stating that knowledge is subjective, and it is consciously constructed and negotiated by and for individuals according to their interpretation and their experiences in the social world, learning is according to the culture and constructed socially. Similarly, Freire (1970/2005) argued in favour of praxis, meaning that lived experiences serve to use previous knowledge to display new knowledge, thus a transformation can happen according to the perception of reality. It is that, reality is not fixed and depends strictly on dialogical interaction within society.

Therefore, we perceive PBL as an opportunity for negotiating learning about the activities of L2 teaching. By using PBL in the context of Initial English Language Teacher Education, cognition may occur if student-teachers are given the opportunity to participate in social practices or communities of practice embedded in learning teaching situations. In fact, Johnson and Freeman (2001) argue that learning about teaching is consistently related to the engagement of [student] teachers in communities of practice for understanding the working context of students, classrooms, curricula, and communities.

Consequently, this paper suggests that learning to create a syllabus should be carried out in contexts where student-teachers have the chance to live the experience of interacting with the target population, the stakeholders, parents and the existing syllabus. However, it is not enough to enter a community of practice to understand how student-teachers perceive the reality they face by living the experience, it is necessary to have descriptive accounts by means of reflection on how they acquire teaching matters

knowledge and how they configure that knowledge into the context of classrooms and schools (Johnson & Freeman, 2001).

### *Reflection in IELTE*

The work of Dewey (1933) on reflection has been largely influential in education as he stated that meaningful experiences are essential when learning. Later in the early 1980's his student Donald Schön expanded Dewey's work. Other scholars, such as Smyth (1989) and Zeichner and Liston (1996) stated that reflection is a manner to gain understanding from one's experience to avoid the transfer of knowledge from others, but they go further arguing that reflection entails the socio-political context of programs, schools and communities. According to Farrell (2015) these theories on reflection have had a major impact on different professions; such as medicine, law, nursing, education and especially on second language teacher education.

Recent research on reflection in second language teacher education (Farrell, 2016) responds to the reality that teaching experiences in English language teaching are diverse and unstable. IELTE should place emphasis on supporting student teachers developing awareness about the issues that a diversity of teaching contexts involves. As a result, teacher educators should prepare student-teachers developing skills in reflective practice. Reflection should be initiated in L2 teaching education programs for student teachers to know ways to systematize and in turn respond to the reality in their local context.

Additionally, Zeichner (2008) argues that reflection should be a means to promote genuine teacher development by focusing reflection not only on own teaching and students, but also to consider the aspects that determine their work inside the classroom, such as to participate in curriculum decisions, staff and instruction; reflection then should be directed to explore and examine beyond the classroom.

A recent framework for reflection was developed by Farrell (2015). It is worth to mention that the author has designed it to be used by pre-service teachers, novice and the most experienced ones. The author presents five stages of reflection: Philosophy, Principles, Theory, Practice and Beyond practice. Philosophy focuses on exploring the personal background and how this influences language teachers' personality; Principles involve to examine assumptions, beliefs and conceptions of teaching and learning; Theory relates to discover and examine official and unofficial theories teachers hold; Practice addresses on what teachers do or what is called observable behaviors; Beyond practice is about critical reflection by exploring and examining the moral, political, social issues impacting a teacher's practice.

These stages are interrelated and each one of them serves to explore and evaluate the roots of teachers' actions inside and outside the classroom. Thus, reflection is

a manner to understand what teachers do and the reasons behind it as seen in the diagram below.

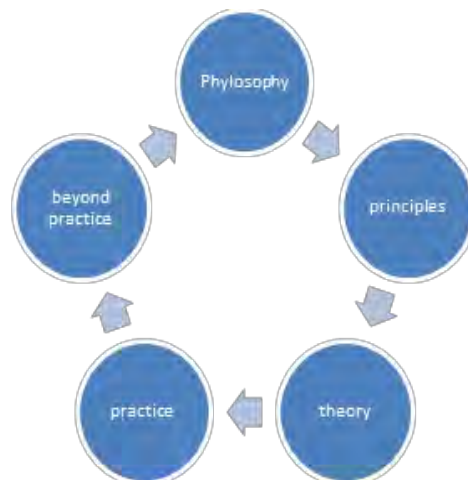


Diagram 1 from Farrell (2015, p.23).

For the purposes of this paper reflection represents “a process, both individual and collaborative, involving experience and uncertainty. It is comprised of identifying questions and key elements of a matter that has emerged as significant, then taking one’s thoughts into dialogue with oneself and with others” (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p.76). Meaning that by means of individual and collaborative reflection, student-teachers learn and clarify meaningful queries through a dialogic interaction with themselves and the others.

Wright’s (2010) review, on the current forms of second language teacher education, has resulted with an emphasis on lived experiences which need to be described, interpreted and explained in reflective activities. Reflective practice into early stages of teacher education is a must that student-teachers initiate by engaging in a process of developing skills that later will support their lifelong learning professional development i.e. language teacher preparation should place an emphasis on the student teacher’s learning to teach and becoming a thinking teacher which in turn means a great deal of reflective activity programmed into learning experiences.

There are different forms to engage in reflection and most of them have been studied and documented as ways to understand what teachers know and how they get to know about teaching. Gebhard (2009) mentions the following forms of reflection: teaching a class, self-observation, observing other teachers, the use of journals, or discussion in seminars, these means of reflective practice have been useful to promote L2 knowledge of pre-service and in-service teachers as stated in the methodology used for this study in the next section.

## **METHODOLOGY**

## *Design*

This study was framed by the qualitative tradition by means of narrative enquiry through reflection, several ways to reflect can be used according to the purposes of the enquiry. Narratives are a prominent form of data collection as they represent completely lived experiences by/from the participants, they are also framed into the socio-cultural approach to understand contextualized knowledge in teacher education. Barkhuizen (2011) defines narratives as “meaning making, learning, or knowledge construction that takes place during the narrative research activities of (co) constructing narratives, analyzing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/ watching/listening to research reports” (p. 395). Thus, this article reports, in the participants’ voice, the lived experience of creating a syllabus and represents the (co) construction of student-teachers’ knowledge.

## *Participants*

The participants were 16 ELT student-teachers aged 20-30 in a compulsory course named Curriculum Design, this title was adapted and called in this paper syllabus design. The experience was during the 2015 spring quarter in the Bachelor of ELT of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla.

## *Data collection and analysis.*

The data were collected with an e-report including the syllabus designed in teams, and a final individual reflection on the process of the syllabus design. The reflection was guided by asking students to write what they had learned through the design of the project. The analysis of the reflections was done identifying and examining student-teachers’ outcomes from their individual reflection on using PBL to design an English syllabus.

## *Location of the research.*

We are teacher educators in the ELT bachelor at Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. This ELT program requires student-teachers take subjects related to Teaching, Linguistics, Culture, Research, Spanish, English as a Target Language and Common core. This study was carried out with 16 student-teachers aged 20-30 years old in a subject named Curriculum Design (we adapted the title of the subject for a better understanding in this paper: Syllabus design). The subject is compulsory and is programmed to be taken in the so called formative stage of the program. This course usually lasts 16 weeks, two sessions of two hours twice per week. The goal of this course is that the student-teachers develop the competence to create language teaching-learning syllabuses; in selecting the shape of the syllabus the student-teachers will consider the current theories of language teaching-learning by choosing the most appropriate option and justifying and adapting it to the diverse contexts, philosophies and needs of language schools. Considering the complexity of introducing student-teachers to syllabus design and the academic concepts related, we started the experience of using PBL as described below.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF INCORPORATING PBL IN A SYLLABUS DESIGN COURSE.**

This experience on incorporating PBL in our syllabus design course was born when we, the professors of the course, revised the syllabus by the institutional program in ELT we work for. The revision took two extensive weeks to decide on how to make the subject matter of syllabus design affordable for student-teachers to get the most out of the subject; after revising and discussing the possibilities, we decided to adapt the institutional syllabus by incorporating PBL and reflections all along the course, doing partial presentations on the components of the syllabus, and a final written reflection at the end of the course.

When we started the course, we introduced the adapted syllabus to the student-teachers. The goal, the objectives, the contents, the materials, and the evaluation of the course were stated and clarified with the student-teachers. The course was designed to accompany student-teachers all along the process of the development of the project. The teacher educator and the student-teachers would revise the concepts related to the subject matter of syllabus design through activities that could guide the student-teachers to create a syllabus by steps. The development of the project was by following the next order.

1. Needs analysis.
2. Stating goals and objectives.
3. Designing Content and Sequencing.
4. Selection of Materials and Evaluation.

The ELT students worked in small teams, four teams of three and one team of four, to carry out the project on designing the language syllabus. The student-teachers decided who to work with all along the course to complete their project.

The introduction of the syllabus design course was related to identify the basic terminology used in curriculum design. Then, the student-teachers were asked to select a specific real population to whom design an English course, i.e. a syllabus. The unique requirement was that student-teachers would have access to know the context of the target population and later apply the instruments. Once they were ready with the target population, they worked step by step using the theory on elaborating what was necessary to complete each part of a syllabus.

Student-teachers first collected information about the target population they selected; such information included the general context of the educational institution, the location, the official level they wanted to design the syllabus for, and in some cases the institutional syllabus that was being used at the moment.

Then, they read about needs analysis and instruments. The professor and student-teachers analysed and clarified the different instruments. After that, the student-

teachers were able to decide on the ones that best fitted the target population. Once they selected one or more instruments, they were adopted, adapted or created; for a better functionality they were revised by the group and by the teacher educator. The instruments were also piloted in the group to verify their purpose, the instructions and possibilities of failure.

Subsequently, the instruments were applied in the real context. The student-teachers collected the target population needs and they carried out the analysis. When they had the analysis of the needs, the next step was to state goals and objectives. A guide and a set of exercises on how to write goals and objectives were used to elaborate them based on the results obtained from the needs analysis.

With the needs analysis results in mind, student-teachers explored how to decide on the content and sequencing by revising the theory related and examining samples. Based on the goals and objectives and with the revision of the theory and the samples they designed the content and the sequencing according to their target population.

The final steps were the Selection of Materials and the Evaluation, which were selected and elaborated by considering the goals, objectives, the content and the sequence of the course.

During the process of each one of the steps the student-teachers were presenting their advances to the whole group and the professor to discuss and reflect on improving each one of the steps of the syllabus. Once the student-teachers finished the steps they were asked to integrate each one of them in an e-report justifying theoretically the design, and a final individual written reflection on the process of designing the syllabus was required as well.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings from the students-teachers reflections. From the analysis three main topics emerged: 1) Working on the Project of a Syllabus Design was Significant, 2) seeing themselves as teachers or in the profession, 3) self and the others.

In the following sections each theme raised by the student-teachers is commented and exemplified by extracts from their written reflections. The extracts presented next are the most representative of each category; a pseudonym is used in each one of them to keep the identity of the student-teachers.

*Working on the project of a syllabus design was significant.*

Student-teachers started to think by internalizing academic concepts, not only following mechanically the theory. As they were reflecting on the process of the design, they were surprised by their achievements. They even found themselves challenged by the demands



of the project, classmates, and the design of the syllabus in context. Besides, they were satisfied when they noticed their efforts and the final product, as expressed by the student-teachers below.

### **Cary**

*I learned the steps that we need to follow to make a syllabus, I can't believe it, but it's true I can do it. I was very stressed at the beginning of the course because I thought how it could be possible that we were going to design a syllabus if we didn't have the previous experience as teachers to create a syllabus. But later, I understood that if we didn't try when the first try could be, I was committed and looked for information to be familiar with the new subject terms.*

### **Beto**

*The creation of the syllabus was a real challenge, we had to apply the whole information we learned in the classroom, and we also tried to link the theory: the needs, the Bloom's taxonomy, etc. I think it was the most difficult we did, but finally when we saw the final product, it was very gratifying.*

### **Betsy**

*I've never realized all the work that is behind a syllabus, the theory, authors, and concepts that I never heard about, but now I understand why the books are very structured and organized, they depend on student's needs.*

*Seeing themselves as teachers or in the profession*

The experience of creating a syllabus in real context helped student-teachers to see themselves as teachers, meaning that they situated themselves as teachers, as they started being aware about some of the activities teachers do, and they also noticed that teachers can contribute to change a syllabus in an informed manner, they also perceived the complexities teachers face, as can be seen in the following extracts.

### **Charly**

*This experience was very good, we are going to be teachers and we have to prepare the subject content. With this exercise we know how being a teacher is like.*

### **Clara**

*Now I feel better because I know that we as teachers have trouble to face, but with this kind of subject we have an idea about all the things that we have to do in our daily life. I really enjoyed the course and I have learned a lot of things that I am sure they are going to be useful in my professional life. Now I have the bases and the knowledge to design a syllabus, I am able to design a syllabus or to make some changes to a certain syllabus in*

order to adequate it to the students' needs, lacks and wants. and to give a valid justification showing evidence for proposing that and for convincing others that the decisions I take are reliable and suitable.

### **Juan**

*I realized that to become a teacher is something difficult and implicates to know a lot of things such as: how to organize students, time and things, I didn't appreciate them before but with this subject and with the project I see it's amazing how students are different among themselves and groups.*

### **Mary**

*At beginning of this course, I was not sure about the utility of this subject. Today, I can see the importance that this subject has for me as student and later as a teacher. I can say that to know all this information will be useful and important for me because now I am conscious that however the school gives me a syllabus, it will be important for me to know the needs of my students and in this manner adjust the contents for them.*

*Self and the others*

From the student-teachers' voices in their reflections, it is evident that they established a dialogic interaction with themselves and the others (Farrell, 2015) and they used what they knew from their experiences, their interaction with theories from books or samples we used during the course and in some cases they found themselves challenged by the demands of the project and they had to get information from other cultural artifacts (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). In the extracts below we can see how student-teachers perceived their work and interaction with others.

### **Aldo**

*This work was fantastic because I learned that working in a team is much better than working individually. Working individually is harder than if we share knowledge and learn to accept the different kinds of thoughts from the other students.*

### **Abi**

*About my team, I like to work with them, although sometimes it was difficult, when we had to do a task, we did not have time because we had other classes. Despite I got on well with them and I met new people, they supported me when I had doubts.*

### **Juan**

*I found meaningful to work in teams for the design of the syllabus. It was a good way to help each other, to clarify some doubts and it this way to make possible getting a good final product.*

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY IN L2 TEACHER EDUCATION**

From the student-teachers voices we know that PBL was useful and meaningful. Furthermore, they contextualized their learning (Boss, Larmer and Mergendoller, 2013). However, we know that learning takes time and it needs to be mediated with others, such as the local context and internalization of academic concepts that later become knowledge (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

By revisiting the experience of using PBL we notice that the student-teachers were engaged in a process of reflecting individually and collaboratively incorporating their experiences and doubts about designing the syllabus and they were immersed in a dialogic interaction with themselves and the others, but also they were interacting with cultural artifacts and different sources that supported the development of syllabus design cognition (Boss, Larmer & Mergendoller, 2013; Farrell, 2015; Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

We are convinced that PBL in Initial English Language Teacher Education programs is an effective method to support learning the matters of syllabus design or if the case, content subjects. Teacher educators should create adequate conditions/approaches that support the contextualized knowledge and the professionalization of student-teachers and not to wait until they finish their studies. Moreover, we should educate student-teachers instead of training them to follow what seems to be the best; they have to accommodate the ELT theory into the reality of teachers' life and the reality of educational institutions into the theory of ELT. As a result, student-teachers would be able to start developing their expertise on the different duties teachers are exposed to when entering into the reality of teaching if we, teacher educators open pedagogical windows that can be used to see how the teaching life is.

Finally, we think that this experience has given us the opportunity to reflect about our teaching educational practices as we have had the opportunity to see that student-teachers' agency by means of reflection all along the course helped them to express what they learned through.

Furthermore, this experience provided us the opportunity to understand how they developed cognition about the matters of syllabus design. Consequently, we recognize that the transmission approach of teacher education is acontextual or a mechanical activity meanwhile a sociocultural approach seeks to understand the complexities that in this specific case, student-teachers faced when they had to take decisions on what and how to design L2 content for the learners. For that reason, we should begin exploring the role of IELTE and the pedagogy we use with student-teachers, the appropriateness of the

approaches we use to deliver content and the psychological tools our student-teacher use to develop their cognition. In this way we will be able to better understand what we are doing and how we can contribute to contextualize IELTE in our Mexican universities or any other teaching education programs.

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# ANÁLISIS DEL DISPOSITIVO DE FORMACIÓN DEL DOCENTE DE INGLÉS EN LA UAEMéx

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## RESUMEN

Como parte de la investigación doctoral, se analizó el dispositivo de formación del docente de inglés, conformado por el conjunto de elementos institucionales, pedagógicos y referenciales movilizados con la finalidad de crear e instrumentar el plan de estudios de la Licenciatura en Lenguas de la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (UAEMéx), desde sus perspectivas diacrónica y sincrónica, así como desde sus tres funciones esenciales: heurística, estratégica y pragmática. En consecuencia, la investigación partió en primer lugar de un análisis documental acerca del origen de la conformación del currículum flexible del programa educativo, su construcción, fundamentos epistémicos y características del contexto educativo. En tanto que la aproximación sincrónica se adentra en el estudio del sistema de mediaciones, el marco teórico-metodológico, las relaciones espacio-temporales determinantes, la organización de los recursos didácticos, los rasgos del grupo y acciones de los actores involucrados en la instrumentación real del dispositivo.

**Palabras claves:** dispositivo pedagógico, formación docente, modelo reflexivo, enfoque por competencias

## INTRODUCCIÓN

El diseño curricular de un plan de estudios de licenciatura debe vislumbrarse desde una perspectiva dinámica, evolutiva, como una estructura abierta y disipativa, en tanto que el discurso oficial de lo que se encuentra impreso, se va diluyendo con el tiempo en la medida que las prácticas educativas internas, sus participantes y el contexto socioeducativo va modificándose, cuando se carece del seguimiento y evaluación sistemática del proyecto original (Casarini, 2013). De ahí que uno de los efectos más evidentes repercute en el alejamiento del perfil deseable del egresado.

La presente investigación surge del debilitamiento del área de formación docente en la Facultad de Lenguas de la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (UAEMéx) derivado de un problema multifactorial. El primero de ellos se ubica en la instrumentación de los planes flexibles en la institución (López, 2001), a partir de cuales los estudiantes elegían las asignaturas en cada periodo escolar aún cuando en algunos casos, no siempre poseyeran los conocimientos y competencias previas, indispensables para cursar

alguna asignatura, derivado de la inexperiencia en la puesta en práctica del mismo. La problemática en el caso propio repercutía en la configuración parcial o deficiente de las competencias profesionales del perfil de egreso del Licenciado en Lenguas.

Para aproximarse al estudio del problema se asumió una visión holista que permitiera estudiar cada aspecto del plan de estudios, desde un concepto macro que sustentara y a su vez articulara la investigación documental y empírica de manera transversal. El vocablo *dispositivo* es de origen francés y de naturaleza híbrida, atribuido a Foucault (1994) quien lo utilizó de manera técnica como instrumento de disciplina para la preservación del control y el poder. Posteriormente, su significado se relacionó con las mediaciones de las tecnologías de la información y comunicaciones para la creación de ambientes virtuales. Al cierre del siglo XX, Peeters y Charlier plantearon el término de dispositivo pedagógico o socioeducativo como espacio de transición, de mediación de saberes, orientados a procesos autónomos de aprendizaje:

Au fond, les dispositifs. En visant à aider l'apprenant à s'aider lui-même, représentent aujourd'hui une tentative curieuse, celle d'une *instrumentation* optimale de l'autonomie des acteurs –association paradoxale, ou tout au moins déroutante a priori, entre instrumentation efficace et autonomie maximale. Cette association s'illustre notamment par un déplacement de la problématique de la connaissance, d'une logique de *transmission* du savoir vers une logique *d'expérience* ou *d'expérimentation* du savoir (p.18).

Como se aprecia, desde esta visión se denota un profundo cambio de paradigma entre el dispositivo de control que propiciaba una lógica transmisiva del conocimiento a un proceso de empoderamiento gradual de los actores, encaminado hacia el desarrollo de la autonomía vía la experimentación del conocimiento per sé.

De modo particular, el concepto de dispositivo pedagógico de formación docente en esta la investigación se sustentó en los planteamientos de Yurén, Navia y Saenger (2005), Zanatta (2008) y Montandon (2013) quienes han estudiado los dispositivos educativos y de formación docente desde una perspectiva holística. Los primeros definen al dispositivo como un “conjunto de elementos dispuestos de tal manera que, al ponerse en movimiento, conducen al logro de una finalidad educativa determinada, la cual responde o bien a una demanda social, o bien a necesidades individuales” (pág. 32). Asimismo, Christiane Montandon (2013) y Becquemin y Montandon (2014) plantean en forma complementaria las dos dimensiones principales de un dispositivo de formación. Éstas son: la perspectiva diacrónica que contiene el estudio de las prácticas discursivas que dan origen y sustentan el diseño curricular de un plan de estudios y; por otro lado, la perspectiva sincrónica que comprende la forma en que se materializan esos discursos, y las prácticas no discursivas derivadas de la participación de los distintos actores en la instrumentación de un determinado currículo.

Derivado de las limitantes de tiempo y espacio, en el presente informe se dan a conocer únicamente los resultados de la primera parte de la investigación, esto es de la exploración de las prácticas discursivas del dispositivo de formación del docente de inglés: sus antecedentes históricos, elementos curriculares centrales, referentes teórico-metodológicos del proceso educativo y del Modelo Reflexivo de formación previsto en el plan de estudios de la Licenciatura en Lenguas, desde el enfoque basado en competencias.

## **JUSTIFICACIÓN**

A más de diez años de la puesta en marcha del *Currículum de la Licenciatura en Lenguas* (Mejía, 2003) en la UAEMéx, se consideró pertinente analizar las dimensiones del dispositivo de formación profesional que estructura dicho plan de estudios. La relevancia del estudio también se justificó en la desarticulación epistemológica entre el Modelo Reflexivo y el Enfoque Basado en Competencias, los cuales constituyeron los referentes teóricos del documento citado. Las deficiencias en conocimientos previos y la adquisición parcial de las habilidades docentes básicas detectadas a través del desempeño de los estudiantes en asignaturas correspondientes a los núcleos sustantivo e integral de la licenciatura, pusieron de manifiesto rupturas en la secuencia didáctica del proceso de formación y la brecha entre el perfil ideal y el real de la mayoría de los egresados.

Cabe mencionar que en la actualidad, el ámbito profesional de la docencia encuentra una serie de demandas en los planos nacional e internacional para los egresados, quienes no siempre cumplen el perfil requeridos para insertarse en esos escenarios (Martínez, 2006; Klett, 2010; Richards, 2011; Moreno, 2012; UCLES, 2014). O bien, ellos son sustituidos por egresados de otras licenciaturas con elevado nivel en el manejo de inglés y de otras lenguas, o con mayor apertura para ejercer la docencia en distintas modalidades y niveles educativos.

Por consiguiente, la pertinencia del proyecto encontró su razón de ser en la necesidad de recuperar los elementos teóricos del plan de estudios a fin de promover la participación en espacios de reflexión y análisis encaminados a la homologación de criterios para el proceso de formación.

## **MARCO TEÓRICO**

Como parte de este marco, se abordarán de manera sucinta los conceptos medulares que dieron el debido soporte epistémico y teórico a la presente investigación; estos son: educación, tipos de dispositivo pedagógico, competencias del profesorado de inglés, enfoque por competencias, modelo reflexivo de formación y desarrollo profesional.

*Educación*



Se concibe este término como proceso eminentemente social y socializador, en el cual se conjugan las demandas, valores y metas de la sociedad con la complejidad de la naturaleza del propio individuo. De ahí que se considere necesario instrumentar dos procesos dialécticos a lo largo del trayecto de formación profesional: la guía o acompañamiento del estudiante para habilitarle en el desempeño de una tarea, o sea *educare*; y de manera casi paralela, la tarea de mediación para detonar el desarrollo intelectual y las habilidades de autogestión del alumno, i.e. *educere*. En la presente investigación se reconoce la importancia de vincular ambos procesos, desde una racionalidad múltiple, centrada en el individuo y alejándose de una orientación artesanal, tecnística o mecanicista.

Desde esa perspectiva, se introduce el término de *dispositivo pedagógico*, como un conjunto de elementos referenciales, institucionales e instrumentales, que al movilizarse como un todo, dentro de un ambiente intersubjetivo, se aproximan al logro de una finalidad educativa. Derivado de la conjunción de esos elementos, se propicia la organización, acoplamiento y movilización de los factores constitutivos del dispositivo, tales como: participantes, objetivos, recursos, procesos de enseñanza, aprendizaje y evaluación, entre otros. La disposición de todo ello dará por resultado cierto tipo de dispositivo que se aproxime con mayor énfasis a uno o a otro extremo del continuum que se ilustra en la Tabla 1.

**TABLA 1. TIPOS DE DISPOSITIVO DE FORMACIÓN DOCENTE**

<b>Funcional</b> (Centrado en medios y orientados a eficacia)	<b>Racionalidad</b>	<b>Comunicativa</b> (Sentido social y personal de la profesión - interacciones e interexperiencias,
<b>Alienante</b> (Tendencia transmisiva, de desempeños específicos)	<b>Posición asignada al sujeto</b>	<b>Instituyente</b> (Tendencia formativa, centrada en la construcción integral del sujeto)
<b>Técnico</b> (Competencias técnicas)	<b>Tipo de formación</b>	<b>Crítica, holística y polivalente</b> (Desestabilización provisional del sistema disposicional) (Competencias teóricas, técnicas, sociales y personales)
<b>Prescriptivo, moldea</b> (Estrategias = reglas) Aplicación estabilizadora	<b>Estrategias de formación</b>	<b>Dinámico, construye</b> (Reglas => experiencias => dinamizan al dispositivo)
<b>Transmisivo</b> (Tradición de los saberes teóricos y procedimentales transmisibles)	<b>Nivel de transición hacia el sentido de la formación</b>	<b>Formativo</b> (Desde fase incipiente: saberes técnicos, transmisibles → fase de formación integral → formación crítica)



Fuente: Elaboración propia (2017), con base en Zanatta, Yurén y Santos (2011, p. 8).

El tipo de dispositivo pedagógico que se gestione tanto por parte de la institución, como por parte del propio educador y del estudiante-profesor, también dependerá de la conceptualización del proceso de formación docente de cada participante. En otras palabras, si se percibe que dicho proceso es solo temporal, descendente, circunscrito a la práctica casi artesanal en situaciones simuladas o semi controladas, y por ende, el logro de la competencia profesional es el punto de llegada, garantizado por la obtención de un

título de licenciatura, entonces se tiene un visión prescriptiva, reduccionista, alienante y tecnócrata de la enseñanza. De manera contraria, si se propicia un proceso continuo de objetivización-subjetivización de la praxis, a partir de ajustes y cambios en las estructuras previas del estudiante, la lectura académica cuidadosa y la discusión crítica de textos de su disciplina; entonces se favorece la instrumentación de un dispositivo de formación integral, centrado en el estudiante, de tipo ascendente, interactivo, dinámico y basado en la racionalidad comunicativa.

### *Competencias del profesorado de inglés*

En este rubro, se consideran los aspectos centrales de las competencias, criterios e indicadores de desempeño establecidos en descriptores nacionales e internacionales en torno a los conocimientos, habilidades y actitudes deseables en un profesor de inglés. Jack Richards (2011) enfatiza que la primera competencia indispensable en un docente de inglés es el dominio de esta lengua, como un factor para asegurar: el uso de la L2 durante la clase, el adecuado diseño y selección de recursos didácticos, la exposición pertinente a muestras de la L2, así como para aproximarse al error del aprendiente de manera oportuna conforme a la etapa y objetivo de aprendizaje.

Por su parte, el Marco de Cambridge contempla una serie de conocimientos y habilidades docentes organizadas por etapas del trayecto docente, las cuales son aplicables en diferentes contextos y niveles educativos de aprendizaje de inglés. Estas etapas conllevan descriptores de desempeño, denominados: 'Foundation', 'Developing', 'Proficient' y 'Expert'. Éstos representan un continuo que va desde prácticamente el conocimiento esencial en algunas áreas de la enseñanza de inglés, aunado al manejo de técnicas simples, hasta el dominio racional y reflexivo en la selección de técnicas más sofisticadas, recursos didácticos innovadores y enfoques didácticos más complejos para atender las necesidades del contexto educativo de manera pertinente y sustentada teórica y metodológicamente. Su propósito es brindar una herramienta de evaluación diagnóstica a los propios académicos y a los empleadores, con la finalidad de aportarles herramientas para la construcción de un plan personal o colectivo de desarrollo profesional en el área a corto, mediano y largo plazo. El marco está organizado en las áreas: 1. El aprendizaje y el aprendiente, 2. Enseñanza, aprendizaje y evaluación, 3. Dominio de la lengua, 4. Conocimiento de la lengua y del metalenguaje y 5. Desarrollo profesional y de valores.

### *Enfoque por Competencias*

Delors (1996) nos plantea una serie de reflexiones en torno al papel de la educación superior frente a las transformaciones y crisis sociales, culturales, económicas y políticas de nuestros tiempos. De ahí que se vislumbre a la educación permanente como la "llave de acceso" para poder transitar por la sociedad actual en convivencia con los demás, desde una perspectiva de reestructuración personal continua, de sus conocimientos y habilidades, en donde siempre esté presente la conciencia social para desempeñar la propia función adecuadamente.

Se privilegia la universidad como centro del dispositivo pedagógico, como 'lugar de ciencia', como plataforma de la educación diversificada y permanente para la adquisición de competencias profesionales disciplinares, la difusión del conocimiento y la promoción de la cooperación internacional. Es justamente mediante estas acciones que las diferencias socioeconómicas de acceso a la educación pueden ser menos incisivas.

La interpretación y aplicación de esos saberes se ha realizado desde distintas posturas metodológicas, con múltiples finalidades educativas y diversos propósitos e intereses en los sectores público y privado. Entre ellas se destacan tres vertientes: a) Enfoque por competencias empresarial o eficientista, b) Enfoque por competencias: centrado en la tarea o en el desempeño, y c) Enfoque por competencias centrado en el sujeto. Se reconoce que la tercera aproximación difiere de la postura del racionalismo instrumental implícita en el carácter técnico o énfasis en el desempeño. En consonancia con los Pilares de la educación saber convivir y saber ser de Delors (1996), se rescata el proceso de formación como una acción pedagógica integral que incluye la adquisición de competencias. Cabe destacar que este enfoque centrado en el sujeto se aproxima a la concepción de un dispositivo de formación de tipo comunicativo, instituyente, holístico y crítico, en tanto que implica la tendencia formativa del estudiante. Asimismo, aborda la educación desde la perspectiva de *educere* derivado del proceso interno que busca desarrollar el potencial intelectual del individuo a partir de su propia naturaleza.

#### *Modelo reflexivo de formación y desarrollo profesional*

La formación docente del profesional de inglés en la UAEMéx se sustenta en el modelo propuesto por Michael Wallace (1991) según se señala en el *Currículum de la Licenciatura en Lenguas* (2005, pp.17-18). La aproximación teórica-metodológica citada constituye un eje transversal sustantivo a todas las unidades de aprendizaje, de los núcleos básico, sustantivo e integral, particularmente aquéllas relativas al área de docencia de inglés. Ello pretende coadyuvar a la toma de decisiones fundamentada y a la apropiación sistemática de los conocimientos del área.

El Modelo Reflexivo contempla tres grandes dimensiones o etapas estrechamente vinculadas entre sí. La primera toma en cuenta los conocimientos, paradigmas, creencias, actitudes con los que ingresa el estudiante al ciclo de formación. Estos esquemas de pensamiento no sólo se permean en la segunda etapa, sino que incluso interfieren positiva y/o negativamente en la ejecución del desempeño docente.

Al respecto, Maggioli (2014) sostiene que el conocimiento empírico derivado de las propias experiencias como aprendientes de una lengua y de otras áreas de conocimiento tiene un impacto fundamental en las preconcepciones del sujeto acerca de lo que significa ser docente, enseñar, aprender, los roles e interacciones en el aula. De este modo, esos paradigmas se ponen de manifiesto cuando el estudiante tiene la

responsabilidad de asumir el papel de profesor, soslayando periodos de formación teórico-práctica.

El estudiante se percibe como agente primario, el cual cuenta con un enorme bagaje de conocimientos y experiencias para aportar a su proceso de formación. Se considera que no hay mentes en blanco, ni actitudes neutrales frente a dicho proceso. Él toma decisiones antes y durante la clase con base en un número limitado de ideas o creencias en torno a lo que puede considerarse como actuación profesional apropiada, las cuales ya han sido almacenadas en su mente desde su etapa preescolar o incluso antes y hasta su formación universitaria. En consecuencia, aun cuando el estudiante-profesor haya cursado varias asignaturas en el área de docencia y haya aprobado cualquier cantidad de cursos de inglés, resultará difícil que muestre una actitud reflexiva, alejada de conceptos mecanicistas, poco racionales, si no han atravesado por una experiencia de aprendizaje diferente. Wallace (1991) señala que esto sucede principalmente cuando: “the subjects which a trainee is expected to study are dictated by tradition or convention, rather than by any proven application to the competent practice of the profession” (p.12).

La segunda etapa del modelo abarca cuatro elementos: a) conocimiento recibido, b) conocimiento experiencial o empírico, c) práctica y d) reflexión; los cuales se conjugan y enlazan teoría y práctica a fin de proponer un arquetipo de formación docente y desarrollo profesional.

A la luz de lo anterior se puede aseverar que, si los estudiantes de la Facultad de Lenguas no experimentan una articulación y congruencia entre lo que se analiza en las clases de práctica docente y el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de sus otras asignaturas, principalmente en el área de inglés y docencia, resultará de muy poco provecho e impacto para enriquecer o expandir sus ideas y creencias en torno al ejercicio crítico-reflexivo del proceso de adquisición de una lengua extranjera.

De este modo, la práctica reflexiva constituye un elemento nodular en cualquier proceso de formación docente, dado que se reconoce la naturaleza compleja implícita en los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje de la lengua meta. Las características particulares de cada contexto educativo hacen impensable considerar un enfoque didáctico único o idóneo para la enseñanza de una lengua. Los procesos de toma de decisiones antes, durante y después de la práctica docente surgen comúnmente situaciones impredecibles, no planeadas del quehacer académico en el aula. De ahí que se requiera un conocimiento sólido teórico y metodológico de los principios subyacentes a la enseñanza y aprendizaje de una lengua.

En síntesis, la práctica reflexiva es el hilo conductor con el desarrollo profesional, ambos guardan una relación dialéctica e incluyente. De ahí deriva justamente la importancia de la inclusión de la práctica reflexiva en la formación profesional de los docentes.

## **PREGUNTA DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

Con base en la problemática y referentes antes expuestos, uno de los cuestionamientos centrales que enmarcó el horizonte de trabajo en esta investigación fue: ¿Cómo se construyen las competencias profesionales a partir del dispositivo de formación docente en inglés de la Facultad de Lenguas?

## **MÉTODO**

La perspectiva epistémica de esta investigación fue de carácter fenomenológico, centrada en el individuo para permitir la exploración y análisis del dispositivo de formación docente en inglés con los estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Lenguas, desde su propio contexto de referencia.

Como parte de la investigación, se analizó el conjunto de elementos institucionales, pedagógicos y referenciales movilizados con la finalidad de crear e instrumentar el plan de estudios de la Licenciatura en Lenguas de la UAEM, desde sus perspectivas diacrónica y sincrónica, así como desde las tres funciones esenciales del dispositivo: heurística, estratégica y pragmática.

El estudio de la perspectiva diacrónica consistió en un análisis documental de las prácticas discursivas que dieron origen a la conformación del currículo flexible del programa educativo, su construcción, fundamentos epistémicos y características del contexto educativo.

Por otro lado, la aproximación sincrónica se adentró en el estudio del sistema de mediaciones, del marco teórico-metodológico, de las relaciones espacio- temporales determinantes, de la organización de los recursos didácticos, y de los rasgos del grupo y acciones de los actores involucrados en la instrumentación real del dispositivo, mediante el método de investigación-acción y a la luz de una racionalidad múltiple y de una visión holística para aproximarse al contexto objeto de estudio, en la intención de captar una realidad dinámica del proceso de formación docente, las percepciones de sus participantes, los diferentes aspectos del pensamiento subyacente y la red de relaciones entre esos elementos, con sustento en el principio de complementariedad en la selección y uso de técnicas cualitativas de investigación.

En el presente trabajo solo se reportan los hallazgos centrales del estudio de las prácticas discursivas del dispositivo de formación, las cuales se sustentaron en las siguientes fuentes: a) Modelo Institucional de Formación Profesional, b) Currículum de la Licenciatura en Lenguas – UAEMéx, y c) Programa de enseñanza de Práctica Docente del Inglés. El análisis de las prácticas no discursivas y de las materializaciones quedará pendiente para la presentación de un documento posterior.

## **RESULTADOS**

Como parte del estudio del dispositivo de formación docente, se presenta un análisis del contenido del libro Modelo de Formación Profesional de la UAEM, elaborado por Miranda, Medina, Espinoza y Moreno (2005), a la luz de los referentes conceptuales y teórico-metodológicos descritos con antelación.

En ese sentido, se reconocen como rasgos centrales del proceso de innovación, la exigencia de formar profesionales ‘competentes’ y ‘competitivos’, a partir de un currículo centrado en la “generación de conocimiento; pero sostenido por ejes transversales y programas flexibles que favorezcan una verdadera fusión entre las ciencias y las humanidades” (pág. 21). Se trata de un intento en el cual se consideren las demandas del sector económico productivo del país, mediante la capacitación de personal corporativo y manufacturero al interior de las Instituciones de Educación Superior; y a la vez, de la profesionalización de estudiantes críticos, reflexivos, innovadores, con iniciativa propia que puedan intervenir en procesos de crecimiento y transformación del entorno científico, económico, tecnológico y social.

En el documento también se enfatiza la necesidad de promover una educación integral y dinámica, la cual promueva procesos de desarrollo humano y la gestación de proyectos de vida personales y profesionales. De este modo, la aproximación epistémica al proceso educativo es a partir de los procesos de aprendizaje, desplazando a los de la enseñanza para formar un individuo multidimensional apto para la comunicación, el análisis creativo y crítico, la reflexión independiente y el trabajo en equipo en contextos pluriculturales” (*Ibidem*, p. 27). Este enfoque humanista constituye uno de los ejes rectores para la formación profesional en la UAEM. Su instrumentación prevé la inserción de estrategias didácticas que promuevan el desarrollo de habilidades cognitivas, reflexivas y críticas; así como el fortalecimiento de las cualidades personales y sociales. Se le apuesta enfáticamente al aprendizaje independiente y a la comprensión y aplicación de lo aprendido.

Los planteamientos anteriores conllevan la reorganización de los currícula de los programas educativos que ofrece la UAEM y la transformación del proceso educativo en términos de: la flexibilización de sus estructura curricular, la articulación entre programas y asignaturas con la misma base disciplinar; así como respecto de la electibilidad de: unidades de aprendizaje o asignaturas, carga académica por periodo escolar, tipo de trayectoria académica, énfasis de formación, participación en procesos de movilidad nacional e internacional, entre otras decisiones que los estudiantes toman durante los estudios profesionales (*Ibid*, pp. 27-29).

En continuidad con la descripción de un modelo centrado en el proceso de aprendizaje y en desarrollo de competencias académicas y profesionales para la solución de problemas del entorno social, se vislumbra un alumno reflexivo, autogestor de su propio conocimiento vinculado con la práctica de la investigación, portador de valores universales, capaz de emitir juicios críticos fundamentados y de tomar decisiones para

formular su proyecto de vida personal y profesional. Por su parte, el docente universitario debe ser un profesional de la educación, conocer su disciplina desde sus orígenes, fundamentos epistemológicos, nexos interdisciplinarios y mantenerse actualizado en la misma. También debe conocer a quien enseña, el propósito y la misión de su praxis e identificarse con la institución, mostrando su compromiso y responsabilidad. Debe gestionar procesos de planeación didáctica, mediante la selección de contenidos, actividades, estrategias y recursos didácticos apropiados y relevantes, así como verificar la claridad y fundamentación teórica y metodológica de sus exposiciones e intervenciones. Asimismo, debe ser capaz de hacer uso de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación.

En síntesis, a partir de estas prácticas discursivas en el documento estudiado, se percibe la intención de proponer dispositivos pedagógicos sustentados en una racionalidad comunicativa, centrados en la formación integral del sujeto desde una postura holística, crítica y polivalente, mediante la promoción de procesos dinámicos orientados a la construcción de un individuo autónomo, reflexivo, crítico, humanista; pero que a su vez, los autores reconocen la importancia y pertinencia de la formación inicial de tipo transmisora y artesanal en los momentos tempranos de ésta.

Cabe mencionar que los planteamientos de Zanatta, Yurén y Santos (2011) establecen términos muy precisos para los extremos del continuum del trayecto de formación, en términos de dicotomías como se aprecia en la Tabla 1. Sin embargo quien esto escribe no presenta los hallazgos bajo un esquema de dicotomías, sino más bien procurando ubicar los rasgos del plan flexible en ese continuum, ver hacia qué extremo se inclina el dispositivo. Esto, con el afán de vislumbrar los ajustes, las modificaciones necesarias para buscar favorecer una formación de los estudiantes en las ciencias del lenguaje menos alienante, más orientada hacia la práctica reflexiva y el pensamiento crítico, más en búsqueda del desarrollo potencial de profesionales más autónomos, con mayores capacidades de autogestión y de trabajo colegiado.

La primera distinción del continuum es acerca de su racionalidad, ya sea 'funcional' o 'comunicativa'. Se aprecia que el *Curriculum de la Licenciatura en Lenguas* (Mejía, 2005) se acerca más al primer extremo, pues describe con mayor énfasis los medios y las competencias que se requieren desarrollar para conducir a los estudiantes al logro del perfil de egreso, soslayando la importancia y efecto que se pueden derivar del intercambio continuo de experiencias y procesos de comunicación sistemática entre los miembros de la comunidad.

Respecto de la característica anterior, también se encuentra que el dispositivo es más de tipo 'alienante' que 'instituyente'. Si bien los marcos epistémico y psicopedagógico, así como el perfil de egreso, señalan la importancia de promover acciones y estrategias para la formación universitaria del individuo atendiendo a todas sus dimensiones. En la trayectoria académica y otros apartados del currículo, se advierte un énfasis en la tendencia transmisiva de conocimientos y desempeños específicos, que no

aborda con claridad la formación integral del sujeto de manera sistemática a lo largo del plan de estudios.

En términos de los extremos 'técnico' versus 'crítico', en los objetivos de aprendizaje de algunas asignaturas del Área de Docencia, se subraya la importancia de que el estudiante sea capaz de contrastar las técnicas, recursos y prácticas docentes en general derivadas del estructuralismo en oposición a aquéllas vinculadas al constructivismo. En consecuencia, se puede aseverar que el dispositivo se aproxima en esta tercera categoría un poco más a la formación desestabilizadora del sistema disposicional del sujeto. No obstante, queda pendiente en la agenda analizar el cómo se concreta esta intención en los programas de enseñanza y en los recursos seleccionados.

Finalmente, en torno a las características del dispositivo 'prescriptivo' --- 'dinámico', se encuentra cierto paralelismo con el rasgo 'alienante' --- 'instituyente'. En los planteamientos de los marcos de soporte se acentúa la importancia de sustentar la praxis educativa al tenor del Modelo Reflexivo, lo cual le daría al dispositivo de formación de la Facultad de Lenguas, el carácter de dinámico, de ser un dispositivo que 'construye', más que 'moldea'. No obstante, no se encuentra evidencia en el documento de la concreción de ese objetivo, por lo cual se considera que puede propiciarse un cierto retroceso hacia el extremo prescriptivo.

#### *Programa de Enseñanza de la unidad de aprendizaje de Práctica Docente del Inglés*

En este documento se observa un predominio de la consecución de productos de aprendizaje para evidenciar el logro de la meta profesional. A partir de ello, ésta puede percibirse como un punto de llegada y no como un continuum, como punto de arranque para detonar procesos ascendentes de autogestión y desarrollo profesional (Mejía, Núñez y Ferraris, 2007).

La relevancia de este último análisis radica primordialmente en la necesidad de articular los referentes epistémicos, teóricos y metodológicos de las prácticas discursivas del modelo de formación profesional y del correspondiente plan de estudios, en vinculación con el proceso de revisión de programas de enseñanza. La evaluación de los programas conlleva una revisión de esos referentes con la finalidad de explorar el cómo éstos se permean o no en la puesta en práctica del plan de estudios. Como parte del trabajo colegiado de los comités curriculares, se requiere la revisión a detalle de los referentes epistemológicos, teóricos y metodológicos que dan sustento al plan de estudios y articulan su instrumentación. Es importante valorar la pertinencia de los mismos y su vigencia en el contexto escolar.

## **CONCLUSIONES**

El presente trabajo doctoral se centró en el estudio exploratorio de la forma en que se construían las competencias profesionales en los alumnos de la Licenciatura en Lenguas,



a partir del análisis del dispositivo de formación del docente de inglés. Esta noción contribuyó a orientar el trabajo desde una perspectiva integral y holista. De manera inicial, se analizó el currículum, el modelo institucional de formación profesional y su vínculo con los programas de enseñanza. Una de las propuestas centrales del dispositivo, establecida en el primer documento fue el acoplamiento el Modelo reflexivo de formación docente y el Enfoque basado en competencias dentro del esquema institucional de flexibilidad curricular de la UAEMéx. Sin embargo, uno de los ejemplos que evidenció incongruencia entre los documentos oficiales citados fue que el modelo institucional se manifestaba a favor de un dispositivo centrado en la construcción y formación crítica y polivalente del estudiante, desde una perspectiva social, dinámica y personal de la profesión. En cambio, con el devenir de los años, y el cambio de los participantes, el diseño de los programas de enseñanza mostró un distanciamiento considerable tanto del modelo citado, como del propio plan de estudios, en términos del acoplamiento del Enfoque basado en competencias y el Modelo reflexivo. En consecuencia, la falta de seguimiento y evaluación curricular en los últimos años redundó en la generación de una educación de tipo más transmisiva, prescriptiva, técnica y funcional.

Entre los retos derivados del estudio de las prácticas discursivas se destaca la necesidad urgente de articular los referentes epistémicos con su concreción en el diseño de los planes de estudio y, principalmente en los programas de enseñanza.

Se requiere además de la promoción de la práctica reflexiva de manera transversal, a lo largo del trayecto de formación, con sustento en el trabajo colegiado y en el estudio independiente. La inclusión de procesos de desestabilización de los paradigmas de los alumnos para modificación de su sistema disposicional, así como la inserción de procesos de alfabetización académica y crítica, con la finalidad de fortalecer la configuración integral de las competencias profesionales del docente de inglés, en los términos que lo plantea el Modelo Institucional de Formación Profesional.

En el presente reporte se informó acerca de los hallazgos centrales del estudio de las prácticas discursivas del dispositivo de formación del docente de inglés en la UAEMéx. Sin embargo, la investigación exploró también las materializaciones y prácticas no discursivas del dispositivo, cuyos resultados no se incluyeron en el presente por cuestiones de espacio. En consecuencia, resulta indispensable consultar estos resultados en documentos posteriores para tener una visión global de la problemática bajo estudio, sus dimensiones, retos y alternativas de solución.

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# COLLECTIVE ACCOMPANIMENT FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE WITH TESOL TEACHERS IN MEXICO

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## ABSTRACT

Reflective Practice (RP) is the ability to reflect on actions by engaging in a process of continuous learning informed by professional knowledge and lived experiences (Schön, 1983). Research on RP has reported positive impacts on teaching (Farrell, 2013b, 2016b), and since the 1980's Reflective Practice has become a component of most teacher education programs. However, it is unclear if educational interventions focusing on RP have been effective within the context of second language teacher education (SLTE). In research on the impact of SLTE on pedagogic beliefs, Richter (2014) worked with students enrolled in a B.A. TESOL program in the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato. One of the main findings was that students in Richter's investigation did "not consider reflection an important aspect of teaching" (2014, p. 334). In contrast, graduates of the LEI program exhibited "more cognitive complexity" than did LEI students and attributed most of their beliefs to reflection on action (p. 335). This article addresses this apparent gap in RP by introducing a Collective Accompaniment Model (CAM) (Guillemette, 2014), a bottom-up approach that encourages reflective practices. As teachers analyze aspects of their professional lives, the collaborative process central to the CAM strengthens and deepens reflection by allowing them to co-construct awareness about their instructional practices.

**Keywords:** Reflective Practice, Collective Accompaniment Model, Professional Development, B.A. TESOL Teachers in Mexico, Action Research.

## INTRODUCTION

The following review aims to contextualize Houde's current research on the promotion of reflective practices (RP). The authors are primarily interested in whether "collective accompaniment" can help to promote the development of RP among English language teachers who have nearly completed or have recently completed a 4-year B.A. TESOL degree. In section I, the difficulties associated with promoting reflective practices are discussed. The authors report on Richter's (2014) research conducted with ESL teachers in Guanajuato, which suggests that second language teacher education (SLTE) students tend not to reflect on their teaching. Possible reasons for this are considered. In section II, the authors introduce the Collective Accompaniment Model (CAM) as a possible way to promote reflection on practice among novice L2 teachers. As a prelude to this, the authors first discuss definitions of RP, dialogic and collective ways to reflect on practices, and

research dealing with RP in teaching English as a foreign language. Finally, in section III, the authors present Houde's current research on the effectiveness of the CAM. The authors conclude with suggestions regarding the development of reflective practices in the Mexican context.

## **DIFFICULTIES IN PROMOTING REFLECTIVE PRACTICES**

### *LEI program at the University of Guanajuato*

Over the past ten years, the EFL teaching profession has grown rapidly in Mexico. Second language teacher education programs have been established countrywide, making it possible for prospective teachers to prepare to enter the profession. At the University of Guanajuato, a four-year B.A. TESOL program is offered (*Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés* or *LEI*). In order to help students make connections between their academic work and their work as teaching professionals, the LEI program offers a number of courses which encourage reflective practices.

Many of the students who enter the program are already practicing language teachers; all LEI students are required to find employment as English teachers during the course of their studies. A survey conducted by the *Coordinación de Interacción con Egresados de la Universidad de Guanajuato* (2016) indicated that 97.5% of LEI graduates worked as EFL instructors during the last year of their B.A. Since many of the students come to the program with teaching experience or gain experience during the degree, students often "self-train" as practitioners.

### *Research conducted with ESL teachers in Guanajuato*

Richter (2014), in a research study on the impact of SLTE on pedagogic beliefs, worked with six cohorts of students enrolled in the University of Guanajuato's teacher training program. These cohorts were each comprised of ten participants. One cohort included teachers with no pedagogical training. Four cohorts were made up of students in different years of the LEI program. One cohort contained graduates of the program who had considerable experience working as English instructors. Richter's research reported that the untrained teachers and LEI students did "not consider reflection an important aspect of teaching" (p. 334). Only three students out of 60 responded that their own reflection on practice influenced their teaching beliefs. Overall, for the students participating in the study, the LEI seemed to have little impact on shaping their views concerning the role of reflection in second language pedagogy.

When asked to generate ideas about what constitutes best practices, neither the students nor the graduates participating in Richter's investigation identified reflection as particularly important. However, when the concept of reflection was offered as one factor among several potential factors that influenced their pedagogical beliefs, the graduates pointed to the exceptional influence of their own reflection on practice. (In contrast,

students enrolled in the LEI program reported that the major source of their beliefs concerning pedagogy was their SLTE professors.) LEI graduates exhibited “more cognitive complexity” than did the students and attributed most of their beliefs to reflection on action (p. 335). Graduates identified eight separate areas that were positively impacted by their reflection on practice: the quality and variety of activities and materials; the importance of teacher personality; the importance of continual professional development; a teacher’s second language ability; the importance of autonomous learning; a teacher’s planning and organization; content knowledge; and pedagogical knowledge. In contrast to the graduates, students in the study only identified one single case where reflection informed their practice: motivating their EFL pupils.

#### *Possible reasons for lack of reflection*

The degree to which SLTE programs help their students reflect on practice is the subject of debate. Among many ELT scholars, there is a pronounced skepticism that teacher training programs have any more than a negligible impact on students’ professional practice (Burke, 2006; Kunt & Özdemir, 2010; Peacock, 2001; Urmston, 2003; Pennington & Urmston, 1998; Von Wright, 1997). Von Wright (1997), for instance, suggests that pedagogic training often produces separate lines of thought: student teachers learn the nomenclature of the teaching profession but do not actually grow in terms of their reflective abilities.

There are a number of possible explanations for the lack of reflection reported among the less experienced study participants in Richter’s study (above). Roberts (1998) writes that student teachers often adopt a negative attitude towards reflective assignments because they perceive them to be “imposed course requirements, with no real meaning for themselves” (p. 59). Such negative attitudes about reflection among student teachers may be quite common. Smith and Lev-Ari (2005), for instance, report that more than two-thirds of the 480 student teachers who took part in their study described the *reflective teaching journal* assignment as an ineffective approach to examining pedagogical experiences. It has been suggested that students may be resistant to sharing personal information or negative feelings (Gunn, 2010). Reporting on her study of journal reflection, Hobbs (2007) notes that instead of sharing their real views, many of the student teachers in her study resorted to “strategic deception.” That is, they wrote entries they felt would please or impress their teacher.

Another problem may simply be that many student teachers do not possess a repertoire of teaching experiences sufficiently large as to provide them with the raw material for reflection (Roberts, 1998). Schön (1987) proposed that experts regularly engage in two types of self-evaluation: “reflection-on-action” and “reflection-in-action.” The former refers to the process of critically examining past behaviors while the latter refers to how experts monitor themselves during practice, particularly when they encounter a new problem. These concepts are supplemented by the idea of “reflection-for-action” (Killion & Todnem, 1991), also referred to as “reflection-before-action” (van Manen, 1991), which



focuses on the planning stages of teaching. All these concepts presuppose that students already have accumulated a sufficiently ample stock of professional experiences upon which to reflect. In many (perhaps most) cases, this may not be true. As a consequence, “many new teachers choose not to reflect on their practice constructively and critically, preferring to fall back on pre-conceived understandings of how they and their pupils should conduct themselves in the classroom” (Moore & Ash, 2002, p. 112).

Students and novice teachers who hold positive views of reflection may nonetheless find the practice challenging. First, students may not understand what reflection is. This may be, in part, an unintended consequence of RP’s success. As Rodgers (2002) notes, the introduction of RP into pedagogic training has been broad but shallow and suggests that “reflection has suffered from a loss of meaning. In becoming everything to everybody, it has lost its ability to be seen” (p. 843). Second, student teachers may be unaware of the critical nature of reflection and believe that describing situations and writing minute-by-minute accounts of their classroom experiences is sufficient (Gunn, 2010).

McIntyre (1993, as cited in Bramald, Hardman, & Leat, 1995) notes that even after SLTE has concluded, novice teachers find it difficult to reflect critically. Although students in the LEI program are required to take courses on *classroom observation and analysis and reflection of their professional practice*, as new teachers they may find it difficult to operationalize learnings from these courses. Opportunities to reflect are compromised by the fact that novice teachers must confront a number of professional realities. Language teachers often receive inadequate salaries, work under contracts that provide no benefits, have only limited access to pedagogic resources, struggle with large classes, and are obliged to cover imposed objectives. Moreover, for many new teachers, there are limited opportunities to talk with other professionals and reflect on their practice. LEI students often find themselves teaching English in schools located in isolated areas. The physical distances between EFL teachers means that many do not have easy access to a community of practitioners to talk to and reflect with. Given these constraints and pressures, new teachers may lack the necessary time and energy to reflect on their teaching practices. Reflection, such as it is, often remains at the technical level, defined by an emphasis on the attainment of narrow goals (McIntyre, 1993, p. 44). According to McIntyre, few novice teachers will demonstrate “critical reflection” (defined by wider ethical, social, and political concerns), a type of reflection which, the author remarks, “is rarely practiced even among experienced teachers” (Bramald, Hardman, & Leat, 1995, p. 28).

## **A WAY FORWARD? A COLLECTIVE ACCOMPANIMENT MODEL FOR PROMOTING REFLECTIVE PRACTICES**

In the previous section, the authors presented evidence suggesting that student-teachers’ and novice teachers’ reflection on practice may be limited, particularly in comparison with more experienced teachers. A number of explanations for this were proposed. In the

following section, an innovative approach to promoting RP is presented. The collective accompaniment model (CAM), first suggested by Guillemette (2014), is a bottom-up approach to developing expertise in self-analysis within a collective setting.

### *Definitions of reflective practice and collective process*

Reflective Practice, as presented by Dewey (1910), is a systematic and rigorous process of inquiry that helps teachers to solve problems through the “deliberate thoughtful dwelling on a specific event, incident or situation” (as cited in Burhan-Horasanli & Ortaçtepe, 2016, p. 372). Schön (1983) stated that RP is the ability to reflect on actions by engaging in a process of continuous learning rooted in professional knowledge and lived experience. Lafortune et al. (2009c) emphasize the socio-constructivist aspect of self-examination. RP is “the act of stepping back to critically examine one’s operating modes and analyze, both individually and collectively, the acts and actions carried out in the course of a professional intervention” (p. 91).

Within the literature on RP, a dialogic process may be defined as conversation both with oneself and with other people. Mann and Walsh (2013), for instance, refer to the dialogic reflection process as a form of “discourse with self” (p. 297) but also stress the need to discuss issues with others. The dialogic process can, then, be understood as discourse with self and between two or more people which incorporates different forms of understanding, including both experiential and received knowledge (Wallace, 1991; Kolb, 1984). For many researchers, the dialogic process is central to RP (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Mann & Walsh, 2013, 2015; Walsh & Mann, 2015; Burhan-Horasanlı & Ortaçtepe, 2016; Kissau & King, 2015; Smith & Lewis, 2015; Mann & Tang, 2012; Farrell, 2012, 2013a, 2015, 2016a; Banegas et al., 2013; Mercado & Baecher, 2014).

Kumaravadivelu (2012) suggests that reflection is best carried out in the company of other teachers as “teaching is a reflective activity which at once shapes and is shaped by the doing of theorizing which in turn is bolstered by the collaborative process of dialogic inquiry” (p. 95). This view is supported by Rodgers (2002), who writes that while reflection can happen in solitude, “in community with others, the learner will broaden his or her understanding of an experience beyond where it might go in isolation” (p. 863). Mann and Walsh (2013) point out that sharing with colleagues can greatly enhance individual reflection since “learning from other colleagues is not the same as a co-constructed sense of reflecting together through interaction” (p. 297).

### *Research in reflective practice in teaching English as a foreign language*

Research on EFL RP has attracted interest since the 1980’s, and its positive impact on practice has been reported (Farrell, 2016a). RP can increase levels of awareness, motivate teachers to explore their practices, and challenge entrenched approaches. Farrell (2015) highlights a number of issues which continue to frustrate research in the field of RP.

These include a confusing terminology and the sheer number of models, levels, strategies, and applications of reflection. Farrell concludes by noting “how complex the concept of reflection is and how little we know about the issues associated with RP” (p. 122).

Farrell (2015) developed a framework for conducting a reflective inquiry process in EFL contexts which acknowledges the “inner life of teachers” (Farrell, 2016b, p. 225), including aspects related to their intellectual, cognitive, metacognitive, moral, emotional, and spiritual lives. Farrell’s framework is used to describe, examine, and challenge a teacher’s embedded assumptions as it provides a lens through which to view teachers’ professional and personal lives and analyze how each “stage” or part of the framework impacts teaching, both inside and beyond practice (2016b). It aims to develop contemplation and raise awareness of teachers’ actions, thoughts, and values. The framework is non-static, and the reflection process is inherently fluid and can start at any point or phase of the framework (Farrell, 2016b). It is constructed around five non-sequential stages or levels that promote reflection of educators’ basic teaching philosophy, the principles teachers rely on to direct practice, the theories that are embedded in their practice, teachers teaching practice in classroom contexts, and beyond the classroom in terms of the sociocultural, affective, moral, political, and emotional dimensions that impact teaching. Figure 1 presents a summary of Farrell’s framework:

1. Philosophy: Looks at how Teachers’ (Ts’) basic philosophy, personal beliefs and values, carried from childhood to pre-service, in-service and beyond teaching impact Ts’ practice.
2. Principles: Looks at the principles Ts use to direct their practice. Looks into Ts’ assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions related to their teaching practice.
3. Theory: Looks at which theories are embedded into Ts’ practice from their general approach to lesson planning, and critical incidents in the classroom.
4. Practice: Looks at what happens in the classroom by engaging in action research through class observations, video/audio recording, transcription of lessons.
5. Beyond practice: Looks beyond the classroom at how the sociocultural, moral, and emotional dimensions are impacting practice. Ts’ engage in critical reflection through dialogue with other teachers in teacher reflection groups.

Figure 1 Reflective Practice Framework for TESOL (Farrell, 2015)

### *The collective accompaniment model*

As outlined above, there are a number of difficulties associated with the development of critical attitudes among SLTE students and novice teachers. One possible strategy for fostering RP includes the CAM, first proposed by Guillemette (2014). The CAM is a bottom-up approach to developing expertise in self-analysis within a collective setting. The CAM serves to support novice and more experienced practitioners as they analyze their teaching and adopt positive changes by helping them to bring unarticulated concepts to a

level of conscious awareness (Farrell, 2013a). As the teachers who follow the CAM analyze aspects of their professional lives, the collaborative process inherent to the model provides a structure designed to deepen individual reflection. The goal of collective accompaniment is to implement long-lasting changes by co-constructing awareness about teaching practices.

Taking a socio-constructivist research perspective is essential to this reflective process:

From a socio-constructivist viewpoint, RP presupposes interacting ... and reassessing the practices of individuals and groups who agree to challenge their beliefs (conceptions and convictions) and experience cognitive dissonance in the aim of achieving greater consistency between what they think, do, believe and accomplish (practices) in their professional lives. (Lafortune, 2009c, p. 91)

As mentioned in Guillemette (2017), the CAM stems from four basic theoretical concepts: accompaniment, analysis of practices, reflexivity, and adjustment of practices. Each of these is considered, below.

- Accompaniment is “the idea of joining the other and offering support by nurturing each other’s potential” (Guillemette, 2014, p. 63, [author’s translation]); this is closely tied to the current trend in research, which sees RP as necessarily dialogic (see above).
- Analysis of practices is the capacity of individuals to examine both their personal and professional experiences as a basis for interpretation, discussion, assessment, and ultimately pedagogic change.
- Reflexivity is “a process of inquiry triggered by an *interpellation* (i.e., a turning point) that emerged from lived experiences, resulting in a reconceptualization of thoughts or a shift in perspective” (Chaubet, 2013, p. 54, [author’s translation]). Reflexivity encourages reflection but at the same time fosters the identification of deeper motivations that lie beneath our actions (Guillemette, 2014). It invites us to examine our values, experiences, conceptual frames, and cognitive and affective facets (Argyris & Schön, 1996).
- Adjustment of practices is the way in which professionals implement changes in their practice while considering the underlying motives which guide their actions in professional contexts (Guillemette & Simon, 2014).

#### *Phases during the accompaniment process*

In the CAM, small groups of teachers are supported by an “accompaniment provider” who facilitates, explains and guides the process. The role of the accompaniment provider is to listen actively, take part in the questioning phase, give feedback on what was presented, take notes, elaborate summaries, and explain theoretical concepts as well as to organize the meetings. The researcher-facilitator must ensure that the whole process is streamlined

and effective. This procedure takes place within a setting where listening, questioning, and giving feedback ensures clear comprehension of participant ideas (Guillemette, 2014 [author's translation]). For instance, during sharing sessions, the physical space is organized in a way to invite, conduct, and create a trusting and safe environment. The participating members sit around a table or arrange themselves in a way in which they can face each other, allowing for a sense of openness and intimacy.

During the group sessions, the process follows different phases: preparation, realization, and introspection (Guillemette, 2014):

- The preparation phase (at the start of each session): serves to bring participants together at the beginning of each session. Goals and expectations are explained. The researcher shares the procedures which will be followed during the group discussion, distributes the summary report to validate information from the previous session, and presents the agenda for the day.
- The realization phase (during the session): is divided in four axes (1) analyzing and problematizing the situation (2) planning actions; (3) actualizing and updating; (4) regulating. Participants analyze their practice by identifying the gap between their present and their desired situation. A participant discusses their teaching situation and the other participants listen actively. During a question period, participants are invited to ask open-ended questions which benefit the reflection process. Participants then move toward planning specific objectives and establishing an action research plan. The information gathered during the realization phase of the session serves to develop the teacher's professional intervention project (PIP). The PIP is the most important data collection instrument to keep track of the progression of the practitioner's reality, to guide the initial questioning, to sustain reflection, and to explicitly name the actions being adjusted in practice. The PIP is gradually developed into sections allowing for the practitioner and the accompaniment provider to keep an overview of progress, teacher's practice, and description of different elements and resources that play a role in the intervention of each participant.
- The introspection phase (at the end of each session): emphasizes the development of collective awareness about events that took place during the session. First, for integration, a collective reflection takes place where participants share their thoughts about the way the session has affected their thinking about teaching. Furthermore, an individual written report is completed by each participant for individual private reflection and introspection.

The CAM phases follow the sequence presented in figure 2:

<b>1. PREPARATION: Set Context</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group gathering</li> <li>• Revisit rules &amp; ethics</li> <li>• Summary report</li> </ul>

<b>2. REALIZATION: Professional Intervention Project (PIP)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Axis 1: Question &amp; Observe (10 min)</b> description of the situation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present the situation: one participant – active listening</li> <li>• Question to understand (technical questions)</li> <li>• Synthesize information &amp; Verify shared understanding</li> <li>• Precise intention of analysis</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Axis 2: Analyze &amp; Reflect</b> - no suggestions or solutions offered</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question for analyzing (open nonjudgmental questions)</li> <li>• Set hypotheses and understanding</li> <li>• Sustain reflection with theoretical concepts</li> <li>• Clarify comprehension (open &amp; nonjudgmental questions)</li> <li>• Synthesize plausible actions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Axis 3: Plan of Action</b> - until next session</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose the steps for action</li> <li>• Establish an action research plan</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Axis 4: Experiment, Implement &amp; Adjust</b> between sessions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching practice between sessions – new posture</li> </ul>
<b>3. INTROSPECTION - INTEGRATION: Awareness level II</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective open reflections to bring closure</li> <li>• Individual reflections (written individual reports)</li> </ul>

Figure 2 Accompaniment Process (Guillemette, 2014, [author's translation])

## CURRENT RESEARCH ON THE COLLECTIVE ACCOMPANIMENT MODEL

In the above section, the CAM was proposed as a way to enhance RP with EFL teachers. In this section, the authors consider on-going research by Houde aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the model in the Mexican context. We will look at the general research question, the research methodology, and Houde's approach to data collection. Some preliminary results are presented at the end of this section.

### *Previous research and general research question*

In general, limited studies have been conducted on EFL RP in the Latin American context, with most recent studies coming from Asia (Farrell, 2016a). Farrell (2016b) identified 116 studies on RP in TESOL teaching between 2009 and 2014. Only a handful of these are from Latin America (Mercado & Baecher, 2014; Banegas et al., 2013). In Mexico, a recent study on RP was conducted with pre-service teachers in an English Language Major SLTE program in Quintana Roo (Dzay Chulim, 2015). In her conclusion, the author highlights the positive effect that the process had on the participants, guiding them towards a more profound level of RP development.

The CAM model has guided adjustments of educational practice in Quebec (Canada), Belgium, Switzerland, and France (Pallascio & Lafortune, 2000; Lafortune et al., 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Paul, 2015; Guillemette, 2014; Guillemette & Simon, 2014; Guillemette, 2017). However, the CAM is a very recent innovation in the Mexican and Latin American context. Research, then, on its potential effectiveness is clearly important.

The general research question guiding Houde's current study is the following: How does reflection emerge through using a collective accompaniment model with EFL teachers who have completed a B.A. in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in Mexico?

*Methodology: epistemological posture for action research*

In an effort to better understand the nature of teachers' reflective practices and ascertain the types of support that are most effective in helping teachers to engage in reflection, Houde is currently investigating RP using the CAM proposed by Guillemette (2014). The current research involves EFL teachers participating in a reflecting process over a period of seven months by implementing changes to their teaching practices. Houde has been working with one cohort comprised of nine participants since the CAM usually takes place in small groups of eight to ten (Guillemette, 2017, p. 4). The group is led by the accompaniment provider (in this case the researcher) who explains and guides the process, facilitates exchanges, manages turn-taking, and organizes the sessions. This procedure is conducted in a setting in which listening, questioning and providing feedback ensure clear comprehension of participant ideas.

The investigation is being carried out using Action Research (AR), a term coined by Kurt Lewin (1946). AR has been defined as:

A participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4)

In 1950, with the idea of implementing changes to AR, Corey introduced the notion of concertation between researchers and educational practitioners (Anadón & Savoie-Zajc, 2007). Along with Hall (1983, as cited in Anadón & Savoie-Zajc, 2007), the research process in participative AR must include discussion, questioning, and analysis.

Because of the nature of AR, reproducibility of the results cannot be expected or assumed. The goal is not to generalize or transfer the results but to understand social phenomena focusing on change and action within the research context. Bill Torbert, who developed the "theory and practices of action inquiry" (cited in Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 706), describes full-blown AR as representing "a double-loop paradigmatic

transformation which interweaves action and inquiry in real time including participants as co-researchers” (Torbert, n.d., cited in Reason & Bradbury, p. 697). The notion of change is deeply present in AR. Reason and Bradbury (2008) suggest that “AR starts from an orientation of change *with* others” (p. 1) rather than a desire to impose change *on* others. Hence, the place of the participants as *co-researchers* is of utmost importance. Torbert (1998), and Chandler and Torbert’s (2003) (cited in Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 6) developed the concept of first, second and third-person strategies for inquiry within AR to show the self-personal, inter-personal and outer personal posture and involvement of the participants within the research project. They referred to first-person voice (the researcher’s own subjective life inquiring); second-person voices (intersubjective face-to-face interpersonal dialogues with others into issues of mutual concern); and third-person voices (objectivity-seeking by creating a wider community of inquiry including social movements).

#### *Methodological approach for data collection*

In order to carry out the current research, the data collection instruments are comprised of the following:

- Professional Intervention Projects (PIPs), which are shared orally during the sessions (recorded, transcribed, and developed according to each participant for subsequent analysis).
- Participants Individual Written Reports, which are filled out at the end of each session by each participant and which describe what was taken away, what the participants would like to work on in the future, and what they can reinvest in their practice.
- A 24-hour post-meeting written reflection sent by e-mail from the participants who presented their PIP during a given session.
- General Summary Reports from the previous session are distributed for validation to the group members at the beginning of each session.
- A Researcher’s Journal is completed in MS Word format.

These instruments allow for data triangulation of the entire accompaniment process. The data gathered through the research instruments is further treated for categorization. The process of categorization and thematization is created in terms of similarities (generic invariants) and differences (contrasts and specificities) found to make sense of the information gathered. This allows the researcher to let the data speak about the process of RP in order to answer the research question and objectives (Guillemette, 2014, p. 120; Paillé & Mucchielli, p. 25; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 253).

#### *Preliminary results*

As the data collection process is ongoing, Houde’s results are preliminary. Below, the authors share selected pre-analysed comments offered by the participating teachers from



*individual written reports* completed at the end of each CAM session. We limit our presentation of results to basic comments made by the teachers involved. We can say that the levels of reflection in the participants are promising and give us better understanding about the importance of developing models of collective reflective practice for the adjustment of teaching practices in the Mexican context. On an *individual and personal* level, participants have shared that the process of engaging in an open dialogue with other colleagues has produced an impact on the way they privately engage in reflection about their own teaching practice. The comments show the following types of reflection thus far:

- “earing o w 4 ad to repeat instructions and t o ug sts weren’t able to ollow them, made me think about the importance of ensure that sts get the correct directions to per orm a task.” L
- “ow can I build a question wit o ut udging or gi e an answer to e lp my partners re lect upon t e ir situation?” 2S
- “ow our belie s can c a nge through time and experience. How our context in luences our teac i ng practice and growt .” 3
- “bout learners wit learning di erences, in my experience I a e also aced a similar situation but at t a t moment I didn’t know w a t to do & it is somet i ng I regret.” 4
- “W y I did not realize last year my student under medication ad a problem? Before assuming children have a behavior problem find out more about their background & work in close relation wit o t e r sta o t e sc o ol.” 5
- “Continuously reflect on my own practice and consider aspects such as instructions, w i c are i tal to linking one task wit anot e r.” 6I
- “I learned t a t one o t e best ways to begin understanding t e problems we a e when teaching is by getting informed. Before making decisions, we need to read.” (P7E)
- “I a e to keep my essence. I eel I am a no i ce teac e r and I need to go to t e next stage or step. I am alling in lo e agai n wit my pro ession.” 8C
- “Re lecting on sts’ inclusion. daptng syllabus according to my context. Looking for different resources, material, information, in order to deal with this kind of situation. Preparing a professional and personal intervention plan. Disability is a reality in my context.” 9

From a *socio-constructivist* point of view, the CAM is making an impact on participating teachers, whether or not they are presenting their PIP during a given session. Being present and participating during collective sessions allows for reflection to emerge for all participants involved. The fact that a colleague shared some issues regarding his/her practice, in influencing the way other participating teachers reflect on what they can do to improve their own practice. As demonstrated by the following comments, a level of influence on all the members of the group originates by the collective process of sharing teaching situations:

- *“Sharing experiences with each other is a very nurturing practice. I wish this activity could be spread to more teachers. That way teaching practices would bring benefits to education.” L*
- *“Listening to other teacher experiences assisted me to prepare myself for new classroom situations. It also helped me to clarify the aspects that I want to improve in my teaching and classroom.” 2S*
- *“I realized how important our context is in our teaching practice, as it affects our teaching planners, and development. I was kind of aware of mine, but I need to open my eyes and see the “whole” picture.” 3*
- *“Sharing is very enriching because we can reflect on them & help me to grow as a person & as a teacher.” 4*
- *“Keep developing as a teacher by learning from our peers in a collaborative way.” (P5A)*
- *“Sharing our experiences amongst peers is enriching for everyone, apart from having an opportunity to open up and somehow take a load off one’s chest.” 6I*
- *“It was interesting for me how teachers who have read a lot about language acquisition and learning theories in general still have troubles when seeing its practical aspect bridging one and another”. P7E)*
- *“When 5 asked “what happens with students who understand instructions and the others don’t? It was a great question because we sometimes, as teachers, don’t realize that we have good experiences too, and in some way, we have the answer.” 8C*
- *“I had to avoid my personal intervention and to be focused on the participant intervention.” 9*

These results are presented as a sample of the kind of data produced by the study of the CAM’s potential. While the investigation is still in an exploratory stage, initial findings suggest that the CAM is useful for developing reflection among the participating teachers. The authors hope that the collective process will produce meaningful types of reflection which will help to foster introspection and bring meaning to the professional practices of ESL teachers.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the previous section, an overview was offered of Houde’s current research. The direct expected value of this research is to provide support to EFL teachers who have completed the B.A. TESOL program in teaching EFL at the language department of the University of Guanajuato and who are looking for ways to enhance their teaching practice. The discussion sessions, collective accompaniment approach and questioning techniques used during the research process serve to support RP, develop effective teaching and improve ESL teaching practices in Mexico. The long-term goal of the research is to create sustainable professional support groups for the members of the EFL teacher community in the state of Guanajuato.

In terms of research limitations, the operationalization of the CAM has not, thus far, been applied to other Mexican research contexts. It is important to keep in mind that in any enactment of the CAM, participants need to fully commit and engage in the process in order to bring about positive results in their professional lives. Participants must travel to the research site and organize their schedule to attend one monthly session. It is important for the group members to feel connected for reflection to be meaningful. The group facilitator also needs to receive training as an accompanier.

Despite the intrinsic challenges, the need to help new teachers develop reflective practices is crucial. As Marcos, Sanchez and Tillema (2011) note, reflection is “rooted in the understanding that teachers recognize teaching as a process that lies open to scrutiny and deliberation which permits change in existing practices” (p. 21). Akbari (2007) comments that as a process for the enhancement of students’ learning and effective teacher performance, “reflection is not an end, but a means to an end” (p. 204). Freeman (2002) argues that “teacher education must ... serve two functions. It must teach the skills of reflectivity, and it must provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience” (p. 11). It is the hope of the authors of the present review that the CAM may provide support to novice teachers. The collective accompaniment model provides an opportunity for novice and more experienced instructors to collectively join in reflection on their professional goals. The CAM can help suggest benchmarks for development, provide support for implementing change to teaching practices, and calm anxieties about initial and ongoing teaching experiences.

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## SECCIÓN IV: TRADUCCIÓN



# LA IMPORTANCIA DE LAS TIC EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA TRADUCCIÓN

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## RESUMEN

La Traducción Asistida por Computadora ofrece una serie de herramientas al traductor para agilizar sus actividades y aumentar su rendimiento. Esta investigación registra las percepciones de dos grupos de alumnos (séptimo y octavo semestres de la Licenciatura en Traducción de la UABC-Campus Tijuana) sobre el uso de memorias de traducción (MT), sus beneficios y utilidad en la profesión del traductor. Mediante la consulta de diversas fuentes se enlistan las características que requiere un texto para poder obtener la mayor ventaja al traducirlo en una MT, a la par que se describe la puesta en acción de la subcompetencia instrumental/profesional incluida en el modelo holístico de Competencia Traductora de PACTE (2000, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011) y Kelly (2002). También revisamos el perfil de egreso planteado en el plan de estudios de la licenciatura en relación con el uso de tecnología aplicada y por último se presentan los resultados obtenidos de un cuestionario aplicado a los alumnos para conocer su imaginario del tema. La opinión generalizada de los estudiantes es que efectivamente es una herramienta que beneficia al traductor, reconocen su importancia, y externan que es imprescindible en sus actividades profesionales. Pero, debido a que sólo se utiliza un semestre (y los profesores de las otras materias de traducción la desconocen) no la vuelven a usar de manera regular en sus proyectos y cae en desuso.

**Palabras clave:** Subcompetencia instrumental/profesional, traducción asistida por computadora, memoria de traducción, tecnología aplicada.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

Actualmente, la traducción cuenta con herramientas tecnológicas para optimizar el tiempo invertido en cada proyecto, que van desde la consulta de diccionarios y enciclopedias en línea, hasta la gestión terminológica por medio de programas informáticos y la creación de memorias de traducción que con cada trabajo se amplían para facilitar la conversión de textos de un idioma origen a un idioma meta.

El presente proyecto pretende poner de manifiesto la percepción del uso de las memorias de traducción en alumnos del séptimo y octavo semestre de la Licenciatura en Traducción con el fin de obtener un panorama del peso que tiene esta herramienta en la profesionalización de dicha muestra, considerando que en estos grados ya cuentan con la

suficiente información respecto al tema, una vez que en sexto semestre se les impartió la materia “Recursos Tecnológicos Aplicados a la Traducción e Interpretación”.

Existen una serie de investigaciones y planteamientos que analizan las ventajas y desventajas del binomio tecnología y traducción, y particularmente el tema de la Traducción Asistida por Computadora (Samson, 2013; Oliver, Moré y Climent, 2008; Olalla y Vert, 2015; Cortez, Basich y Figuera, 2013, Cortez, Figueroa, y Luna, 2015), así como la subcompetencia instrumental/profesional, y su importancia en la formación de traductores. Este trabajo busca aportar datos empíricos al área, así como generar inquietudes para próximos proyectos. Además, puede brindar información que apoye la reestructuración de la Licenciatura en Traducción y su adecuación a estos tiempos donde la tecnología es parte importante en todas las áreas científicas<sup>1</sup>.

Ante todo, buscamos describir un caso práctico del uso de memorias de traducción (MT en adelante) como herramienta de apoyo para el estudiante de la Licenciatura en Traducción de la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California-Campus Tijuana. En cuanto a referentes teóricos, este trabajo se basa en el modelo holístico de la Competencia Traductora (CT, en adelante) del grupo PACTE (2000, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011) y el de Kelly (2002), haciendo énfasis en la subcompetencia instrumental/profesional. Además, revisamos los requisitos de egreso establecidos en el plan de estudios en cuanto a las competencias instrumentales/profesionales que deberán manejar los estudiantes al egresar de la licenciatura. A lo largo del artículo se encontrará también la información respecto a las MT, cómo surgieron y se volvieron parte de las herramientas de la Traducción Asistida por Computadora.

En la sección Resultados, se presenta el producto obtenido de cada uno de los reactivos del instrumento de apoyo aplicado en la muestra y las conclusiones se desarrollan sobre la base de la información recopilada durante el proceso de investigación de manera documental y a través del instrumento aplicado, dando respuesta a las preguntas de investigación.

El objetivo de este trabajo es describir el uso de la tecnología aplicada a la traducción, específicamente de las memorias de traducción por parte de los estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Traducción de la Facultad de Idiomas de la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC)-Campus Tijuana.

Como objetivos específicos planteamos: a) Constatar si existe uso generalizado de las MT en los estudiantes de séptimo y octavo semestre de la Licenciatura en Traducción de la UABC-Campus Tijuana.

b) Identificar las características de la subcompetencia instrumental/profesional incluida en el plan de estudios.

c) Constatar si es suficiente el tiempo dedicado en la currícula a las TIC aplicadas a la traducción.

Con relación a la problemática a tratar: la memoria de traducción (MT, en adelante) almacena segmentos de texto junto con sus traducciones y posibilitan el acceso a esa información siempre que sea relevante. Estas son parte de las aplicaciones que ofrecen los sistemas de Traducción Asistida por Computadora (TAC), que son consultados por profesionales en la traducción.

La consecuencia directa de la disponibilidad de información que ofrecen estos programas incide directamente en la productividad del traductor y, en consecuencia, en el resultado económico que obtienen por su actividad. Si partimos de la relevancia de esta herramienta en el ámbito profesional del traductor se observa que durante la reestructuración de la Licenciatura en Traducción que ofrece la UABC (2006) y que aplica también para el campus Tijuana, se plantearon los recursos tecnológicos como herramientas que logran formar traductores de calidad, competentes, sensibles ante las necesidades de su contexto y con la capacidad e inteligencia para resolver problemas mediante el ejercicio constructivo del conocimiento, considerando el dominio de las competencias específicas (subcompetencia instrumental/profesional) para la consulta de diferentes fuentes de información, tales como diccionarios, bases de datos, memorias de traducción, enciclopedias, textos especializados y/o fuentes vivas, apoyándose en la tecnología más avanzada de manera eficiente.

Observando entonces que uno de los requisitos de egreso es el dominio de las herramientas tecnológicas, y tomando para este estudio como variable a la MT surge la inquietud sobre la información existente del uso de dicha herramienta por los alumnos de séptimo y octavo semestre de la Licenciatura en Traducción de la UABC-Campus Tijuana, tomando en cuenta que dentro del plan de estudios se encuentra la materia “Recursos Tecnológicos Aplicados a la Traducción e Interpretación” en el sexto semestre correspondiente a la etapa terminal<sup>2</sup>.

## **MARCO TEÓRICO**

Entre otros expertos, Strandvik (2010) reflexiona sobre el uso de las MT en servicios de traducción, y explica que, dentro de su área de trabajo, en la Comisión Europea, representa una sexta parte del total. Señala, además, que las razones por las cuales la Comisión Europea adoptó las MT fue por el carácter repetitivo de los textos, la importancia de la coherencia terminológica y el aumento de la productividad

El estudioso destaca que su equipo maneja Translator’s Workbench (TWB) de Trados y que utilizan un sistema por turnos donde primero analizan los textos recibidos para ver si son apropiados al entorno. Una vez observado esto, le dan el tratamiento adecuado (alineación del texto con respecto a la memoria central) y por último se envía

una nota a las distintas secretarías indicando el tratamiento que se recomienda en función del resultado de los análisis efectuados. (Strandvik, op. cit.).

Dentro de su comunicación resalta el hecho de que se debe desconfiar de la pretraducción arrojada por el TWB como de cualquier diccionario o base documental, pero que al trabajar con la MT en modo interactivo se logran procesar los segmentos conscientemente, así se pueden comparar las opciones y elegir si la que arroja el TWB es la adecuada.

“Utilizada en modo interactivo la memoria de traducción no es traducción automática, sino traducción sistemática, lo que es muy distinto y muy valioso para determinados tipos de textos, que (...) son más numerosos de lo que se pensaba inicialmente” (Strandvik, 2010, p. 3).

Al revisar lo anterior, podemos visualizar la importancia de la utilización de las MT en un organismo internacional que tiene relevancia por sus funciones y naturaleza. Por otro lado, en el ámbito académico, se llevó a cabo un estudio en la Universidad de Valencia por Ramírez y Ferrer (2010) donde describen las acciones y reflexiones obtenidas del proyecto DocenTic (programa que va dirigido a la producción de recursos digitales en abierto para la docencia así como el fomento de las TIC en el aula) aplicado a su Licenciatura de Traducción e Interpretación.

Así, el trabajo parte del análisis de dos factores: la infraestructura disponible y la enseñanza de destrezas instrumentales, bajo la coordinación docente y su constante capacitación. En su caso, los alumnos entran en contacto con las TIC en la asignatura Informática Aplicada a la Traducción en el cuarto año de la licenciatura.

“La asignatura pretende desarrollar (...) competencias necesarias para manejar las siguientes herramientas: editores de texto a nivel avanzado, navegador de Internet, clientes de correo electrónico, clientes FTP, herramientas de análisis de corpus, gestores de terminología y de memorias de traducción” (Ramírez y Ferrer, 2010, p. 30)

En su artículo, los autores hablan de algunas ventajas del uso de las memorias de traducción que, en su opinión “se hacen más evidentes al aplicarse en textos especializados, mayormente técnicos y en especial cuando se enfrenta a (...) documentos con un alto grado de repetición (...) desde una perspectiva crítica hacia las herramientas de las TIC” (op. cit., p. 29). Este proyecto es un ejemplo de la importancia de las tecnologías y herramientas para la traducción dentro de la currícula de una universidad.

Por otro lado, Cortez, et al. (2015) hablan de un estudio comparativo desarrollado en la Facultad de Idiomas-Campus Mexicali, en la UABC, el cual, tras hacer un recuento de la competencia traductora, contrasta los resultados obtenidos en una encuesta aplicada a alumnos de licenciatura en 2010 y 2013 respecto al uso de las tecnologías. Los datos muestran que existe el uso de procesadores de texto, herramientas de traducción y acceso a Internet mediante sus celulares y PC en el Laboratorio de Traducción. En sus

conclusiones advierten que si los alumnos son cada día más hábiles en el uso de la tecnología, los profesores deben procurar, por lo menos, estar a la par en cuanto al desarrollo de esas habilidades, y afirman que “(...) los planes de estudio deben actualizarse para igualar el desarrollo técnico, científico y tecnológico que se presenta en el mundo laboral del traductor” (p. 100).

### *Subcompetencia instrumental/profesional*

Antes de analizar la subcompetencia instrumental/profesional, es necesario saber qué es la Competencia Traductora (CT).

Uno de los principales representantes del estudio de la CT es el grupo PACTE, cuyas siglas significan Proceso de Adquisición de la Competencia Traductora y Evaluación, quienes desde su inicio en 1997 investigan la formación, manifestaciones y evaluación del tema. Según su modelo holístico, se entiende por competencia traductora el sistema subyacente de conocimientos, habilidades y aptitudes necesarios para traducir que, como toda pericia, posee componentes declarativos y operativos, aunque es un conocimiento básicamente operativo. Además, se considera que está integrada por subcompetencias que interactúan y entre las que se encuentran relaciones, jerarquías y variaciones (PACTE, 2005, p. 574).

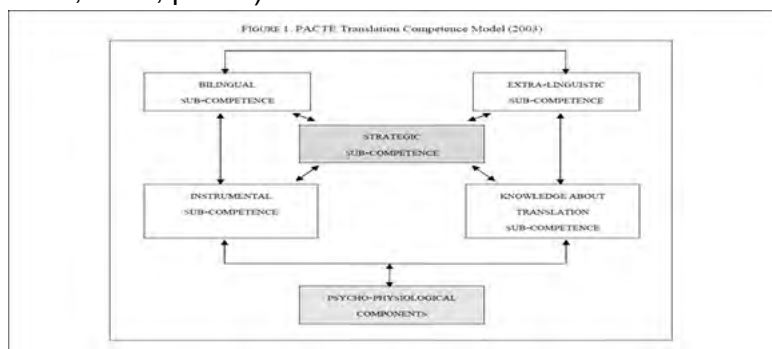


Figura 1. Componentes de la CT según grupo PACTE. Fuente: PACTE (2003).

En este modelo holístico, que es una evolución de su modelo original (2001, p.40), la competencia traductora engloba cinco subcompetencias que a su vez activan una serie de mecanismos psicofisiológicos (PACTE, 2003); dichas subcompetencias, se describen como:

\* *Subcompetencia bilingüe: Competencia gramatical y textual, ilocutiva, sociolingüística.*

\* *Subcompetencia extralingüística: Conocimientos acerca del mundo en general.*

\* *Subcompetencia de traducción (transferencia): Capacidad de llevar a cabo el proceso de transferencia desde el texto original hasta el texto final, así como conocimiento de la práctica de traducción profesional.*

*\* Subcompetencia instrumental: Conocimientos y habilidades en relación con el ejercicio de la traducción de manera profesional: conocimiento del mercado laboral y correcto comportamiento profesional, conocimiento y uso de las fuentes de documentación de todo tipo y de las nuevas tecnologías necesarias para la traducción.*

*\* Subcompetencia estratégica: Engloba todos aquellos procesos llevados a cabo ya sea conscientes o inconscientes, de manera verbal o no verbal que permiten resolver los problemas que se presentan en el desarrollo del proceso traductor.*

(PACTE, 2003, pp. 58-60)

Dentro de la subcompetencia instrumental/profesional se desarrollan las habilidades del manejo de herramientas que facilitan el proceso de la traducción, es decir, la capacidad del traductor para documentarse y hacer uso de programas de TAC en el manejo de terminología y memorias de traducción entre otras.

Por otro lado, Kelly (2002) retomó los modelos que describen el concepto de éxito en la traducción profesional de Jääskeläinen (1990), Chesterman (1997) y Hansen (1997), y los utilizó para el desarrollo de su enfoque didáctico, análisis y propuesta de modelo de la CT.

La autora define la CT como una macrocompetencia que en conjunto se constituye por “capacidades, destrezas, conocimientos e incluso actitudes que reúnen los traductores profesionales y que intervienen en la traducción como actividad experta” (op. cit., p. 14). El modelo, lo integra de la siguiente forma (p. 14):

\* Subcompetencia comunicativa y textual en al menos dos lenguas y culturas. Haciendo uso de las fases de la comunicación y las convenciones textuales de las culturas a trabajar.

\* Subcompetencia cultural. No sólo conocimientos enciclopédicos, sino también las representaciones textuales de valores, creencias y comportamientos.

\* Subcompetencia temática. Conocimiento sobre los campos temáticos que el traductor trabaja.

\* Subcompetencia instrumental profesional. Abarca el uso de fuentes documentales de todo tipo, así como aplicaciones informáticas más útiles para el ejercicio de la profesión.

\* Subcompetencia psicofisiológica. La conciencia de ser traductor.

\* Subcompetencia interpersonal. La capacidad de trabajar en equipo tanto colegas, otros profesionales y cada persona que se encuentre en el proceso de traducción.

\* Subcompetencia estratégica. Todos aquellos procesos aplicados en la organización y realización del trabajo, así como el identificar y resolver problemas, y a la autoevaluación y revisión.

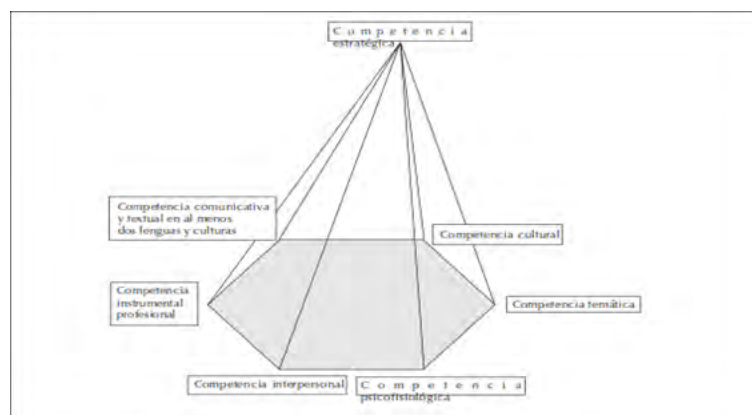


Figura 2. Componentes de la CT según Kelly. Fuente Kelly (2002, p.9)

Además de la conceptualización, Kelly expone los objetivos que, se deberán cumplir en la etapa de formación de los alumnos para obtener o dominar cada subcompetencia. Para efectos de la presente investigación, se observan los objetivos correspondientes a la subcompetencia instrumental profesional (Kelly, 2002):

- \* Preparar para saber identificar, valorar la fiabilidad y utilizar las diferentes fuentes de documentación para la traducción y la interpretación.
- \* Preparar para saber organizar y realizar la búsqueda de terminología, así como valorar la fiabilidad y gestionar recursos terminológicos.
- \* Dar a conocer y preparar para saber manejar las principales aplicaciones informáticas de utilidad para la traducción y la interpretación.
- \* Dar a conocer y preparar para saber manejar otras herramientas profesionales tales como el fax, el dictáfono.
- \* Dar a conocer las principales pautas para evaluar la calidad de traducciones en diferentes situaciones.
- \* Dar a conocer el mercado local, regional, nacional e internacional de la traducción, la interpretación, y actividades afines.
- \* Hacer comprender el funcionamiento del mercado profesional de la traducción y de la interpretación en sus aspectos laborales, fiscales y empresariales.
- \* Dar a conocer, y preparar para valorar y comprender la deontología de la traducción y la interpretación profesionales, así como el papel de la traducción en la sociedad.
- \* Dar a conocer las principales asociaciones profesionales nacionales e internacionales.

(Kelly, 2002, pp. 17-18)

A nivel local Cortez, Figueroa y Luna (2013, p. 103) adaptaron a nuestra realidad el modelo de análisis de PACTE (2003), y descubrieron que las subcompetencias estratégica, textual y extralingüística ayudaron a subsanar las carencias en la

instrumental/profesional, es decir la falta de experiencia y el problema de nunca haber traducido frente a ordenador por parte de los alumnos de séptimo semestre en 2005. Gracias al bagaje experiencial de haber traducido más tiempo, solventaron el problema y a pesar de sus carencias tecnológicas y su falta de entrenamiento, llevaron a buen término la misma tarea traductora específica que los alumnos de Cuarto semestre realizaron anteriormente usando la tecnología.

### *Memorias de Traducción*

Las memorias de traducción son sólo una parte de las herramientas que la Traducción Asistida por Computadora (TAC) ofrece como instrumento para la traducción en volumen de textos, "...la TAC comienza a dar sus primeros pasos en la década de los 90 con la aparición de numerosos programas y el desarrollo de proyectos ni siquiera soñados, tiempo atrás" (Hernández, 2002, p. 106).

Así se pueden mencionar las herramientas de la TAC, considerando que son éstas las que apoyan directamente al trabajo del traductor: gestores terminológicos, herramientas de alineación de textos, herramientas de localización de software, herramientas de localización de páginas web, herramientas de subtitulación, herramientas de ayuda lexicográfica o explotación de corpus y las memorias de traducción (Bermúdez, 2014).

"El concepto de MT existe desde hace décadas. La idea se originó en los años 70 (...) y las primeras implementaciones se produjeron en los años 80, pero (...) sólo representaron una entidad comercial significativa desde finales de 1990" (op. cit., p.133).

Una MT (Hernández, 2002) es un tipo de base de datos lingüística que se utiliza para almacenar textos originales y sus traducciones. Los textos se dividen en segmentos cortos que a menudo se corresponden con oraciones, y la unidad de traducción:

(...) se compone de un segmento de texto origen y su equivalente traducido; de manera más simple, una MT puede verse como una lista de segmentos de texto origen explícitamente alineados con sus homólogos de texto destino. La estructura resultante se denomina corpus paralelo o bitexto. Un corpus paralelo es una colección de bitextos, siendo un bitexto el texto constituido por un texto y su traducción.

(Hernández, 2002, p. 117)

Estas unidades de traducción, agrega la autora (op. cit.), se almacenan en la base de datos de las MT. Algunos programas de MT sofisticados utilizan la tecnología llamada red neuronal para almacenar información. Una red neuronal permite que la información se recupere más rápidamente que mediante una técnica de búsqueda secuencial. La idea esencial de un sistema de MT es que permite a un traductor reutilizar o "reciclar" segmentos previamente traducidos, lo que a veces se llama



"aprovechamiento". Aunque el lenguaje es dinámico, es muy repetitivo, y se suelen utilizar expresiones similares para comunicar ideas similares en dominios determinados.

Ahora bien, una MT puede ser creada a partir de la traducción de documentos mediante TAC, pero " (...) si el traductor ya cuenta con un volumen considerable de documentos traducidos, junto con el archivo original, es capaz de tratarlo y obtener de ahí segmentos con los cuales alimentar una MT, para esto es necesaria la alineación de textos" (Oliver, Moré y Climent, 2008, p. 64).

Además de lo antes mencionado, una MT puede contener información adicional tal como Oliver et al. (2008) lo describen:

- \* Identificador del usuario que ha creado la MT.
- \* Identificador del usuario que ha creado o modificado determinada entrada en la memoria.
- \* Fecha de la creación y modificación de las entradas de la memoria.
- \* Identificadores de las lenguas en las que están escritos los segmentos e incluirá también información si los segmentos son originales o traducciones.
- \* Información sobre el área temática.
- \* Información sobre el cliente.
- \* Información sobre el proyecto de traducción del cual proviene un segmento.
- \* Información sobre el estado de las unidades de traducción (aprobadas, pendientes de revisión).

Oliver et al. (2008, p. 68)

Esto será de utilidad tanto para el mantenimiento de la MT como para que el mismo software decida cuál es el segmento más adecuado en caso de que existieran varias opciones para el mismo segmento, ya sea considerando el área temática del segmento o el cliente para el cual se está trabajando.

Por otro lado, se encuentran diversas ventajas que otorga la MT a los traductores, entre ellas:

Aumento de la productividad. Dependiendo de si el texto tiene contenido repetitivo y de la calidad de la MT.

Aumento de la coherencia. Ya que ciertos segmentos tendrán bien establecidos su traducción, además si se trabaja en equipo y se comparte la MT, lograrán coincidir partes de las traducciones.

Observar traducciones de segmentos específicos y si estos tienen algunas variaciones.

Se puede trabajar sobre los borradores del documento a traducir, y así conforme se le hagan ajustes se ajusta también la traducción, recuperando mediante la MT los segmentos más importantes y que no hayan sufrido muchos cambios.

(Oliver et al., 2008, pp. 61-62)

Por su parte, López (2003, p.180), afirma que "la MT también es una herramienta útil cuando sospechamos que una gran parte del texto original se ha traducido alguna vez". Por lo que los textos técnico-científicos con lenguaje denotativo, son ideales para su trabajo dentro de los sistemas de MT.

En cuanto a nuestra percepción como docentes, sobre la enseñanza de TIC a los estudiantes de traducción, vemos su juventud como una ventaja, pues son muy abiertos y favorables al uso de la tecnología y más entusiastas a aprender el uso de los programas, que las personas mayores de 40 años, por ejemplo.

## **METODOLOGÍA**

Las preguntas de investigación que planteamos son las siguientes:

- 1.- ¿Con qué frecuencia es utilizada la herramienta memoria de traducción por los alumnos de séptimo y octavo semestre de la Lic. en Traducción de la UABC-Campus Tijuana?
- 2.- ¿Cuál es el beneficio que se espera obtengan los estudiantes al emplear las MT en sus actividades de traducción?
- 3.- ¿En qué tipo de documentos los estudiantes emplean las MT?
- 4.- ¿Cuántas asignaturas dentro del plan de estudios de la licenciatura apoyan el desarrollo de la subcompetencia instrumental?

Es necesaria una ampliación de materias que aborden la enseñanza de tecnologías aplicadas a la traducción en la Etapa Terminal (Sexto a Octavo semestres) de la Licenciatura en Traducción de la Facultad de Idiomas-Tijuana, pues debido a la escasa práctica por parte de los estudiantes (sólo lo hacen durante un semestre), particularmente de memorias de traducción, hace que ese conocimiento especializado caiga en desuso. Por lo tanto, los alumnos no egresan con su competencia instrumental-profesional en un punto óptimo para integrarse al mercado de trabajo de una forma adecuada.

El presente proyecto se basa en un proceso de investigación cualitativa puesto que se valorará una realidad a partir de una inquietud. Para Hernández Sampieri, Fernández-Collado y Baptista (2006, p. 5) "el propósito del enfoque cualitativo es 'reconstruir' la realidad, tal y como la observan los actores de un sistema social previamente definido".

Para esto, Hernández Sampieri et al. (2006) señalan que los estudios cualitativos involucran la recolección de datos utilizando técnicas que no pretenden medir ni asociar las mediciones con números ya que busca comprender su fenómeno de estudio en su

ambiente usual (cómo se vive, se comporta y actúa la gente; qué piensa; cuáles son sus actitudes, etcétera).

La muestra seleccionada para esta investigación cumple con las características para considerarse como muestra homogénea: "(...) aquellos sujetos que poseen un mismo perfil o características o bien, comparten rasgos similares cuyo propósito es centrarse en el tema a investigar o resaltar situaciones o procesos de un grupo social" (p. 567).

De la totalidad de estudiantes de la Lic. en Traducción, se eligieron los grupos de séptimo (con 25 estudiantes) y octavo semestre (con 23 estudiantes), debido a que ambos grupos habían cursado ya la materia "Recursos Tecnológicos Aplicados a la Traducción e Interpretación" y se esperaba que tuvieran conocimiento académico sobre las MT.

La recolección de datos necesaria para esta investigación se efectuó a través de un cuestionario mixto que contenía preguntas abiertas y cerradas (Corral, 2010), una vez consideradas que las condiciones espaciales y temporales eran apropiadas para dicha actividad. Aunque algunos autores señalan que el cuestionario es más bien un formato de recolección de datos del enfoque cuantitativo, Álvarez-Gayou (2003), estima que se es capaz de obtener información útil para el enfoque cualitativo a través de dicho instrumento: en primer lugar, el cuestionario tiene que elaborarse con mucha claridad del problema y las preguntas del proyecto en cuestión. En segundo término, se deberán diseñar los reactivos para que lleven a quien los responda a un proceso de reflexión propia y personal, que refleje su postura ante el asunto investigado.

"El cuestionario consiste en aplicar a un universo definido de individuos una serie de preguntas sobre un determinado problema de investigación del que deseamos obtener información" (Corral, 2010, p. 156).

Al considerar la finalidad de este proyecto, se puede apreciar el enfoque metodológico de investigación-acción, que en palabras de Rojas:

...Su substratum básico reside en que tanto los investigadores como la población participan a un mismo nivel como agentes de cambio, confrontando de manera permanente el modelo teórico y metodológico con la práctica, a fin de ajustarlo a la realidad que se pretende transformar y pueda servir para orientar los programas de acción que se desarrollen...

(Rojas, 2006, p. 22)

Según Stringer (como se cita en Hernández Sampieri, et al., 2006, p. 708) "las tres fases de los diseños de investigación-acción son: observar (recolección de datos y bosquejo del problema), pensar (analizar e interpretar) y actuar (resolver problemas y

aplicar mejoras), las cuales se dan de manera cíclica, hasta que se resuelve el problema, se logra el cambio o la mejora se introduce satisfactoriamente”.

De la misma manera, se puede detallar el proceso a través de ciclos en espiral donde primero se detecta el problema de investigación, se clarifica y se diagnostica; en segundo lugar, se formula un plan para resolver el problema o introducir un cambio; en tercer lugar, se implementa el programa y se evalúan los resultados; por último, se lleva a cabo la retroalimentación la cual introduce un nuevo diagnóstico y una nueva espiral de reflexión y acción (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2006).

La investigación-acción se presenta como una opción metodológica de mucha riqueza ya que permite la expansión del conocimiento a la vez que va dando respuestas concretas a problemáticas que se van planteando los participantes de la investigación.

### *Perfil de egreso*

A continuación, registramos cómo la subcompetencia instrumental/profesional sí es parte del Plan de Estudios de Licenciado en Traducción de la UABC.

El plan de estudios de la Licenciatura (UABC, 2006, p. 154) hace mención a las competencias que el alumno deberá reforzar durante la etapa terminal de sus estudios donde culmina su proceso formativo escolar y son:

- \* Transferencia
- \* Estratégica
- \* Comunicación Lingüística
- \* Comunicación Extralingüística
- \* Instrumental/ Profesional

Tras la revisión del extenso dentro del apartado de perfil de egreso, por la naturaleza de la actividad a la que se enfrentará el futuro profesionalista, las competencias adquiridas se describen de la siguiente forma:

(...) recibirá una formación que tiene que ver no sólo con el dominio de conocimientos lingüísticos, culturales y sociales de un segundo idioma, sino con el desarrollo de destrezas para la aplicación de recursos tecnológicos, documentales, heurísticos y electrónicos propios de la disciplina de la traducción, a fin de lograr ser competentes, entre otras actividades, de utilizar conocimientos traductológicos y lingüísticos, con el fin de verificar la relación existente entre el mensaje original y su reexpresión en la lengua meta en un ámbito profesional específico, valiéndose de las técnicas de investigación documental y de campo, así como de nuevas tecnologías aplicadas a la traducción (...) respetando el mensaje original y su reexpresión en la lengua meta en un ámbito profesional específico (...) así como de nuevas tecnologías aplicadas a la traducción; buscando a toda costa ser fiel a la idea original y a la intención del autor del texto; actuando con responsabilidad y ética”

(UABC, 2006, p. 189).

Como se puede apreciar, la enseñanza de tecnologías aplicadas a la traducción está contemplada en el plan de estudios, sin embargo, como se verá más adelante, los estudiantes consideran insuficiente el número de clases dedicadas a esta especialización.

## RESULTADOS Y DISCUSIÓN

A continuación, se muestran los resultados del cuestionario, dividido en reactivos, con su gráfica correspondiente:

### 1.- ¿Con qué frecuencia utilizas software como apoyo en la traducción?

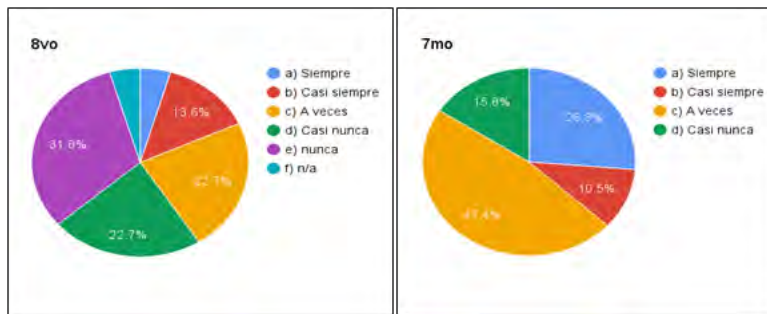


Figura 4. Resultados de Octavo semestre

Figura 3. Resultados de Séptimo semestre

En este reactivo se nota una diferencia de opinión entre ambos grupos, donde las respuestas de séptimo oscilan en mayor frecuencia del uso de software de traducción con porcentajes de 26.3% siempre, 10.5% casi siempre y 47.4% a veces (Figura 3); mientras que el octavo semestre muestra los mayores porcentajes en el área de menor frecuencia de uso: 22.7% a veces, 22.7% casi nunca y 31.8% nunca (Figura 4).

### 2.- ¿Qué software utilizas más?

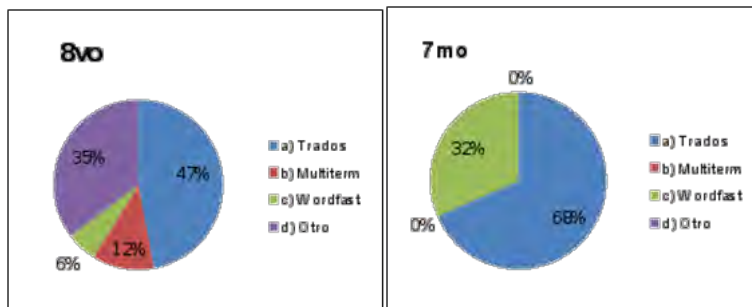


Figura 6. Resultados de 8vo. semestre

Figura 5. Resultados de 7mo. semestre

Se observa que ambos grupos coinciden en el uso de SDL Trados como software de traducción con 68% (Figura 5) y 47% (Figura 6) de uso respectivamente. Séptimo semestre hizo mención a otro software con un 32%, mientras que octavo semestre utiliza como segunda opción Wordfast con un 35%.

Cabe destacar que SDL Trados Studio es el programa informático comercial de apoyo a la traducción más utilizado por las empresas, seguido en preferencias por WordFast, que es más utilizado por los traductores autónomos o freelance. Zanettin (2016, p. 41) define a SDL Trados como "una de las estaciones de trabajo del traductor más populares" (la traducción es nuestra).

3.- ¿Qué nivel de satisfacción te dejaron las materias en las que se vieron los temas de Traducción Asistida por Computadora y sus herramientas?

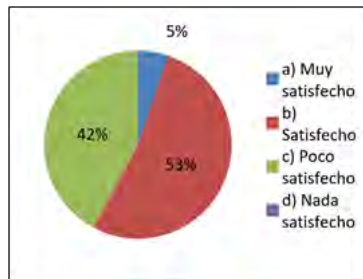


Figura 8. Resultados de Octavo semestre.

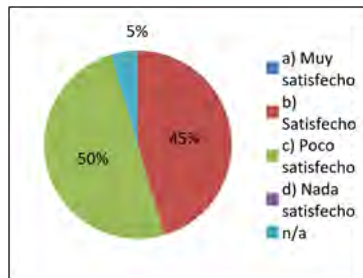


Figura 7. Resultados de Séptimo semestre.

En este inciso las respuestas del séptimo semestre (Figura 7) se dividieron: un 5% en muy satisfecho, 53% satisfecho y el 42% restante mencionó estar poco satisfecho; en lo que respecta al otro grupo encuestado (Figura 8) las respuestas no fueron muy diferentes: 45% satisfecho, 50% poco satisfecho mientras que un 5% se abstuvo de responder, dejando con esto una visión media de satisfacción en lo que respecta a la muestra total.

4.- ¿Manejas una memoria de traducción personal?

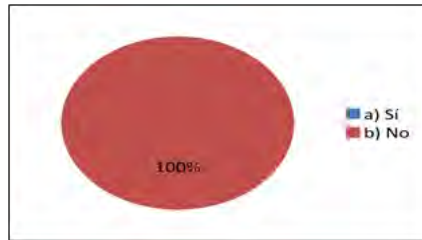


Figura 9. Resultados de Séptimo semestre



Figura 10. Resultados de Octavo semestre.

Esta respuesta demuestra una negativa en el uso de MT por parte de la muestra, donde sólo un pequeño porcentaje de 9% en el octavo semestre hace mención al uso de una MT personal de SDL Trados (Figuras 9 y 10). Aquí es patente la falta de continuidad en el uso de las herramientas, por lo que es probable que olviden su manejo.

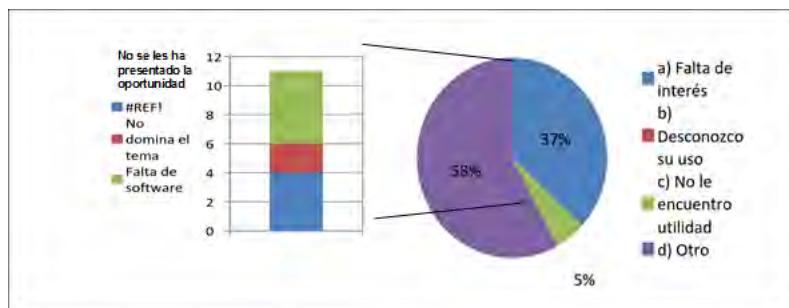


Figura 11. Resultados de séptimo semestre.

### 5.- De responder no, ¿Por qué?

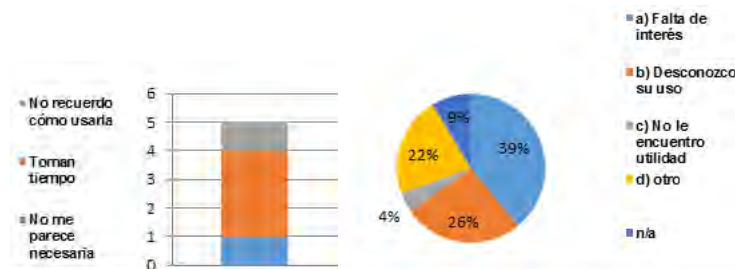


Figura 12. Resultados de octavo semestre.

Existe una variedad de respuestas respecto a esta pregunta, por un lado séptimo semestre hace mención a la falta de interés con un 37% y otras respuestas como el que no se les ha presentado la oportunidad de llevarlo a la práctica, "no dominan el tema" y la "falta de software o equipo de cómputo" apto para el uso adecuado de la herramienta que

en total suman 58% de los encuestados (Figura 11); respecto al octavo semestre, sus respuestas con mayor frecuencia fueron la "falta de interés" con un 39% de respuesta y el "desconocimiento del uso de las MT" con 26% del total, el 22% de las respuestas se dividen en opciones como "no recuerdan cómo usarla", "toma tiempo el utilizarla" y que "no les parece necesaria" (Figura 12).

6.- En caso de que aún no tengas claro cómo utilizar la memoria de traducción, ¿con qué tipo de material de apoyo te gustaría contar para recibir capacitación de dicha herramienta?

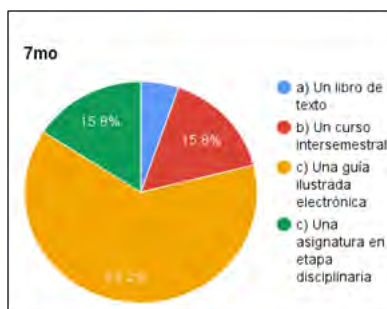


Figura 13. Resultados de séptimo semestre.



Figura 14. Resultados de octavo semestre.

De las opciones de respuesta, en ambos grupos la que tuvo mayor frecuencia fue una guía ilustrada electrónica con 63.2% y 47.6% (Figura 13 y 14) respectivamente, seguida en menor medida por un curso intersemestral con 15.8% y 19% de los resultados correspondientes y una asignatura en etapa disciplinaria con el 15.8% y 23.8% de respuesta en los grupos encuestados. Esto habla de mayores requerimientos en la formación.

7.- ¿Con qué frecuencia utilizas tus memorias de traducción dentro de tus actividades de traducción?



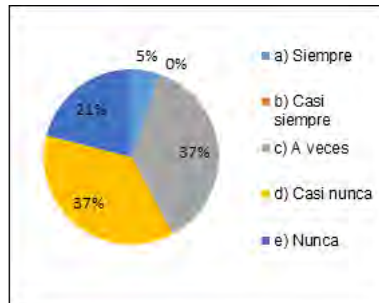


Figura 15. Resultados de séptimo semestre

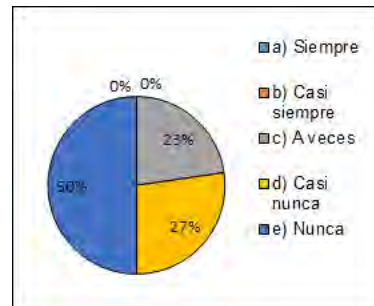


Figura 16. Resultados de octavo semestre

Este inciso arrojó respuestas por parte de los estudiantes que hacen referencia a una baja frecuencia en el uso de las MT en sus actividades de traducción, por un lado, séptimo semestre respondió sólo un 5% que siempre las utiliza, un 37% que a veces, otro 37% respondió que casi nunca y el 21% restante respondió que nunca las utiliza (Figura 15); mientras que en el grupo de octavo semestre las respuestas se dividieron el 23% en a veces, 27% en casi nunca y el 50% restante respondió que nunca (Figura 16). La tendencia es obvia.

8.- ¿En cuáles de los siguientes tipos de textos utilizas las memorias de traducción?

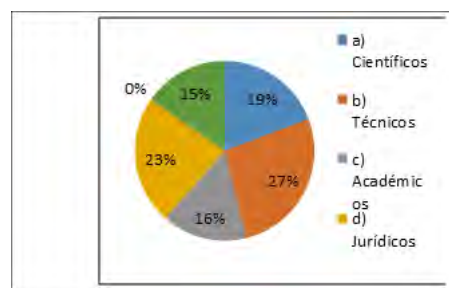


Figura 17. Resultados de Séptimo semestre.

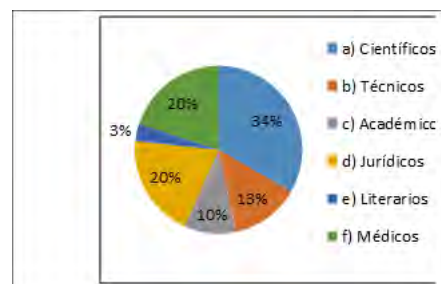


Figura 18. Resultados de Octavo semestre

Las respuestas con mayor porcentaje de cada grupo corresponden a textos técnicos en séptimo semestre con 27% y 34%, donde le siguen de cerca los textos científicos en octavo semestre (Figuras 17 y 18). Cabe destacar que séptimo semestre no seleccionó la opción de textos literarios y octavo semestre lo considera sólo en un 3%.

9.- ¿Consideras a las memorias de traducción como una herramienta útil en tu formación como traductor?

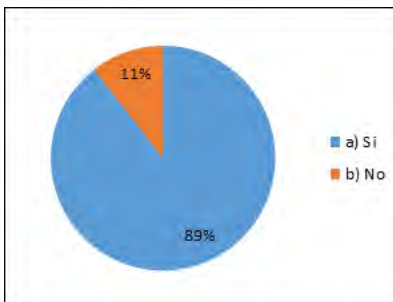


Figura 19. Resultados de Séptimo semestre.

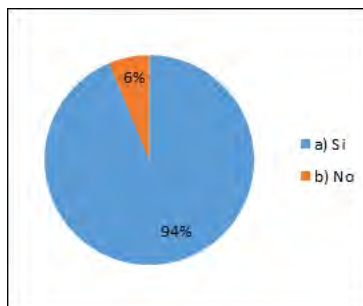


Figura 20. Resultados de Octavo semestre.

El grupo de séptimo semestre respondió un 89% que sí, dando razones variadas como que reducen el tiempo de la traducción y mejoran la calidad del trabajo, el 11% restante que dio respuesta negativa mencionó que era difícil si no se contaba con el equipo necesario (Figura 19). Las respuestas de octavo semestre fueron similares en cuanto a que un 94% considera útil la memoria de traducción porque hace más rápida la traducción mientras que un 6% considera lo contrario, que no le ve ninguna ventaja real en su uso (Figura 20).

Irónicamente, aunque su percepción sobre la importancia de las MT en el trabajo del traductor es casi 100% favorable, la mitad de los alumnos encuestados no está satisfecha con los conocimientos recibidos por el instructor de la materia. Lo anterior, pudo llevar a la falta de interés (hasta 39%) y al resultado (según sus respuestas 100 y 91%) de no sentirse capacitados en el manejo de esta tecnología, y en consecuencia su uso esporádico o nulo (37% ambos rubros) llevará a este conocimiento especializado a caer en desuso. Sin embargo, hay unos porcentajes importantes (50 y 21%) en los grupos que sí hicieron suyo este conocimiento y que integraron a su estación de trabajo. Quienes no lo hicieron, mencionan que les gustaría formarse mediante manuales electrónicos, más

materias que aborden el tema y libros especializados. Algo a destacar en ambos grupos es que el material más utilizado en este tipo de traducción asistida son los textos científicos. Las respuestas recabadas nos hablan de que la metodología utilizada por los profesores no está a la par de la importancia de este tipo de conocimiento que es eminentemente práctico, por tanto, la desmotivación en los discentes. Hace falta una revisión del método, pues es verdad que hace apenas 6 años el sitio web de Youtube puso a disposición del público en general los primeros videotutoriales sobre el uso de SDL Trados Studio, pero al ser un conocimiento muy dinámico, el instructor debe estar constantemente actualizando sus conocimientos sobre programas, aplicaciones y gadgets que inundan el mercado y son usados en la traducción.

## **CONCLUSIONES**

A través de la consulta de la bibliografía existente, así como del instrumento de investigación aplicado, se pueden llegar a las siguientes conclusiones:

Ambos grupos (séptimo: 89% y octavo: 94%), como futuros egresados de la carrera de Licenciado en Traducción-Campus Tijuana, consideran útil el manejo de memorias de traducción. Sin embargo, sobre la base de sus respuestas, consideran que necesitan más acceso a la práctica y continuidad en el aprendizaje de las tecnologías aplicadas.

Los encuestados respondieron que no utilizaban las MT de manera regular, por lo que una manera de subsanar esa falta de práctica sería su utilización obligatoria en otras materias tales como Traducción Técnica, Traducción Científica, Traducción Legal y las Introducciones. Esto permitiría su uso continuo desde Sexto a Octavo semestres, lo que sería un aprendizaje situado, tanto de traducción especializada como de tecnologías aplicadas a la traducción.

Las razones por las que la muestra no utiliza las MT son variadas, pero las más sobresalientes son la falta de software para realizar las actividades lo que redundaría a la larga, en una falta de interés. Esto nos dice que egresarán sin el conocimiento de las tecnologías aplicadas, lo que en sí ya es una desventaja ante la competencia de traductores autónomos que trabajan en línea. Lo anterior se puede remediar con el uso de software libre, que son programas gratuitos que se pueden descargar en cualquier laptop o PC, y que desempeñan el mismo trabajo que las licencias comerciales de 650 dólares o más. Sin embargo, hace falta una materia especializada en "Memorias de traducción de uso gratuito". Pero para esto se debe capacitar a los profesores de las otras materias de traducción en el uso de las tecnologías aplicadas. Una opción viable sería crear un DocenTic regional (Mexicali, Tijuana y Ensenada) para aumentar radicalmente su uso.

Algo que debe tomarse en cuenta en el plan de estudios de la carrera es la necesidad de aumentar el número y la variedad de materias donde se utilicen las tecnologías (Traducción Audiovisual, Localización, Subtitulación, Software libre), pues sólo

existe una materia dirigida a este objetivo: "Recursos Tecnológicos Aplicados a la Traducción e Interpretación".

Creemos que una entrevista estructurada cara a cara, hubiera arrojado más datos sobre los motivos que llevaron a los estudiantes a formarse una expectativa mayormente negativa sobre el uso de la tecnología en traducción. Sin embargo, es muy positivo que un 12% de los estudiantes de octavo semestre gestione la terminología por medio de Multiterm (Aplicación de SDL Trados para la gestión terminológica y la creación de bases de datos). Sería interesante replicar el estudio en los otros campi de la Facultad para conocer sus necesidades y saber si existe la misma problemática en Mexicali y Ensenada.

Como vemos, hay un área de oportunidad para apoyar a los futuros egresados de licenciatura en traducción y fomentar su interés en las tecnologías aplicadas a la traducción. Debemos de ocuparnos más que preocuparnos en apoyarlos y permitirles que egresen bien "armados", con las herramientas necesarias para desempeñarse de manera adecuada en la profesión que buscan abrazar.

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# PERCEPCIÓN PÚBLICA DE LA IDENTIDAD SORDA EN GUANAJUATO EN LAS PALABRAS DE INTÉRPRETES DE LSM

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## RESUMEN

La lengua de señas mexicana (LSM) es parte del patrimonio lingüístico de México y sus usuarios, la comunidad Sorda, tienen derecho tanto a la información e integración de las dinámicas sociales como cualquier otro grupo. Partiendo de una postura equitativa, a través de entrevistas semi-estructuradas con intérpretes que trabajan o trabajaron en el estado de Guanajuato, se realizó un sondeo sobre las condiciones de trabajo de los intérpretes de LSM. Los resultados enfocados en la percepción pública hacia los Sordos que se presentan aquí revelan que carencias en el conocimiento de la cultura Sorda en la población general obstaculizan la comunicación entre los dos grupos y resultan en percepciones negativamente distorsionadas sobre los Sordos.

**Palabras clave:** interpretación, Lengua de Señas Mexicana, comunidad Sorda, percepciones públicas

## INTRODUCCIÓN

El territorio del México actual siempre ha albergado una tremenda variedad de distintos grupos de personas y culturas, con una gran diversidad cultural, lingüística, religiosa e ideológica. Sin embargo y desafortunadamente, esta diversidad no ha conseguido integrarse en un ambiente en el que todos gocen de los mismos derechos y obligaciones: detrás de los promocionales turísticos, los negocios de artesanías y los discursos políticos que muestran un México integrador y justo, en la actualidad también hay personas sin acceso a servicios básicos a causa de que no hablan español. Aparte de los grupos indígenas, entre ellos se cuentan miembros de la comunidad Sorda<sup>1</sup>, una minoría cuya situación ha recibido poca atención en el discurso académico en el país.

En esta aportación, proponemos el análisis de unos hallazgos de un proyecto que fue realizado en el estado de Guanajuato con la participación de intérpretes de la lengua de señas mexicana. Aparte de la información sobre las condiciones laborales de los mismos intérpretes, que era el enfoque original de la investigación (Sauceda Navarrete, 2018), las entrevistas semiestructuradas confirmaron que los miembros de la comunidad Sorda padecen del desconocimiento de sus circunstancias sistémico entre la población general, el tema al cual se orienta este escrito. Tras presentar el contexto federal y estatal, plantear el marco conceptual y proveer una explicación breve de la metodología,

exponemos los resultados con la esperanza de contribuir al discurso emergente sobre las lenguas de señas y la comunidad Sorda.

## **CONTEXTUALIZACIÓN**

### *La normatividad federal*

Actualmente, México cuenta con una serie de leyes que incluyen a y salvaguardan los derechos de las personas con discapacidad. La primera de ellas es la Ley Federal para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación (2003), que trata de “promover la igualdad de oportunidad y de trato”. Si bien esta ley se refiere a todas las personas que viven dentro del territorio mexicano contra la discriminación, se especifica que las medidas de nivelación incluyen, entre otras, el “uso de intérpretes de lengua de señas mexicana en los eventos públicos de todas las dependencias gubernamentales y en los tiempos oficiales de televisión”, así reconociendo la necesidad de proveer apoyo lingüístico a los Sordos.

La Ley Federal para la Inclusión de las Personas con Discapacidad (2011), a su vez, reconoce la comunidad de sordos como un “grupo social cuyos miembros tienen alguna deficiencia del sentido auditivo que les limita sostener comunicación y socialización regular y fluida en lengua oral”. Al mismo tiempo, hace mención de la LSM y declara que ésta “forma parte del patrimonio lingüístico de dicha comunidad (de sordos) y es tan rica y compleja en gramática y vocabulario como cualquier otra lengua oral” y promueve el reconocimiento cultural y lingüístico de la comunidad de Sordos. Respecto a los intérpretes, precisa que su participación se hace necesaria en contextos jurídicos, educativos y en medios de comunicación audiovisual e impulsa tanto la formación de profesionales en la interpretación para mejores servicios de acceso a la información a personas sordas, como la creación de un programa de certificación de estos profesionales.

En cuanto a la LSM en medios de comunicación audiovisual, la Ley Federal de Telecomunicaciones y Radiodifusión (2014) señala que las transmisiones de televisión deben de “contar con servicios de subtítulos, doblaje al español y lengua de señas mexicana para la accesibilidad a personas con debilidad auditiva”, cuales servicios “deberán estar disponibles en al menos uno de los programas noticiosos de mayor audiencia a nivel nacional”.

Aparte de las leyes emitidas, en 2001 se propuso la Ley Federal de la Cultura del Sordo con “el propósito de defender los derechos culturales y lingüísticos de todas las personas sordas, todas aquellas que no pueden dialogar naturalmente por medio de su oído”, en la que se reconocía a las personas con sordera como una comunidad y se consideraron su lengua, sus derechos a la educación, servicios de salud, acceso a la información. Desafortunadamente, esta propuesta no ha sido aceptado, por lo cual, la legislación que regularía la vida de los Sordos en detalle sigue pendiente.



Además de la legislación federal, en respuesta de las necesidades referente al acceso a servicios públicos por miembros de la comunidad Sorda, hace casi una década, la Secretaría de Educación Pública (2009) publicó la Norma Técnica de Competencia Laboral de Intérpretes de Lengua de Señas a Español y Viceversa, dando resultado a la consultación con la participación de la comunidad Sorda, intérpretes y expertos en LSM, además del Consejo Nacional de las Personas con Discapacidad y el Consejo Nacional de Normalización y Certificación de Competencias Laborales. La norma técnica describe las competencias de un intérprete de LSM, las actitudes, hábitos y valores, define la evaluación de los intérpretes y describe la clasificación de los trabajos de interpretación. Con este código de conducta laboral finalmente se exigió el proceso de certificación para intérpretes, incluso aquellos que ya ejercían sin ningún tipo de registro o control de calidad.

La única pega, bastante parecida al caso de las otras regularizaciones, es que la fecha límite la actualización de esta norma ya se venció en el 2013 y tampoco se han renovado las certificaciones que, en teoría y según la norma, tenían una vigencia de cuatro años, lo cual significaría que ninguno de los intérpretes de LSM conserva su estado de formalidad. Aquí cabe también mencionar que en México no existe un programa de formación de intérpretes de lengua de señas en ningún nivel, aunque parece que recién y nuevamente existen iniciativas para impulsar su certificación (Romero Muñoz, 2018).

#### *Estadísticas del estado de Guanajuato*

Tristemente, las estadísticas sobre la comunidad Sorda mexicana siguen siendo publicadas en informes sobre la discapacidad (INEGI, 2016). Según las cifras más recientes que reflejan la situación en el 2014, a pesar de su tamaño, el estado de Guanajuato se encuentra entre los siete estados en México con el mayor número real de discapacitados: 4,6% de la población con discapacidad del país vive en esta entidad federal. En términos relativos, esto se traduce a 57 personas en cada 1,000 de la población estatal que vive con un tipo de discapacidad.

Las cifras son aún más altas en el caso de niños (0 a 14 años), ya que 12.9% de la población infantil, a comparación con el promedio de 8.8% a nivel federal, tiene discapacidad. La tendencia es parecida en la población juvenil (15 a 29 años) con el 11.3% frente del 9.4% del promedio nacional, entre los adultos (30 a 59 años) con el 28.3% que es bajo del 34.4% del país y en el caso de las personas de la tercera edad con el 47.3% se acerca el porcentaje del 47.4% en todo el país.

Considerando la distribución según sexo, no se destaca de la línea nacional, puesto que un poco más que la mitad de las personas con discapacidad en Guanajuato son mujeres. En el 41.0% de los casos, se origina la discapacidad en una enfermedad, el 32.1% se deriva de la edad avanzada, el 12.5% es una condición innata, el 7.6% fue

causada por un accidente, el 0.9% se debe a violencia y en el 5.9% se desconoce el origen de la discapacidad.

Respecto a la calidad de vida, que 11.5% de la población estatal vive con limitación, con una distribución según la edad y el sexo bastante semejante a las cifras anteriormente compartidas. La raíz de la limitación se divide de la manera siguiente: el 37.9% se debe a una enfermedad, el 32.0% viene de la edad avanzada, el 10.5% corresponde a una limitación innata, el 9.4% se produjo por un accidente, 0.4% se origina en violencia y en el 9.8% no hay información sobre la causa.

A nivel nacional, el 33.5% de la población mexicana tiene problemas graves con escuchar y el 19.3% tiene un grado de limitación con respecto a sus habilidades sensoriales auditivas, aunque algunos de ellos usen aparato auditivo que le facilita la comunicación. Además, varias de las personas con discapacidad auditiva también cuentan con por lo menos una otra discapacidad y / o limitación. En cuanto a las tasas discapacidad (y la limitación), el 28.9% (26.3%) se emana de una enfermedad, el 49.6% (47.5%) se genera conforme del avance en edad, el 9.3% (6.6%) es una condición innata, el 6.3% (7.9%) resulta de un accidente, el 0.8% (0.6%) tiene su motivo en la violencia y en el caso del 5.1% (11.1%) no se cuenta con información sobre la causa.

De acuerdo con los datos de la ENH 2014, entre la población de 3 años y más de edad con limitación para escuchar, sólo 4.5% utiliza algún tipo de aparato auditivo; porcentaje similar entre hombres y mujeres. Dentro de este grupo poblacional, 9 de cada 10 personas tienen problemas de acceso a este tipo de ayudas y, por consecuencia, pocas oportunidades de comunicarse y de interactuar con los demás en igualdad de condiciones, situaciones que impactan en la integración de la población en ámbitos como el social, educativo y laboral. (INEGI, 2016, p. 163)

Del número total de las personas con discapacidad en el estado, el 28.2% tiene problemas auditivos graves, es decir, son completamente sordos. Otro 14.5% tiene algún tipo de limitación auditiva, aunque es posible que use aparato auditivo. A pesar de que estas cifras también incluyen personas con la pérdida de la capacidad auditiva con el paso de los años, a base de los porcentajes anteriores se puede derivar que varias viven con audición reducida por causas de una condición médica, incluso innata, o accidente, que significa que hay un grupo de personas que no pueden participar en la vida cotidiana al mismo grado que la población sin discapacidad.

## **HIPÓTESIS DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

Tomando en cuenta esta última observación, la presente investigación parte de las hipótesis que:

(1) Entre la población oyente, carece la conceptualización verisímil de la vida de los Sordos.

(2) Por su relación con la comunidad Sorda, los intérpretes se identifican con los Sordos.

(3) Por su conocimiento de la cultura Sorda, los intérpretes pueden sensibilizar a la población oyente sobre las condiciones vivenciales de los Sordos.

(4) Entre ellas, se destaca la correlación estrecha entre la identidad Sorda y el uso de la LSM.

## **MARCO TEÓRICO-CONCEPTUAL**

Partiendo de una postura equitativa, la investigación se posiciona en la conceptualización actual de la Sordera como una cultura, con la lengua de señas como el marcador principal de identidad. En este sentido, se formula una crítica de paradigmas anteriores mantenidos durante la mayor parte del siglo XX, según los cuales la sordera se clasificaba como una condición médica y / o una discapacidad. En contraste, más reciente se plantea que, aún más allá de la noción que la Sordera deslinda a los miembros de su comunidad en algún tipo del “otro”, se ha construido un discurso sobre esta cultura completamente distinto, que promueve el apoderamiento a los miembros y fortalece la creación de una identidad positivamente distintiva. Esta transformación significativa en la conceptualización de la Sordera, en teoría, debe conllevar cambios en la percepción de la comunidad y la cultura Sorda tanto por sus propios miembros, como por la sociedad entera.

### *De la discapacidad a la identidad*

Desde la antigüedad, la condición innata de la sordera ha sido considerada una discapacidad suficientemente severa para considerar que las personas afectadas no son capaces de pensamiento independiente. Aunque desde el siglo XVIII ya se reconoce la habilidad de los sordos de aprender, continúa el rezago referente al nivel de educación de los sordos, junto con la privación socioeconómica, cultural y política. Asimismo, se considera que la estigmatización se provoca por la confusión y la carencia de información sobre la discapacidad auditiva (Matlala, 2015, p. 2).

En Estados Unidos, por ejemplo, hasta la primera mitad del siglo XX se consideraron los sordos como discapacitados e inútiles para trabajar, se les negó la oportunidad de conseguir seguro social, licencia de conducir o un testamento (Burch, 2002, pp.4-5). Conforme, los líderes de los sordos, en su esfuerzo de mejorar su imagen pública, exigieron que todos los miembros de su comunidad se abstuvieran de fumar, inebriarse, involucrarse en actividades promiscuas, o, simplemente, ser vagos (Burch, 2002, p.149). Se manifestaron los cambios después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial,

cuando ya se observó la educación como un derecho civil y no como privilegio (Robinson, 2016, p. 397) y así, gradualmente se ha desarrollado el concepto de la identidad Sorda.

### *El turno discursivo: conceptualizaciones positivas de la sordera y la identidad Sorda*

Con el advenimiento de ideologías y teorías foucaultianas y bourdieusianas de transgresión y el desafío a discursos existentes, también se ha presentado una alternativa en reformular las narrativas sobre la sordera. En consecuencia, la carencia o pérdida del oído se ha convertido en una identidad diferente pero no inferior, donde, en el siglo XXI, la sordera se considera una ganancia en cuanto a la diversidad humana (Bauman & Murray, 2017) y se reconoce la existencia de las perspectivas múltiples de las epistemologías Sordas (Paul & Moores, 2012).

Es el mismo contexto que permite un diálogo transparente tanto sobre la toma de decisiones y la participación en la vida social por los Sordos (Berg, 2012a) como una réplica crítica del mismo por una intelectual Sorda (Blankmeyer Burke, 2012) y otras contestaciones (Feltz & Abt, 2012; Mason Pope, 2012; Matthews, 2012; Moore & Gallagher, 2012; Sadovnikoff & Jouchak, 2012; Stark & Fins, 2012; Tsai, 2012; Wahlert, 2012); todos publicados en la misma edición de la revista estadounidense de bioética junto con las observaciones finales de la autora original (Berg, 2012b).

Otra influencia significativa, y vinculada con los pensamientos críticos de Foucault y Bourdieu, es el surgimiento del feminismo que se ha propagado en estudios académicos de la discapacidad en general (Hall, 2011) y en los estudios de la sordera en particular (Kafer, 2011). Esta postura bastante sentenciosa y moral, al mismo tiempo, puede complementarse por una actitud más facilitadora, como la de la psicología positiva (Snyder & Lopez, 2009) o perspectivas constructivistas narrativas, como la terapia narrativa (Epston & White, 1990) que, aparte que en sí se basa en teorías foucaultianas, se ha aplicado a la (re-)construcción de identidades sordas (Edwards & Crocker, 2008; Furlonger, 1999, Glickman, 2009).

### *Lengua de señas: el marcador de la identidad Sorda*

Como ya se mencionó y también comenta Holcomb (2013), el uso de la lengua de señas es el componente central de la identidad Sorda, en comparación, por ejemplo, con las personas con discapacidad auditiva que a menudo equiparan su capacidad de hablar con un componente crítico de su esencia. Para reconocer las experiencias culturales de las personas Sordas e identificar este grupo cultural en el contexto académico, Woodward (1972) propuso el uso de la mayúscula, una convención que fue solidificada por Carol Padden, hija de padres Sordos, que ha sido instrumental en el reconocimiento de la cultura Sorda (Padden, 1980, 1996; Padden & Humphries, 2005). En su artículo del 1980 sugirió que personas ,cuya manera de comunicación principal está basada en la lengua de señas y tienen nexos con la comunidad Sorda, deben ser designadas con la mayúscula en la Sordera (véase Holcomb, 2013, p. 45).

Ahora bien, suponiendo que la lengua de señas es la característica cardinal de la identidad Sorda, debe contar con reconocimiento legal, público y académico. Ya que en la sección anterior se presentaron las regulaciones, especialmente referente a México, y, que este escrito se enfoca en la percepción y aceptación públicas, se queda exponer sobre el posicionamiento escolástico de lenguas de señas. En los países más desarrollados en cuanto a estudios sobre la comunidad Sorda y las lenguas de seña, se comenzaron a difundirse las gramáticas y se empezó a divulgarse información sobre varios aspectos lingüísticos.

Primero, fueron publicadas guías en el campo de la lingüística descriptiva en distintos contextos a nivel mundial, como, por ejemplo, en Estados Unidos sobre la morfología y la sintaxis (Padden, 1998), la sintaxis (Lidell, 1980), en Australia sobre el léxico (Johnston, 1989, 2001, 2003). Después estas se complementaron por publicaciones de la lingüística aplicada, entre ellos estudios sociolingüísticos (Lucas, 1989, 1995, 2003; Schermer, 2004, 2006), pragmáticos (Wilcox, 2000, 2005) y trabajos sobre las políticas y planeación lingüística (Schermer, 2012). Conforme con el avance de las investigaciones y el paso del tiempo, se compilaron en gramáticas íntegras en Australia (Johnston & Schembri, 2007), Irlanda Leeson & Saeed, 2012), Estados Unidos (Stokoe, 1960; Stokoe, Casterline, & Cronenberg, 1965) para finalmente dar paso a las obras contrastivas-comparativas lexicológicas (McKee & Kennedy, 2000), y generales (Baker, van den Bogaerde & Crasborn, 2003; Sandler, & Lillo-Martin, 2006).

### *Lengua e identidad Sorda en México*

Se refleja la misma tendencia en México donde, gracias al trabajo arduo de Miroslava Cruz-Aldrete, se cuenta con una gramática exhaustiva de la LSM (Cruz-Aldrete, 2009), unos aspectos específicos de la pragmática de negación (Cruz-Aldrete, 2012), la semántica (Cruz-Aldrete & Villa Rodríguez, 2013) y la construcción de un diccionario (Cruz-Aldrete, 2014), un manual para aprendientes de la LSM (Cruz-Aldrete, 2014), e, incluso, consideraciones educativas y pedagógicas (Cruz-Aldrete, 2017; Cruz-Aldrete & Cruz Cruz, 2013; Cruz-Aldrete, Garcia Bruno & Lopes Lopes, 2016; Cruz-Aldrete & Villa Rodríguez, 2016).

En general, se ha experimentado la proliferación de información sobre la cultura Sorda en los últimos años, por ejemplo, con informes de proyectos de inclusión en el contexto educativo (Vidal Salgado, Isidoro Mojica & Bonilla Aco, 2012) o la inauguración de la primera sala de Lengua de Señas en México (Cacho Carranza, 2015). Sin embargo, todavía existen carencias, como reporta Verónica Cárdenas (2016), aunque ya se comenzó el discurso sobre la identidad Sorda (Francisco Martínez, 2011) tanto como el diálogo sobre los avances y las necesidades pendientes (Tecnológico de Monterrey, 2017).

Si acaso todavía no fuera manifiesto, cabe mencionar que, al contrario de la percepción popular e igualmente equivocada, la LSM es un sistema lingüístico

independiente a cualquier otra, sea una lengua de señas u otro idioma oral-escrito. Es decir, la LSM cuenta con una estructura morfosintáctica propia, por lo cual, no es una representación en señas del español. En cambio, se denomina español signado a la representación con señas de cada palabra del español, siguiendo la sintaxis española (de Fleischmann, 1995, p. 19).

## METODOLOGÍA

Ya que el objetivo principal del proyecto era describir las relaciones entre intérpretes y la comunidad Sorda e identificar cuáles son las percepciones de la LSM y el trabajo de interpretación de la misma, se optó por un enfoque fenomenológico del corte cualitativo. De igual manera, se seleccionó la entrevista semiestructurada como instrumento para la recogida de datos<sup>2</sup>, lo que resultó muy benéfico por la abundancia de información que proporcionaron los participantes. Entre ellos, se incluyeron tres intérpretes de LSM de los cuales dos (*Carlos* y *Pascual* por su seudónimo que se les asignó según las mejores prácticas de ética) actualmente laboran y un tercero (*Néstor*) había trabajado en el estado de Guanajuato. El cuarto participante (*Jorge*) era un historiador que ha estudiado la educación de sordos en México y también ha trabajado con intérpretes y la comunidad Sorda.

Una vez terminadas, las entrevistas fueron transcritas con la ayuda del software gratuito, o de acceso libre, llamado *Transcriber*, y transferidas a una hoja en MS Excel por cada participante, lo que permitió catalogar cada intervención con un código con la inicial del entrevistado y el número secuencial de la línea en la entrevista (por ejemplo, C56 es la línea 56 en la transcripción de la entrevista con Carlos). Así también se marcó cada enunciado en un color según el tema principal emergente desde los datos, o repetidamente en más que un color si se podía clasificar en varias categorías. Como se puede apreciar en la Figura 1., por ejemplo, los temarios “formación (en general)”, “carencia de formación en México” y “formación en el extranjero” fueron marcados en tres distintos tonos de azul asignados al mismo fragmento. En la siguiente etapa se aplicó un filtro que proporcionara únicamente las intervenciones de los participantes que contenían el tema deseado, así dando paso al análisis propio.

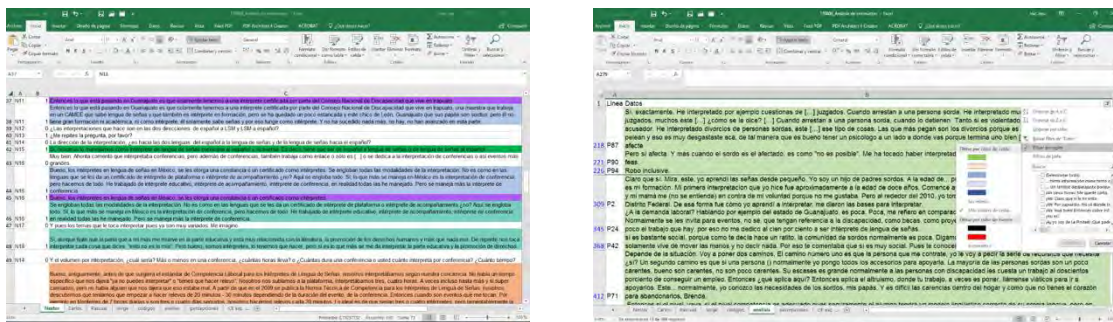


Figura 1. Preparación de los datos para el análisis en Excel: la etiqueta de temas por colores y la aplicación del filtro según los colores

## ANÁLISIS DE DATOS Y RESULTADOS

La información presentada de aquí en adelante se deriva de las entrevistas realizadas con los intérpretes, que obviamente tienen una conexión especial con la comunidad Sorda, experiencia que les impulsó compartir su opinión sobre las percepciones y los malentendidos del público sobre esta cultura. Por lo mismo, aunque tal vez no parezca evidente por qué incluir las historias de cómo los cuatro entrevistados tuvieron su primer contacto con los Sordos, las narrativas revelan el origen de su pasión por el tema y la raíz de su activismo.

### *Los comienzos de la relación de los informantes con la comunidad Sorda*

Dos de los intérpretes entrevistados empezaron su relación con la comunidad Sorda desde temprana edad. Por ejemplo, Néstor comentó sobre su amistad con algunos niños sordos.

*Crecí con un grupo de niños sordos que eran hijos de personas sordas que a la vez esos eran amigos de familiares directos míos. Estuvo conmigo en la escuela, yo fui como su monitor y a la vez que él iba adquiriendo la lengua de señas, me la iba enseñando. Fue de manera natural este aprendizaje porque no hubo un programa, algo establecido, una formación sistemática. (N2)*

El crecer juntos con personas sordas desde su infancia, permitió que Néstor se socializara con la cultura Sorda y, parte de este proceso, adquiriera la LSM.

Un caso muy parecido, pero incluso más cercano a la comunidad Sorda, es el de Pascual que creció como un niño CODA que, por sus siglas en inglés “Child of Deaf Adults”, se refiere a niños cuyos padres son sordos.

*Mira, este, yo aprendí las señas desde pequeño. Yo soy un hijo de padres sordos. A la edad de [...] pues no sé, es mi lengua materna, básicamente esa es mi formación. (P2)*

A diferencia de Néstor, Pascual aprendió la LSM directamente de sus padres sordos, como su lengua materna. En su caso, el haber aprendido la LSM desde una edad precoz, también significó que todavía era muy joven cuando realizó las primeras interpretaciones, más probable, en contextos informales que no requerían una interpretación formalmente rigurosa.

*Mi mamá me llevaba a muchos lugares a que aprendiera la lengua de señas. Me decía que les ayudara a familias sordas que no tenían la posibilidad de hospitales, terapias psicológicas y todo ese tipo de cosas. (P8)*

*Mi primera interpretación que yo hice fue aproximadamente a la edad de doce años. Comencé ayudando a las personas sordas en las asociaciones [...] en contra de mi voluntad porque no me gustaba. (P2)*

En comparación con Néstor y Pascual, Carlos comenzó como intérprete y su relación con la comunidad Sorda en un momento más adelante de su vida.

*En el 2000 comencé más o menos en [...] este [...] yo daba clases en INE a través del servicio militar. Pero curiosamente donde me pusieron, que fue en el Cerro del Cuarto, donde yo daba clases de INEA, a un costado estaba un maestro sordo. [...] Yo dije: “No, pues a mí me interesa la lengua de señas”. Siempre me ha gustado mucho apoyar a las personas con discapacidad. Entonces dije: “De aquí soy, aprendo” y realmente lo aprendí por hobby. (C1)*

En consecuencia, Carlos aprendió la LSM de manera más consciente y menos natural que los otros dos intérpretes entrevistados.

#### *Identidad lingüística de los Sordos: el español signado no es LSM*

Como suele ocurrir en circunstancias similares, cuando se aprende la lengua de señas como adulto, en vez de adquirir la lengua de señas local, Carlos aprendió lo que se llama “un idioma signado”. Como ya se indicó al final de la sección sobre el marco conceptual, en esta pseudo-lengua, no se utiliza la lengua de señas en su complejidad, sino simplemente se muestran las señas que son “equivalentes” en el orden en que aparecen en una oración en español.

*Di como “el sopetón”, de que a mí me dieron todo el mundo “ ablas español signado”. C33*

De modo parecido, Jorge explica que, si un intérprete no tiene habilidades consolidadas en la lengua de señas, suele recurrir al español signado.

*Cuando el intérprete no tiene un dominio adecuado muchas veces lo que usan es español signado. (J22)*

Esto es sumamente insultante a los Sordos, y Pascual opina que muchas personas tratan de aprovechar la falta de regulaciones en cuanto a intérpretes de LSM y desempeñan de manera inadecuada.

*Hay tantas personas que se paran y mueven las manos y engañan a las personas que los contratan y eso es una burla y un enojo muy grande para las personas Sordas. (P79)*



Lo mismo comenta Carlos, explicando que, pese de que se trate de un sistema lingüístico cuya representación se hace a través de señas, no es la lengua utilizada por los Sordos, y muchos consideran su uso como poco profesional e incluso ofensiva.

*Para un sordo, a un sordo le ofende muchísimo, muchísimo cuando un intérprete habla en español signado o cuando le habla en español signado. Se ofenden como no tienen idea. Es como si agarraran su lengua, su idioma y lo hicieran añicos, así. (C121)*

En un principio puede parecer que las palabras de Carlos son exageradas, pero solamente si no se recuerda que, para los Sordos, su lengua es el marcador principal de su identidad. En pocas palabras, ignorar su identidad lingüística les priva a los Sordos de su derecho humano de pertenecer a su propia comunidad lingüística distinta y minoritaria.

*Entonces, para nosotros el español es como una forma de comunicación. Para el Sordo la lengua de señas no es una forma de comunicación, la lengua de señas es su identidad ¿sí? Es más interna la lengua de señas para un sordo. Entonces, a un Sordo, si tú ofendes su lengua, lo estás ofendiendo a él. Si tú una persona te habla mal del español, pues te vale. Pero tú, ataca la lengua de señas, es como si agarraras un cuchillo y apuñalaras al Sordo, porque hay Sordos que te dicen "es que tienes que aprender la cultura de la lengua de se as". [...] Los Sordos siempre te dicen la cultura de la lengua de señas. Para que te digan de la cultura de señas es porque para ellos la lengua de señas es algo vivo. (C130)*

A pesar de su importancia para los usuarios, la LSM no era contemplado en la legislación, hasta que en 2005 que se promulgó la Ley General para las Personas con Discapacidad anteriormente mencionada.

*Mi experiencia es que la lengua de señas mexicana no había sido reconocida y comento esto, porque como no era digamos reconocida la lengua, normalmente no estaban tomados en cuenta los Sordos. Entonces, mi experiencia es que realmente del 2005 para acá, desde que se polinizó o digamos, que se certificó la lengua de señas. La reconocieron como patrimonio lingüístico de una comunidad, ha tomado mucha importancia. Y realmente fue como un "boom". (P10)*

Pascual conceptualiza esta ley como un parteaguas para la comunidad Sorda, ya que esta ley permitió que la LSM fuera vista como un idioma diferente e independiente del español. También fue benéfico para los intérpretes que trabajan con el español y la lengua de señas en México, porque posterior a esto se crearon certificaciones, guías y códigos de conducta laboral que concedieron a la práctica de la interpretación de LSM mayor formalidad. En general, se visibilizaron tremendamente la lengua de señas y a la comunidad Sorda.

## *El papel de los intérpretes en la promoción de la diversidad lingüística*

Sin embargo, la misma visibilidad no siempre se manifiesta en la práctica cotidiana. Aunque sin enunciados sonoros, los Sordos aprovechan de otras maneras de comunicar su desencanto con el menosprecio de su cultura y lengua. Como explica Carlos,

*Ha habido veces que al estar de intérprete señalando en un evento formal, los Sordos se levantan y se van, te dejan solo. Ha habido veces que se levanta un Sordo, interrumpe al orador, así en frente de todos. (C121)*

Sin embargo, no solo los Sordos se involucran en activismo, sino numerosos intérpretes de LSM también toman el papel de transmitir información sobre los derechos lingüísticos de los Sordos a los miembros de la comunidad. Parece que los cuatro entrevistados, tal vez inspirados por sus experiencias iniciales con la cultura Sorda anteriormente expuestas, pertenecen a este grupo de abogados de la cultura, identidad y derechos Sordos.

*Ahora lo que estamos nosotros realizando también, como parte de la promoción de los servicios de interpretación, es trabajar con las comunidades de Sordos e informarles sobre el Código de Conducta Profesional y saber cómo deben de trabajar con los intérpretes, porque si bien muchos Sordos o la mayoría de las personas Sordas han visto a un intérprete y han estado en contacto con él, no saben qué es la manera o cuál es la manera en la que se debe de conducir un intérprete. (N36)*

Esta responsabilidad social no sólo se mantiene en la difusión de la información, también se puede ver en la práctica profesional. Pascual al ser hijo de padres sordos comprende de cerca el reto tan grande que es para un sordo desarrollar una actividad laboral.

*Normalmente a las personas con discapacidad les cuesta un trabajo [sic – se entiende: muy difícil] de conseguir un empleo. Entonces ¿qué aplica aquí? Entonces aplica el altruismo, donde tu trabajo, a veces es poner, llámense viáticos para ir a apoyarlos. Este... normalmente, yo conozco las necesidades de los sordos, mis papás. Y es difícil las carencias dentro del hogar y como que no tienes el corazón para abandonarlos. (P71)*

Es evidente que Pascual está con toda la disposición de ayudar a las personas Sordas porque se identifica con su aprieto, como también los otros entrevistados.

### *Identificación con la comunidad Sorda por parte de los intérpretes*

Infelizmente, los intérpretes tienen toda la razón para identificarse con sus clientes, los miembros de la comunidad Sorda, ya que los desprecian de igual manera que a los mismos Sordos.

*Desgraciadamente, las personas oyentes no entienden esa parte, como ellos no ven, no entienden esta parte del proceso de la traducción, de la interpretación. Ellos piensan que no es esfuerzo que nosotros solo sacamos las manitas. Ellos me dicen "el mue e manitas". C6*

Carlos comenta sobre la forma en la que algunos de sus compañeros de trabajo ven su labor. Tal como dice, la percepción de la gente sobre los intérpretes es aún desinformada. Se piensa que por hablar un idioma o usar una lengua de señas se puede realizar un trabajo de este tipo, pero la realidad es que es necesario tener una formación, de igual manera que aceptación por la comunidad Sorda.

*¿Cómo les entiende alguna persona administrativa? Llámese encargado, llámese cualquier persona del gobierno o de las personas que los contratan... ¿cómo les entienden a las personas sordas o cómo se dan a entender entre ellos? Eso es un gran problema (...) Por eso, a mí me interesaba mucho que supiera lo básico de señas para que pudieran juzgar y decir que "eres un comunicador y sabe señas y él es un intérprete". Porque para poder decir "soy intérprete" yo creo que se necesita un poquito de valor. (P93)*

Aparte de la exigencia de un acercamiento profesional al oficio del intérprete, Pascual también comenta sobre la dificultad que se enfrenta por cualquier personal administrativo que, por la carencia de información y conocimiento, simplemente no puede comprender las necesidades de los Sordos. Sin esta conciencia, no se puede esperar que se desarrolle comunicación significativa y empatía entre los oyentes y los Sordos.

### *Percepción pública de los Sordos*

No obstante, la apreciación de los intérpretes, o, mejor dicho, la carencia de ella, no compara con el desestimo de los Sordos. Como en otros lados por el mundo, por mucho tiempo los sordos han tenido un estatus inferior que el resto de las personas viviendo en México. Se solían considerar como discapacitados mentales y su lengua sólo se percibía como una mímica sin estructura.

*Era ésta como una especie de mímica, [...]. De hecho, algunas personas juzgaban como ademanes de locos a los sordos. Y... este... realmente eran discriminados por ese lado porque no tenían una lengua de cómo expresarse. (P14)*

Las preocupaciones que verbaliza Pascual también comparte Carlos.  
*Porque aparte como Sordo, como lenguaje de señas, es una persona con discapacidad y siempre han sufrido o habido bullying o desprecio. (C130)*

Mientras estas observaciones generales ya parecen suficientemente inquietantes, el fragmento más conmovedor relata las prácticas de los padres de niños sordos, porque

en resumen sintetiza las confusiones sobre la sordera y la carencia del conocimiento y comprensión de qué es vivir una vida Sorda.

*Generalmente cuando los padres descubren que sus niños son sordos, pues con la primera persona que corren es con el médico y si le va bien el médico les recomienda que sean opciones. Bueno... o sea lo que generalmente el médico prescribe que no se le exponga al niño a la lengua de señas, porque esto podría entorpecer el desarrollo cognitivo, cuando sabemos que tampoco es cierto. O, por el otro lado, se van al extremo de sugerir a los padres esta opción de los implantes cocleares. Bueno, y los padres creen que con esto... De hecho, los propios sordos, usuarios de la lengua de señas se dividen, se refieren, perdón, al implante coclear como la oreja biónica, justamente porque prometen que una vez que todo el mundo esté implantado. Bueno, finalmente, van a escuchar perfectamente, pero la realidad es que ni los propios médicos saben si el implante va a ser funcional. Entonces, tenemos a niños implantados que no escuchan absolutamente nada, pero pues bueno ya tienen ahí todo el aparato conectado a sus cráneos. (J42)*

Entre las preocupaciones que menciona Jorge, se destaca que la sordera sigue siendo considerada como una condición meramente médica que, aparte, se resuelve con intervención quirúrgica. Sin embargo, el aparato coclear conocido en la comunidad Sorda como “la oreja biónica” no siempre tiene la respuesta, ya que no todos tipos de la sordera se raigan en un problema fisiológico auditivo.

Lo que es aún más perturbador es que los padres, quizá por el miedo de no poder comunicar con su propio hijo, sigan el consejo del médico que considera que el niño no empiece a aprender a señalar. Dado que el desarrollo cognitivo se procede a través del desarrollo lingüístico, es muy probable que si un niño no tiene acceso a ninguna lengua, sea signada u oral, vaya a tener consecuencias negativas. Al parecer, todavía hace falta aceptar que la lengua de señas es un idioma que cualquier otro que no solo sirve para fines de comunicación, sino también es marcador de la identidad de las personas que lo usan.

## **CONCLUSIÓN**

Posicionada en el enfoque equitativo y con esperanzas de que las narrativas biomédicas de la sordera se hayan empezado a reescribirse, el presente proyecto exploró las percepciones sobre la identidad lingüística-cultural de la comunidad Sorda en el estado de Guanajuato. Con base en entrevistas semiestructuradas realizadas con cuatro intérpretes de LSM y / o proponentes de la cultura Sorda, los hallazgos confirmaron las cuatro hipótesis:

(1) Como se observó en la última parte del análisis, aun los padres de niños sordos siguen con creencias equivocadas sobre, por ejemplo, la naturaleza de la sordera, lo que significa que *la población oyente*, que tiene todavía menos

información sobre estas circunstancias, *carece la conceptualización verisímil de la vida de los Sordos*.

(2) *Por su relación con la comunidad Sorda*, ya que crecieron en la compañía de sordos y por su propia voluntad se han involucrado en la comunidad, y a menudo porque su trabajo tampoco se toma en serio, como los problemas de *los Sordos*, *los intérpretes se identifican con ellos* y bien entienden sus pruebas y tribulaciones.

(3) Por lo mismo, *por su conocimiento de la cultura Sorda*, *los intérpretes pueden e intentan servir esta comunidad y sensibilizar a la población oyente sobre las condiciones vivenciales de los Sordos*, por ejemplo, dándoles visibilidad en contextos administrativos.

(4) Finalmente, las anécdotas sobre cómo el español “signado” ofende a los Sordos, se confirmó *la correlación estrecha entre la identidad Sorda y el uso de la LSM*.

Así se puede concluir que el giro discursivo sobre la sordera definitivamente no ha llegado al contexto bajo de estudio, es decir, no se puede hablar de empoderamiento a través de la creación de la identidad Sorda. Además, sigue manteniéndose la desinformación sobre la lengua, cultura e identidad Sorda. Solo resta comentar que, en el esfuerzo de cambiar los discursos existentes, la comunidad académica también debe asumir su responsabilidad en cuanto a la investigación de la cultura Sorda y la divulgación de información sobre ella con cautela y consideraciones éticas (McKee *et al.* 2013).

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