THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS ON HIGHER

EDUCATION STUDENTS: A NARRATIVE STUDY ON STUDENTS' LEARNING

EXPERIENCES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF COLOMBIA'S NBP

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INFLUENCIA DE LOS REQUISITOS DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS EN LOS ESTUDIANTES DE

EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR: UN ESTUDIO NARRATIVO SOBRE LAS EXPERIENCIAS DE

APRENDIZAJE DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN EL MARCO DEL PNB EN COLOMBIA

Estiven Alfonso Gutierrez

John Edisson Duarte Romero

Jose Luis Rodriguez Barrera

Thesis Director: Jimena Alviar Rueda

Universidad El Bosque

Facultad de Educación

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Abstract

Despite the implementation of the National Bilingualism Program, Colombia continues to hold the bottom in international rankings for English proficiency. This project was motivated by the desire to understand the influence that the National Bilingualism Program had on 6 Colombian students from rural areas during the last 2 decades. Studies on the impact of these educational policies in Colombia are scarce and the diversity of cultures and identities is unexplored. Thus, this work aims to understand how these policies impacted the professional and personal lives of a group of university students. This research was conducted in a Eighth-semester environmental engineering class at a private university in Bogotá. There were 6 participants, 1 woman and 5 men, whose ages ranged between 22 and 35 years. The flexible character of the narrative designs enriched the understanding of the stories told by the participants. The data collection instruments were: a semi-structured interview, a focus group, and some artifacts. The narratives were analyzed taking into account the stages proposed by Sampieri (1994) and the coding process designed by Charmaz (2006). Through this process, the data was classified into three macro-categories: I. *The emotional impact of NBP Policies on students' learning process of a second language,* II. *Implications of NBP policies on students' academic and professional performance, and* III. *Acknowledging diversity as a key factor for second language learning.* The results of this research show the influence that the implementation of the National Bilingualism Program has had on the emotions of the

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participants and, consequently, on their learning process and professional development. It was concluded that despite the scope of the National Bilingualism Plan throughout the national territory, its design did not take into account the diverse identities of the students and their specific contexts, which means it was not successfully adapted or implemented according to their needs.

Keywords: National Bilingualism Plan (NBP), Bilingual Education in Colombia, English teaching, identity, emotions, learning experience.

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Resumen

A pesar de la implementación del Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo, Colombia sigue ocupando los últimos lugares en las tablas que miden el dominio del inglés. Este proyecto fue motivado por el anhelo de comprender la influencia que tuvo el Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo en la vida de los 6 estudiantes Colombianos del área rural durante las dos últimas décadas. Los estudios sobre el impacto de dichas políticas educativas en Colombia son escasos y se desconoce la diversidad de culturas e identidades en los salones de clase Colombianos. Así, este trabajo de grado se propuso entender cómo se vieron afectadas las vidas profesionales de un grupo de estudiantes universitarios. Esta investigación se realizó en una clase del noveno semestre de ingeniería ambiental en una universidad privada en Bogotá. La población estuvo conformada por 6 participantes, 1 mujer y 5 hombres, cuyas edades oscilaron entre los 22 y los 35 años. El carácter flexible de los diseños narrativos enriqueció la comprensión de las historias contadas por los participantes. Los instrumentos de recolección de datos elegidos fueron la entrevista semi-estructurada, el grupo focal y un artefacto diseñado para que los participantes retrataran sus experiencias. Las narrativas fueron analizadas teniendo en cuenta las etapas propuestas por Sampieri (1994) y el proceso de codificación diseñado por Charmaz (2006). Mediante este proceso se clasificaron los datos en tres macro categorías: I. *Impacto emocional de las Políticas del PNB en el proceso de aprendizaje de una segunda lengua.* II. *Implicaciones de las políticas del PNB en el desempeño académico y profesional de los estudiantes.* y III. *Reconocer la*

diversidad como factor clave para el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua. Los resultados de esta

investigación evidencian la influencia que la implementación del Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo

ha tenido en las emociones de los participantes y por consecuencia en su proceso de aprendizaje

y desarrollo profesional. Se concluyó que a pesar del alcance del Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo a

lo largo del territorio nacional, su diseño no tuvo en cuenta las diversas identidades de los

estudiantes. Por lo cual no se adaptó con éxito a sus necesidades. **Palabras clave: Plan Nacional

de Bilingüismo (NBP), Educación Bilingüe en Colombia, Enseñanza del inglés, identidad,

emociones, experiencia de aprendizaje.**

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1. Introduction: Life stories

As Colombian students and as pre-service English teachers we have been able to experience and live the implementation of the NBP first hand. Such experiences have allowed us to re-think the role of such policies in light of what students from different backgrounds might live in their own contexts, and to explore what these experiences mean for us as a society.

The National Bilingualism Program (henceforth NBP) has been defined by the Ministry of Education as a strategic project that seeks for the improvement of educational quality, in particular for the improvement of English teaching in Colombia. However, even if this goal sounds indeed as a positive one, the development and implementation of such strategy has not been an easy task due to the fact that our country entails diverse and unequal learning environments that either boost or hinder the learning experiences of a second language.

In this line, as professionals in the English Language Teaching arena, it has become of utmost importance to comprehend how bilingual policies such as the NBP, which is based on international standards, influence the learning processes as well as the personal and professional development of Colombian students from rural areas. The understanding of how their life stories have been shaped by the teaching and learning of English opens reflective scenarios that will allow future teacher generations to reconsider and redesign their teaching practices in the quest

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to promote more equal learning environments which are also aligned with the international agenda of our country.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Globalization has made it necessary to learn English as a second language for the development and labor competition of Colombian people. Based on economic purposes, the national and regional governments in Colombia have aimed to increase English levels according to the CEFR measure.

To achieve this goal, the MEN has developed specialized programs such as Connecting Cultures (MEN,2016,) BeThe1Challenge (MEN,2020) and ECO 2.0 English For Colombia (MEN,2021). However, those policies usually portray bilingualism as a homogenous goal disconnected from community context and needs (Guerrero, 2008). It is necessary to understand the whole context, so the decisions made to improve English teaching generate the desired impact on Colombians lives.

One of the main problems is the Colombian students' low results at those proficiency tests. According to PISA tests, more than 45% of Colombian students have a low English proficiency level (El Tiempo, 2021). Although the University Language Center offers a variety of preparation courses for these tests, the main issue detected in this research is that most

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Eighth-semester Environmental Engineering students at the university can not graduate because of their low English proficiency level at the ITEP *International Test of English Proficiency*.

In Colombian universities, it is mandatory to take tests to qualify the learning process of students. In this university case, the ITEP test assesses basic to advanced levels of English as a second language. While it is true that some students have certain skills to learn a second language faster, not all do, and this is when the teaching process requires more time to be internalized (Baker 2017). However, low results in English proficiency exams seriously affect Eighth-semester environmental engineering students' professional lives. Despite having the necessary skills to perform effectively in their area of knowledge, they cannot practice as professionals due to the fact that they cannot obtain the required results in the ITEP test. It is a serious problem considering that they have access to the education system hoping to improve their lives and climb the socio-economic hierarchy.

The professional lives of environmental engineering students at the university have been directly affected, they cannot access better salaries, nor can they contract with organizations or exercise their profession legally despite the fact that these activities are carried out in their mother tongue. This situation also has social and emotional consequences, as their families expect to see them graduate to access a better quality of life.

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2. Rationale

Colombian newspapers and media have recently reported low international test scores regarding English proficiency in Colombia (Orduz,2020) . Despite the efforts made by the government through the NBP, learning English as a foreign language in Colombia still has particular challenges for diverse populations, such as the population of the Eighth-semester environmental engineering students at the chosen university for this particular study.

According to the EPI (English Proficiency Index) made by EF, an international educational company, in 2020 Colombia ranked number 77 out of 100 countries with a very low English proficiency and dropping 17 positions compared to previous years. Based on these results, EF's country manager, Catalina Arteaga, pointed out the importance of improving English performance in Colombia and implied that citizens should perceive English as a communicative strategy for professional development, rather than a requirement for companies or institutions (Orduz 2021).

Currently, numerous courses for specific English proficiency tests are available on the Colombian educational market. 48 percent of Colombian respondents said they needed English skills for university, while it is unclear whether this refers to entry or exit requirements or both, it is likely that it refers to English exit requirements at Colombian universities, where B2 CEFR

certification of English language attainment is necessary for graduation (The British Council,

2015).

To clearly illustrate how this problem can be an opportunity to empower Eighth-semester

environmental engineering students at the university, empowerment studies from prestigious

universities serve as a guide to propose critical thinking strategies through English teaching

practice (Hussain, & Zafar 2009).

Furthermore, our group of study should not learn English only as a university requirement

since it will bring even more insecurities, difficulties in the exams, lack of motivation, and lack

of connection to their labor fields. As claimed by Paulo Freire (2005), critical pedagogy

examines how market education has a cognitive, psychological, and social impact on the

learners; resulting in the students' performances being affected.

On the other hand, sociolinguistic theories evidence how discourse and power

relationships are linked (Dijk, 2010). This framework provides Eighth-semester environmental

engineering students with critical awareness of the power dynamics in the classroom (Foucault,

1992). This research was born from the voice of those who have experienced first hand, the

obstacle, as they call it, which demands getting a B2 English level as a prerequisite for

graduating. Therefore, it is clear that this type of power dynamic sets a high bar for students who

are about to finish their professional studies, thus, creating discomfort and uncertainty among them.

Additionally, this research project opens a discussion to how future researchers and teachers within the English Language Teaching arena should face the challenges of implementing bilingual education policies in diverse contexts. It fosters a reflection on how our teaching practices might impact students' lives and on how standardized testing might not always be a positive tool for diverse learners.

3. Research Question

The research question below is based on collecting and telling stories. This research is concerned with establishing answers to the whys and hows of the phenomenon in question: the difficulty that Eighth-semester environmental engineering students have to graduate because of their low English level proficiency.

Based on a qualitative approach, and within the advocacy and participatory worldview, the following research question was proposed as part of this narrative inquiry design:

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How have Environmental Engineering Eighth-semester students´ L2 learning paths been shaped and influenced by the Colombian NBP?

This paper also aims:

- To understand how the implementation of the Bilingualism Plan affects the professional lives of Eighth-semester environmental engineering students.

- To interpret the phenomenon of what type of emotions Eighth-semester environmental engineering students feel when being exposed to a second language.

- To recognize the diversity of Colombia's Educational Space in order to reflect on effective English teaching practices.

4. Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this section is to examine the main concepts that will delimit the framework necessary to address the problem mentioned in the question before. Tracing this conceptual path is valuable to the understanding of meanings at their origin and how these are related with the current discussion. First, the concept of second language learning at university level will be explained. This concept is of vital importance to comprehend the particular characteristics and needs of learners at this educational level.

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In the second place, Bilingualism policy led by *The Ministry of Education* (MEN) in Colombia is also a key concept in this research, especially the programs on second language education and how it has been developed, implemented and upgraded through the last twenty years. Standardized testing systems based on *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) became a relevant topic in the context of the national bilingualism program (NBP). In order to review in detail the experiences of the population of this study, these concepts will be interconnected.

Finally, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) will be conceptualized and then proposed as a standpoint that can enrich the interpretations of narratives of the Eighth semester students of Environmental Engineering.

4.1 Second language learning

Multidisciplinary researches including psychology, linguistics, applied linguistics, cognitive science, neuroscience and education have tried to understand the process that occurs when learning a second language. In particular, researchers seek to document what and how it happens. We can find different interpretations of this process, but for this particular case study, a sociolinguistic approach will be used. This theory recognizes the cultural character of language, to understand the way in which it shapes the way we think.

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In the field of second language acquisition it is stated that learning or acquisition may take place through formal or informal means (Baker, 2000); informally through street, nursery school and community, or formally through school, adult classes and language courses. There is no single 'best' route by which learners, young or old, become competent in a second In the field of second language acquisition it is stated that learning or acquisition may take place through formal or informal means (Baker, 2000).

One of the most important characteristics of a second language student is age. Older students have greater cognitive maturity. However, the later the age of acquisition, the greater the number of errors that learners usually show while performing. According to Ruyun (2016), some adolescents or adults who start to learn a second language will fail to achieve language fluency, while children who were exposed to a second language at an early age seem to be proficient like native speakers (p.1).

This is an important factor to take into account, some students perceive more commitment to the English learning process or even less depending on the area of knowledge of their career. Likewise, professionalization for economic reasons puts extra pressure on the student which triggers anxiety and the impossibility to improve their quality of life.

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Probably the most exciting finding for second-language learning is that with very limited exposure to a second language, learners can at least have positive results in their brains responses related to grammatical processing just like native speakers, for properties that are similar between their first and second languages (Gabriele et al., 2021). Besides, Escudero (2019) mentions that learners will initially perceive and produce the sounds of the L2 and recognize L2 words in the same way they do so in their own native language (p. 25).

We can see how different authors, including Escudero, refer to the fact that learning a second language is significant in this time, in which globalization has an immense impact in people's lives; thus, it is imperative to learn English to be able to communicate. For example it has been said "Second language (L2) use is one of the most effective avenues toward improving and promoting intercultural communication in a multicultural society" (Clément, 1984 p. 13). Nowadays, learning English has become an essential tool in order to have better academic and professional opportunities in this multicultural world, for that reason second language learning in an institutional context promotes in favor of bilingualism the necessity of having a second language, or acquiring it during the process of studying a professional career. Thus, second language acquisition becomes a crucial aspect in this research, due to the fact that it is the scenario in which this phenomenon is being studied, that is how participants narrated their L2 learning experiences, from childhood to adulthood, besides they showed how learning English throughout their Engineering program had different facets and experiences, some of them were

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good others not. However, not only second acquisition is important in this research but also emotions and feelings. This is because learning a second language is more than a cognitive process, it also has to do with how you feel in the process of learning, which is the reason we will study the role of emotions in the learning second language process.

Classrooms are full of emotions, research shows that students experience many emotions during classes, assignments and tests. These emotions can be positive or negative. The processing of emotions is carried out, mainly, by the limbic system where the sensations received are interpreted and given meaning. Long-term memory also plays a fundamental role in this process, together with the sensory receptors, they bind and activate memories associated with those sensations. As a result, learners are provided with pertinent information about the stimulus presented, thus helping them to understand whether what is happening threatens them or brings them well-being (Pekrun, 2014,p. 52). Emotions play a fundamental role in learning, they make learning knowledge easier to consolidate. Experiences associated with high levels of emotion are easier to remember.

Pekrun (2014) classified the emotions experienced in the classroom into four categories: Achievement emotions which are related to success and failure resulting from activities at school or university, Epistemic emotions are emotions triggered by cognitive problems, such as confusion or frustration; Topic emotions are triggered by topics presented in lessons, for example

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a student motivated by an interesting lesson; Finally, social emotions are related to teachers and peers in the classroom (p. 45).

All of these emotions can have important effects on students' learning and achievement. Emotions control the students' attention, influence their motivation to learn, modify the choice of learning strategies, and affect their self-regulation of learning. Furthermore, emotions are part of students' identity, and they affect personality development, psychological health and physical health (Pekrun, 2014, p. 52).

Students' emotions are intimately linked with their motivation and identity. According to (Mendez et al., 2013) emotions can enhance motivation in learning a foreign language, both positive and negative emotions have a significant impact on the motivation of foreign language learners.

There is some evidence that neutral to pleasant affective states are more beneficial to students' behavioral and cognitive engagement and should thus be promoted within the classroom so students have more opportunities to learn effectively. Future research, however, will need to more carefully examine whether unpleasant effects may serve a useful role. (Phye et al., 2014).

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4.2 National Bilingualism Program (NBP)

The Colombian government has developed several projects and laws aimed at improving the education system. In 1994, the General Education Law was approved, which formalized English teaching in Colombian schools. On the other hand, the country's economic policy encourages relations between Colombia and other countries and the recognition of foreign languages, especially English. In 1996 the Ministry of Education of Colombia published *"Curricular Guidelines in Foreign Languages"* and a year later announced the opening of the *'National Bilingualism Program',* aimed at expanding the student's knowledge of English.

The National Bilingualism Program is relevant for this research because its implementation has impacted students' lives directly. In the search to train competent professionals, the Colombian government has designed the NBP. However, this series of strategies has not given the expected results (The British Council, 2015). These policies' implementation has had immediate effects on the entire educational community. Regarding university students, those who do not achieve the goals proposed by the MEN will not be allowed to access their professional market.

The National Bilingualism Program has been defined by MEN as a strategic project for the improvement of educational quality, in particular for the improvement of English teaching in

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Colombia. Since its inception, the program has chosen to respond to national interests regarding the learning of English and has focused its efforts on training teachers and students of elementary, middle, and higher education based on international standards. The implementation of the Program is based on the mastery and improvement of communicative competence of English.

On July 12, 2013, Law 1651 was created, through which some articles of Law 115 of 1994 were modified and the Bilingualism Law was promulgated. It presents in detail the requirements for the development of communicative skills in English, in addition to clarifying the route for the creation of programs in the teaching of languages in the country. The NBA seeks to develop strategies that encourage the use of English as a vehicle for communication, cultural exchange and a tool for the integral formation of the Colombian students.

The MEN has developed specialized programs such as Connecting Cultures, which seeks to connect 350 Colombian Educational Institutions with foreign classrooms that allow communicative and cultural exchange in English and Colombian Spanish as a foreign language. In 2019 the MEN proposed that mastering a foreign language represents a comparative advantage, an attribute of their competence and competitiveness, so according to NBP that requirement must become a "competence for all" (MEN, 2006).

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The main objective of the NBP is to promote citizens' communicative competences in English with international standards, in order to stimulate the country's development in the global economy. Among the specific objectives, the NBP seeks that from 2019 all students finish their secondary education with an intermediate level (B1). Likewise, it is expected that all English teachers in the country will have at least an intermediate-advanced level (B2).

The implementation of NBP is of particular interest for this work regarding the university context. These policies project that in the coming years at least 40% of Colombian university students will have a B2 level of English.

According to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the B2 level implies that these higher education populations have the fluency to communicate effortlessly with native speakers, this level can be described as "confidently" in the sense of "I speak English with confidence". The official word that describes this level of English is "upper intermediate." These standards, despite being well-intentioned, directly affect the development of the professional life of many Colombian students because reality shows that obtaining that level is rather complicated in several contexts and territories of our country.

On the other hand, the National Plan for Bilingualism in Colombia (NBP) has been widely criticized during the last years. These discussions have helped the development of the

NBP, thanks to the work of researchers the educational policies have been modified to be less

hegemonic.

As a result, the MEN has adopted an approach of bilingualism based on the diversity and recognition of indigenous languages. Despite the NBP, Colombia still has a low English level, which can be evidenced in standardized English tests scores. In the current scenario the goals proposed by the Ministry of National Education may not be accomplished (The British Council, 2015).

4.3 Standardized testing systems based on CEFR

A standardized English test is any form of examination that measures English proficiency. It requires all test takers to answer the same questions. Answers are scored in a standardized manner so that the relative performance of individual students or groups of students can be compared (Alderson et al., 2006; Hiranburana et al., 2017). The CEFR has been adopted locally and globally as a standard reference for language education. It also describes which communicative skills a learner needs to develop in order to communicate effectively in a particular language (Leńko-Szymańska, 2015).

Tests are the way we can be measured through results not just in English learning, but also in many fields. In this case, standardized tests, according to Hattie (2012), inform students how good they are, what they still may need, and such tests should aim to motivate students to greater effort, during the learning process. Another important thing to add is that those tests

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cover the learning objectives learnt during the whole and the previous process of the students, making it possible to have confidence in themselves. However, when students are not well prepared for these tests and they obtain bad results, their morality and self-esteem are negatively affected.

The MEN defines and socializes standards for all levels of education in Colombia. To the basic group of standards are added the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages: English, which according to the MEN, contribute to Colombian students preparing to face the demands of the globalized world.

The NBP chose the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment", a document developed by the European Council, which describes the scale of performance levels that the student of a language is achieving. The MEN has adopted these levels as specific goals for the different populations of the educational system, which is why tests based on the CEFR began to be used in Colombia to evaluate the performance of students.

According to the document *Basic Standards of Competence in Foreign Languages: English,* B1 was established as the minimum level for 100% of High School graduates, and B2 as the standard for graduates of university careers and English teachers. In the case of new graduates of university degrees in languages, the required level is C1. Nevertheless, there are

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several positive impacts as well as difficulties and potential problems in the application of the
CEFR in the language high education context of Colombia. Undoubtedly, CEFR can be a great
pedagogical tool, however it cannot replace the evaluation process, because this process is
constant throughout the educational program, and the fact that you obtained a low result in the
CEFR does not always mean that your level is bad, this could be due the other circumstances.

As evidenced above, Colombia has established and strengthened a mercantilist approach
to education to improve economic development indicators through human development. These
approaches are based on competencies that educational institutions should develop according to
market needs, therefore, as it has been argued, one of the strategies applied by the MEN was to
adhere to the CEFR guidelines (MEN, 2004).

Due to Colombian diversity and complexity, this approach would be unrealistic.
According to Guerrero (2008), "Bilingualism is constructed as a packed, monolithic and
homogeneous concept (p.27)"; this perspective could generate a gap between what is established
by the MEN, and the realities faced by the educational community throughout the national
territory, especially where English is not spoken daily.

Test standardization based on CERF is paramount for this study, as the participants have
not been able to graduate and start their profession due to the fact that their English skills need to
be measured based on the ITEP test. Thus, having a critical stance on this concept allowed a

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deeper understanding of the motivations and interests that underlie the implementation of this type of international test in Colombia. This also allowed us to highlight the weaknesses that emerge in the implementation of bilingual education guidelines in Colombia.

4.4 Critical discourse analysis

Teun A. van Dijk defines CDA as an analytical discourse research that primarily studies how the abuse of social power, dominance, and inequality are practiced, reproduced, and occasionally combated by texts and speech in the social and political context. Critical discourse analysis, with such peculiar research, explicitly takes sides, and hopes to contribute effectively to resistance against social inequality (Londoño, 2010).

According to Bolivar (2004):

 This conception of discourse leads us to pay greater attention to the interpersonal aspects of the meaning construction, without neglecting what is related to the knowledge representation, but without losing sight that things mean something because there is a social interaction as a general framework for the interpretation.

Discourse is fundamentally action because through it we can construct and perceive reality (Van Dijk, 2014). This discourse consciousness can generate changes in our society, in

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our daily context, in our universities. Our goal should be to examine what we say and evaluate what we know and what we can do with that knowledge in the education field.

Critical discourse analysis model is a methodological approach that allows the researchers to examine the structural role of discourses in the research's social context. Thus, implementing some elements of CDA to analyze data can reveal the connection between discursive and other problem interaction, rather than reducing everything to discourse, as some relativist forms of discourse analysis do.

4.5 Identities in the field of language learning

Although it is true that when learning a second language we are exposed to following a series of rules that are not only related to the language, we are also subject to complying with standards that have been established in Europe here in our country, Colombia. We must keep in mind that this type of implementation is presented in many countries around the world as a way to adequately follow the learning of a second language, sometimes leaving aside the multiple identities that exist in the learning process in different environment.This is why, on the path of students wanting to graduate with a diploma, they come across the fact that in government policies, standardized tests and the established dynamics do not consider identities paramount in their implementations. This shows us that what has already been established in other countries where the teaching of a second language is taken into account, but does not choose to create a

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plan that favors the learning processes of the students and therefore their professional goals are affected or become stagnant.

With the aforementioned, we must bring to light an issue that is little taken into account when it comes to teaching, the identities of the students. David Block (2007), Doctor in Education, declares in his education research that identity is an important factor in the different learning contexts of a second language, so the different contexts in which a second language is taught must be taken into account. In Colombia we can find different student experiences, the own language of the learner and gender expressions based on ideas that have been taught during the socialization processes in both parties, either at home or at school.

In the words of Wenger (1998), identity can be developed in the relationships we have with others in different contexts, either from our lived experiences and unfolding towards what is known as the future. Identities are a flexible construction that can be shaped and worked with ease, they can also be dynamic or permanent, taking into account what we are and what we can become as a result of our participation with others in this experience called life (Wenger,1998). It is a continuous process of negotiation of participating in a community of practice, which gives rise to the unalterable course of growth in human learning.

A growing number of studies in the area of identities focused on language learning adopt a particular approach which is post-structuralist. It pays attention to meanings and the way in

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which a subject produces itself, especially through language, which has presented the concept of identity in learning a second language. According to Danielewicz (2001), identity refers to "our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are" (p.176). The author's point of view on the term *identity* and the relationship between the development of identity and discourse were analyzed in a learning environment; thus, the author pinpoints that the identities of individuals are produced through participation in the discourse of others. To be more specific, "Identities are the result of dynamic interplay between discursive processes that are internal (to the individual) and external (involving everyone else)" (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 176).

The identities of the students in the words of Danielewicz (2001), are determined by the social class and the economic conditions of their families, which during a process of learning a second language influence, affect and even conflict with the attempt to an individual to become a bilingual person, who easily acquires the knowledge of another language. The author also mentions the role of the positions that we adopt in the construction of identity and is based on what has already been pointed out by Stuart Hall (1997) "it is how we are represented by the positions that we take (or we are forced to adopt) in different times and places, and the social roles we play in each varying circumstance, that make us (momentarily) who we are" (p. 32).

Gass (2008), a distinguished Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Michigan State University, says, family is the place where each individual can find his or her own identity

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and develop a sense of power, which makes that person have a special condition and saying it in other way has his or her own identity (p.25). That is the reason why we can not leave aside this important context in a second language learning. Besides, she states that where we came from is very important and meaningful to know ourselves in different contexts, not just in learning, she says, "Identity is very important because everyone needs to know his or her own root" (2008, p. 116). According to this, it is necessary to say that in relation to learning a second language it has been a crucial factor as a need for development in society that completely modifies the borders giving us the possibility of interconnecting our knowledge.

The construction of the participants' language learner identities has been shaped by their language learning processes, national bilingualism policies, standardized tests, and power relations, teaching that many times we are supposed to follow certain already established standards for learning a second language and do to this, it is necessary for us, as students to hide or delegitimize our identity in a learning environment, uprooting ourselves from who we really are in the educational environment, in order to comply with a series of rules that are imposed on us in the student environment.

5. Literature review

Teaching English in non-English speaking countries has been a rising trend in the educational market. The pedagogical field has also demonstrated interest in this

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phenomenon. In the last twenty years, various researches have been published on bilingualism policies in non-English speaking countries. Here is a review of literature based on the impact of English proficiency tests as a graduation requirement of university students from non-English-speaking countries.

In 2004, Dongwan Cho challenged the requirement for English proficiency tests in college settings. This qualitative study examined how many universities in Korea required specific results on tests designed to measure the level of English proficiency to graduate. As a result, several Korean students had been affected emotionally, socially, and economically. The data analyzed concluded that the Korean policies of bilingualism were based mostly on economic interests by pedagogues.

In early 2006, the British Council published a report on the role and conditions of the English language around the world (Graddol, 2006). In this wide report, the applied linguistics specialist, David Graddol, not only analyzed the current situation of English in the international scenario, but he also made some intriguing predictions regarding the future of this language and how it would be taught. According to Graddol, the vast majority of EFL students had failed trying to learn the language. The educational system did not require a large number of good English speakers. However, this is no longer the case. As has happened with basic computer skills, all aspiring professionals will need basic English.

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Most of the predictions made by that investigation of the British council were correct. Currently, English does not belong to native speakers. Today English has permeated aspects of the lives of citizens of non-English speaking countries in a way that had not been seen before (The British Council, 2015).

In 2008 Carmen Helena Guerrero published an article at the University of Francisco José de Caldas, reporting a critical analysis of the discourse of the NBP's proposed document Basic Standards of Foreign Language Proficiency. Analysis was limited by the theory of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the theory of symbolic power, particularly language as symbolic power.

This discourse analysis concluded that NBP discourse suggests that Colombian bilingualism means speaking English, promoting a monolithic and homogenous conception of Colombian bilingualism. According to (Guerrero, 2008), the NBP guidelines exclude Colombian native language speakers and only encourage English class.

In 2009, *The Washback of the General English Proficiency Test on University Policies: A Taiwan Case Study*, illustrated how the compulsory teaching of English impacted communities in Taiwan. Research work has been carried out in several countries and it is a sample of how this problem has become increasingly relevant around the world. Within the context of Taiwan, universities seek teaching excellence and better English learning

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outcomes, so English proficiency tests have been imposed on thousands of university students as one of their degree requirements.

Such research developed by the University of New York obtained empirical data from two applied foreign language departments of technological universities in Taiwan. One department did not lay down any English test as a degree requirement, whereas the other required its daytime students to pass the listening and reading proficiency tests. In each department teachers were interviewed; in addition, departmental documents and records were reviewed. Results showed that teachers had to consider social and educational factors, school factors, and parental and student factors before they decided if they would implement their English requirement (Hsu, 2009).

In 2012, there were already papers about the problem of English as a requirement in Colombia. That year the University of La Sabana published on the challenges of the NBP proposed in 2004. It stipulated the guidelines and objectives for its development throughout the country. That article analyzed the pros and cons of the Program through documentary research and presented reflections on Colombian English teaching policies (Fandiño-Parra, 2012).

In 2015, the British Council published the widest quantitative study on bilingualism policies in Colombia named *English in Colombia: An examination of policy, perceptions and*

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influencing factors. This quantitative study concluded that due to global trends, English was set to become highly valued in the marketplace. For that reason English in Colombia has been widely seen as a skill for greater employability, regardless of whether English is actually used or necessary in the Colombian workplace.

Without a doubt the English culture in Colombia is growing. However, the challenges faced by English teachers continue to present barriers to positive and equitable English acquisition in formal education. The British council researchers evidenced how real English acquisition is currently a privilege reserved to higher socio-economic strata, where students often have access to bilingual or private education. It suggested that public programmes should provide more opportunities for equitable learning in the country (The British Council, 2015).

In 2017 the argumentative essay entitled *El inglés en la educación superior: su necesidad de mejorar la aplicación en Colombia* written by Correa was published. This text exposed how the process of globalization that was developing in the different countries made the command of English a fundamental part in the professionalization. Therefore, universities had to begin to evaluate the way they were applying English in their undergraduate programs, to recognize if they were truly developing the skills needed to respond to the needs of the

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country from a globalized world on social, cultural, economic and political issues (Correa, 2017).

Also articles such as the one in the scientific magazine *Dominio de las ciencias,* published the same year, added how learning English is of vital importance mainly for university students. Since, according to that article, most of the basic bibliography of the different careers is in English, as well as the necessary information on the Internet. This article discusses the usefulness of knowing this language in Higher Education, as well as its usefulness once the student graduates (Chávez, 2017).

Recently, regional University Center of Panama researchers have considered that the training of bilingual professionals in all areas of knowledge is essential for social development (González 2019). At the Regional University Center of Panama West every year there are more students who cannot graduate satisfactorily and do not immediately obtain their degree, since an English exam is required as accreditation to graduate. Understanding this issue was the objective of Gonzalez's study. That research suggests an andragogic methodology in the teaching of the English language to address the problem (González, 2019).

On the other hand, publications such as *English Language Policy Relevance in a Colombian Rural Area: A Case Study in Antioquia*, demonstrated how the Colombian

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government's vision of bilingualism is discriminatory and does not adjust to the needs and
realities of the students. The study followed the parameters of qualitative research and the
case study method, having as main data collection techniques documentary analysis and
interviews conducted with the seven educational representatives of the municipality, chosen
to participate in the study. It was found that, according to the perception of the citizens who
participated in this study, the linguistic policies that the national government is implementing
around bilingualism become an ethereal discourse for the inhabitants of rural areas, while
they are perceived as a homogenizing proposal that does not respond to the needs of rural
communities, and that is finally not being implemented effectively. This work evidenced the
lack of coherence between state educational policies and the daily contexts of the populations
(Peláez, 2017).

Regarding linguistic diversity protection, the State has contemplated two linguistic
policies, one in reference with the bilingualism for indigenous communities and the other one
related to the certification of a few levels in foreign language. The Thesis *Eventos narrativos
de estudiantes indígenas frente al requisito de lengua extranjera para obtener el grado en
sus universidades* adopts a definition of bilingualism from a sociolinguistic perspective. The
methodology of this work was the analysis of narrative events, understood as discursive acts
narrated orally or in writing.

In total there were four interviews of indigenous students from universities in Bogota. The thesis published by the Javeriana University in 2017 makes a deep reflection on the impact that state education policies in Colombia have on indigenous communities. In the same way the publication from magazine Ikala demonstrated the lack of awareness and commitment of Colombian educational policies with the rural communities (Miranda, 2012).

Despite the wide variety of research on the problem, there are still gaps that can be addressed to better adapt public policies in Colombia to the realities of the communities. Certainly, The voices and experiences of the participants in this research can help fill in the current void in literature.

6. Methodology

The methodology chosen for this research is based on a narrative design. Narrative research design analyzes life stories and experiences about events considering a chronological perspective. Researchers write narratives about the experiences of individuals, describe a life experience, and discuss the meaning of the experience. This method is about collecting and telling stories, it is also a means for exploring and understanding human problems (Creswell, 2022).

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Human beings express themselves through various ways and means, from hand-writing to social networks on the Internet, and such expressions are ways to represent personal identities and experiences. According to Hernandez Sampieri (2014), qualitative designs aim to capture such narratives. The variety of experiences lived by the participants and their different interpretations make up a complex scenario, therefore, such a narrative methodology is in line with our research objectives.

People tell stories to capture the rich complexity of human life and give meaning to lived experiences. Narrative inquiry works with detailed stories drawn in some way from participants, stories that reveal how people view and understand their lives (Wertz, 2011). In addition, narratives also shape people's perceptions of reality; when we examine narratives we look for how people perceive reality. Hence, narrative inquiry is an alternative research method that responds to contemporary research issues, this methodology is ideal for research in complex and dynamic environments (Mertova & Webster, 2019).

In this line, narrative inquirers can fully embrace the intricate complexity of stories and their storytellers. Since the current needs of learners are complex, the methods outlined can be used to successfully address this situation. That is the reason why in this line, narrative designs have a great value in teaching and learning research and are more relevant than ever, because when implementing this kind of approach, the researchers are co-constructors of stories to be

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re-told and re-presented. Thus, researchers should be fully immersed in the same socio-cultural context as the research participants during the data collection and the process of analysis, additionally, participants and inquirers are emotionally and psychologically more vulnerable than with other qualitative methodologies (Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021).

In this type of research, the researcher becomes the interpreter of the individual's stories, which means that multiple interpretations are possible. Therefore researchers must be transparent about their understanding of the notion of story. On the other hand, a relationship based on respect and empathy is established between researchers and participants. All the narrative material must be interpreted through a strong ethical and critical approach to preserve the integrity of the stories told and retrieved to answer the research question (Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021).

This method fits the needs of our research and provides us with a rich framework of meaning. The narrative telling is not mimetic; it is not an exact representation of what happened, but a particular construction of events created in a particular setting, for a particular audience, for particular purposes, to create a certain point of view (Mishler, 2004). We certainly believe that analyzing the life stories of engineering students in relation to the bilingual scenario in Colombia allows for a deeper understanding of issues that might have been neglected. The narrative design enhances our awareness of the impact of educational policies on society; for example, the need

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for standardized tests in rural areas can be deconstructed through participant narratives, resulting in deeper and analytical conversations between educators, stakeholders and the communities. Furthermore, these narratives allow us to understand how NBP has struggled to implement its policies in specific settings.

Besides, the selected approach aims at representing and understanding the sequence of phenomena, facts and events through the life stories or narratives of individuals and groups. Despite the importance of clearly and concisely sharing the findings, the information that this work entails has allowed us to understand through the questions established in each of the interviews how this deficit on the participants' English proficiency does not allow students to successfully culminate their program. It is necessary to mention that we are conducting a narrative inquiry using a wide range of data collection, analytical methods and procedures and, according to Kramp (2004), it was also necessary to base ourselves on the personal stories of the participants, stories of experiences lived in the past or imagined in the future.

Without a doubt, this research has led us to significant advances in theorizing in the field of language, being more specific in the learning of a second language, - English - in a rural Colombian context. The use of narrative inquiry has allowed us to examine how human beings perceive and assimilate reality in different fields of learning. With this methodology we better

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understood the identities of students when they faced new learning that may have or may have not been easy, and understandable to them (Varghese, 2008).

Due to the fact that the objective of NBP is to promote students and citizens in their communicative skills so that they can be measured with international English standards and, with this, stimulate the development of a country in the global economy, this approach seems accurate and aligned with the need to comprehend the phenomena. It facilitates the understanding of the participants' stories, whose lives are pigeonholed in having to learn a second language in order to complete a professional career, in which, based on Sarbin (1986), events are connected in what we could define as a frame that has beginning, middle and end points.

When we talk about learning experiences, it is important to mention that these take place in a process that has allowed people, students, citizens to grow in a specific field, with this we mean that in the course of these processes we can find stories, contexts , cultures, societies, families that allow us to have an idea of how easy or difficult it has been to be able to acquire a second language, and this is what we want to narrate in this chapter to show what in the words of Geertz (1973), is the "mixed gender", which is related to systematic analysis of the narrated experience (interviewees) with literary deconstruction (relationship between text and meaning) and hermeneutical analysis of meaning (interpretation of texts).

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Likewise, this methodology included data collection instruments with participatory elements based on the subjects' experiences, in which important data of the investigation can be verified. These were a focus group, interviews, artifacts and notes by the interviewers. With these diverse techniques a triangulation process was carried out, from which it was possible for us to understand how the education in different environments, emotions, points of view, culture, and life experiences of the students create different ways of learning. Such reflection invites us to rethink the process of learning a L2, so that students in the future are not affected in their chosen careers by finding themselves with the requirement that a second language or an exam, in this case English, be requested to be able to complete a professional career.

The narrative inquiry process we followed is depicted in Figure 1. This process entailed 4 stages: planning, action, general narrative, and analysis. Even if this methodology contains elements from other methodological frameworks, every stage was developed rigorously in order to assure reliability and validity.
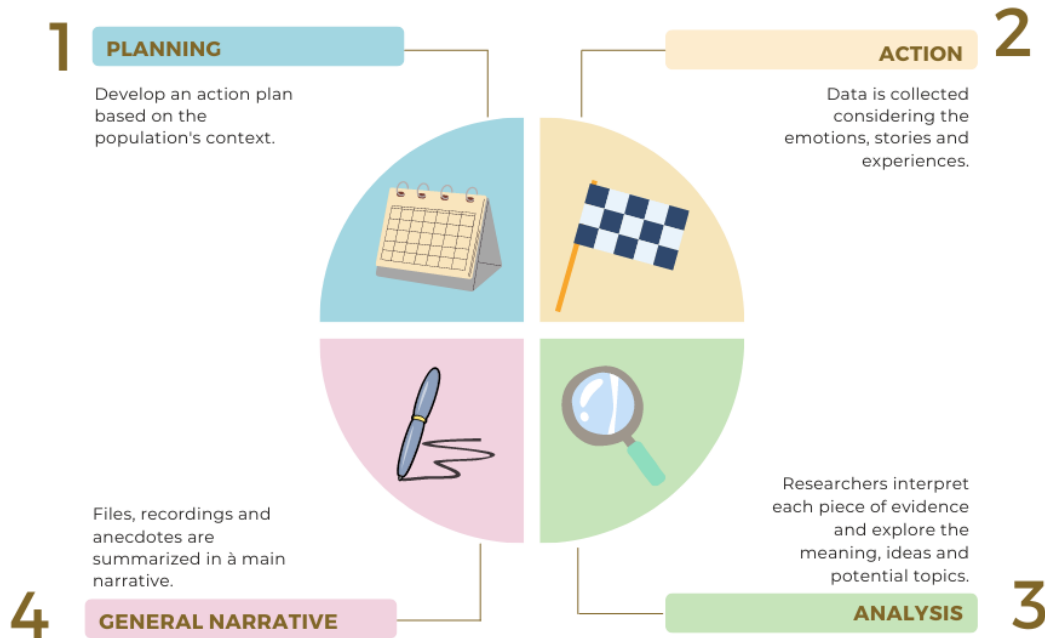
Figure 1. Research stages

7. Context description

As explained previously, this study was conducted in a Eight-semester environmental engineering class at a private university in Bogotá. This university offers a diverse range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs after more than four decades of activity. This institution is known for its humanistic approach to science and technology, based on ethical values at the service of social development. The university has its main offices in Bogotá, and

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facilities in Cajica and Medellín. The Ministry of Education certified it as a university on August 19, 2014, by Resolution No. 13370, and the institution aligned itself with the Ministry of Education's aims in terms of bilingualism and teaching English as a foreign language.

The university adheres to the regulations that promote English learning as part of obtaining the degree, post-graduate or certification of language proficiency. This policy is aimed at offering foreign language training to students, which allows them to build interpersonal, intercultural, work and educational relationships in different countries of the world and therefore contextualizes them in the global environment.

As mentioned before in the theoretical framework, students need to certify a B1 level of English based on the CEFR to graduate as professionals from the university. The language center offers a wide range of face-to-face and virtual English courses with the aim of providing a communicative pedagogical approach and support resources for students to improve their communication skills in English.

Each of these programs is conformed to different academic content based on the levels proposed by the CEFR, the courses must be taken level by level, because one is a prerequisite for the other. The university's language center also offers tests for students who are interested in homologating the B1 proficiency level for their degree requirements.

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The participants who volunteered to participate in this study were 6 students, who were almost finishing their university studies in the second semester of 2021 in the face-to-face modality. However, due to the obstacles that they face in understanding English as a second language, their lives, routines and learning process have changed, therefore their graduation is delayed for not meeting the requirements that are required to achieve this. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. Our participants were 5 men and 1 woman.

8. Participants

The majority of the students are from a middle class socioeconomic background and live in a rural context. Participants play an influential role in the diverse narrative that was constructed during this analysis. The five male participants were Eighth-semester environmental engineering students between the ages of 22 and 35. A female participant between 22 and 35 years of age was also part of the group. This particular case was chosen because it enriches the analysis of the problematic. The participant has a profile with similar characteristics, the participant comes from a rural area and could not graduate as a professional due to her limitations in the English language. Most of the participants reside or labor in small towns and work to support themselves and family members.

Regarding education, all the participants have attended elementary and middle school. Some of them have previously studied technical careers, or some other university career. Most of

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them have studied in public schools. Currently, the participants are about to graduate as environmental engineers, and they are preparing to accomplish all of the English courses offered by their university, or to obtain the required certificate through a proficiency English test called ITEP. Although none of the participants are fluent in English, they have all attempted to learn the language at some point in their life.

9. Data Collecting Instruments

Since most research involves data collection, there is a wide range of methods to meet the needs of each research. Data collection and analysis can be done by reading, observing, measuring, questioning, or a combination of strategies. Because of the qualitative nature of this study, data gathering procedures that specialize in analyzing the richness and complexity of the participants' experiences were required. To comprehend this kind of social problem it is necessary to have a flexible approach that adapts to each participant's story and dialogue with them. Similarly, data collection methods should concentrate on obtaining relevant information that aids in the integral reconstruction of stories. Qualitative research provides depth to data, interpretive richness, contextualization, specific details, and unique experiences (Creswell, 2022).

When collecting data within a narrative approach, researchers should be fully immersed in the participants' socio-cultural contexts, researchers should also take into consideration

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participants' identities and socio-economic status. In narrative design, a researcher is a co-constructor of stories, additionally researchers must be aware of ethical considerations like the importance of keeping accurate, systematic and confidential records (Sampieri, 2014, p. 394).

Three data collection instruments were used for this research. The first one was   the semi-structured interview, which is ideal to adapt to the narrative of each participant in search of possible new information. Artifacts designed for story telling, and focus groups were used as well, these instruments are ideal for responding to each participant's story in search of new information. These data collection techniques provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and life stories that enable researchers to learn about personal attitudes and beliefs in ways that other research methodologies can not.

9.1 Semi-structured interview

For qualitative approaches the semi-structured interview is an essential data collection technique that captures data that may not be accessible through techniques such as observation or questionnaires. According to Sampieri (2014) ''the qualitative interview is more intimate, flexible and open than the quantitative one. This kind of data collecting instrument can be used to uncover each participant's views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations *''* (p.25).

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According to Blaxter (2001), this type of interview provides participants with guidance on what to say. Semi-structured interviews include several key questions that help identify relevant areas to explore, but also allow the interviewer to diverge in search of more detailed ideas or answers, this flexibility allows the researcher to link the participant's life story to the research question.

Therefore, even if Colombian students have been required to learn English as part of their process at university, and tests based on CERF have been used to check their levels of proficiency in this language, such Colombian students usually face strong difficulties to achieve that goal. Thus, by implementing a semi-structured interview, the researchers aimed to gather life stories, experiences, explanations, opinions, observations, and knowledge from the chosen population in the quest to comprehend their narratives related to what has meant to learn a new language under these circumstances.

 Since the participants feel more comfortable using their mother tongue and in order to capture the essence of each story, the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Afterwards, the answers were transcribed and translated with the necessary rigor.

The interviews were personal encounters with the participants which discussed several different questions related to their second language process acquired through their academic life.

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Before carrying out the interviews to the participants of this research they were piloted with three students from different careers in various universities in order to assure accurate levels of validity and reliability. According to Creswell (2022) "qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects" (p. 176). Therefore, by piloting this instrument, we sought for accuracy and for a more cohesive interview. Within such a process the interview was corrected in terms of interpretation to contextualize the answers in a proper manner.

9.2 Focus group

According to Sampieri (2014), focus groups are usually understood as group interviews due to their similarity, however this technique maximizes the benefits mentioned above and gives greater reliability to the data collected, because when you are sharing your stories or anecdotes with someone else and they have the same perspective or a similar experience this fact gives more credibility. On the other hand, this technique promotes dialogue in a spontaneous way while the researcher guides the discussion, this allows the moderator to dive deep into any problems that emerge during the session.

To develop these focus groups we proposed different questions for the participants in this study in a meeting in which they could argue how the second language acquisition process took

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place, and to make comparisons between them in aspects related to the schools they attended, the materials available, for example, how their learning process was in those schools, the methodology they learned along with the amount of time they studied in their English classes and so on, and so forth in the quest to find similarities or differences in their processes. The participants discussed the stories underneath their English language learning journey. They also reacted to a series of graphic pieces related to the research topic. Finally, the participants expressed through artifacts how they feel when they use English.

The researchers guided and moderated the discussion. However, the participants exchanged their different opinions, stories and comments in an open and free manner.

9.3 Artifacts

Finally, some artifacts were used and developed to comprehend the phenomenon in a deeper manner. Artifacts can be understood as "data in the form of physical texts produced by the students in a series of contexts at home and school [...]" (Lankshear Knobel, 2004, in Mojica, 2017, cited in Alviar, 2020, p.61). Therefore, during the Focus Groups drawing pieces were produced as data that enlighted other aspects of students' narratives. These drawings contained elements related to their experiences, hopes and dreams that depicted how learning English in the light of the NBP affected their lives.

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10. Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations of this research project followed the ethical guidelines of the School of Education at Universidad El Bosque.

Firstly, in line with the University's code of conduct, one of the members of this thesis group was the only one in charge of contacting the participants due to, as researchers, one researcher had to be in the context and contact the subjects using their anonymity. It is paramount to state that the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants have been ensured by using pseudonyms, which they have chosen or have been assigned to them. Respect for the dignity of the participants has always been our main goal.

The participants were given an informed consent, in which they were explained the purposes of the project, the instructions to follow for the group interview, and how long their participation was going to last. The participation of the volunteers did not carry out any kind of incentive; they agreed voluntarily and they were also notified that they could stop participating at any time if they wanted to.

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The current project deals with a range of ethical issues related to privacy and anonymity of their identities. Apart from what has been mentioned, in the quest to hear and respect our participants' voices, the transcripts, analysis, and results were shared with them.

11. Data managing and coding

This section provides an overview of the data collected and its triangulation, which refers to "the use of different sources and collection methods" (Sampieri, 2014, p. 417). Due to the complex nature of qualitative research, the search for different sources and a greater variety of collection methods and instruments, such as interviews, artifacts, focus groups, and notes taken by interviewers, facilitated a broader and deeper understanding of the narratives of the participants.

Following the flexible and dynamic approach of the narrative design methodology, we integrated the Grounded Theory data analysis proposed by Charmaz (2006) into the narrative analysis proposed by Sampieri (2014, p. 489). Therefore, we conducted semi-structured interviews to reconstruct the participants' learning journey. The data was collected "evaluating each piece of information, listening to the participants and considering their emotions" (Sampieri, 2014, p, 489). To enrich the interpretation, we brought the participants together to hold a focus group and discuss their experiences with each other. For example, we had questions such as, *Why did you start studying English* or *How important do you consider English to be in*

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your professional field?; thus, based on these kinds of questions they shared their answers based on their experience, furthermore some of them argued that English is very important to accomplish their goals.

Next, we transcribed the narratives to convert the pieces of evidence (audio recordings, drawings, field notes) into "files that could be handled in a computer program to be analyzed" (Sampieri, 2014, p, 489). For data analysis, we incorporated the coding process developed by Charmaz (2006). This methodology is composed of three stages. In the initial coding, we fragmented all pieces of data into sentences that worked as units for analysis. Once we got familiarized with the data in that initial coding, we identified the main categories and the sequence of events in focused coding. Based on this classification, we moved towards axial coding, from which we extracted 3 main concepts that contained the categories identified in the previous stage. This process was the result of finding associations between all the categories. We achieved a data saturation that synthesized all the data collected giving us a big picture of the stories. After this process, we created a visual representation of the 3 macro-categories and 9 sub-categories that represent the results of our analysis.
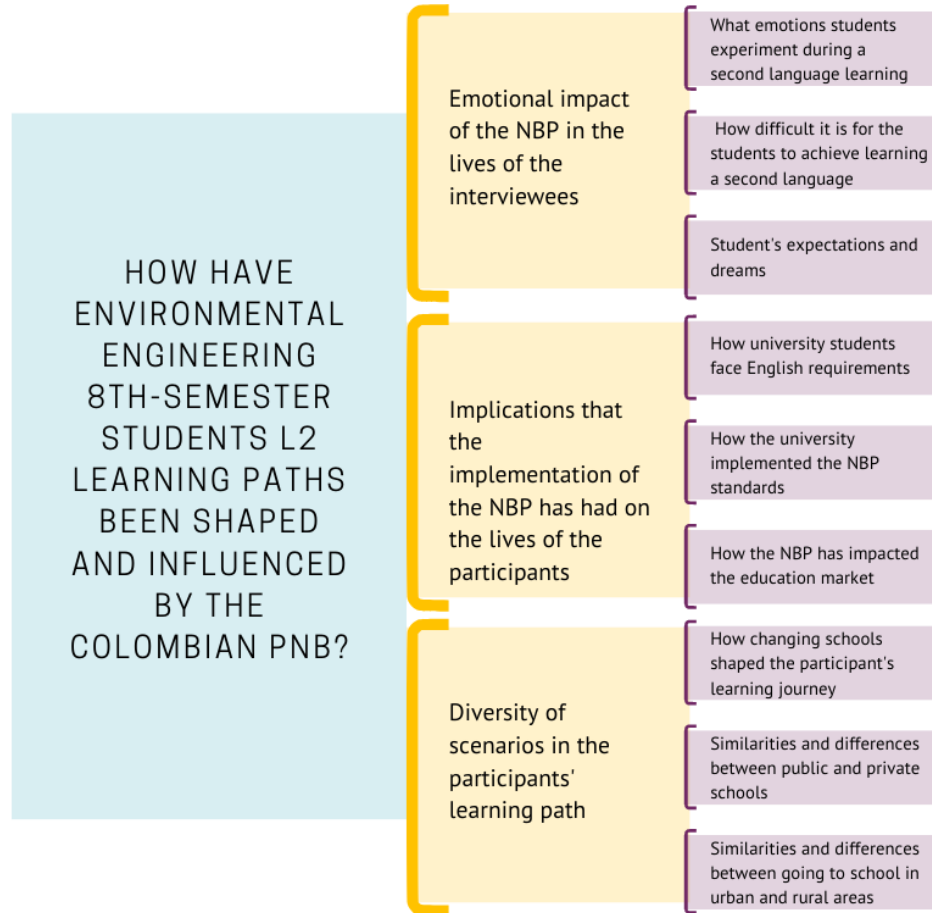
Figure 2. Code analysis and saturation: macro categories and subcategories

We found three macro categories that aligned with the research question of our study about how Eighth-semester Environmental Engineering students' L2 learning paths had been shaped and influenced by the Colombian PNB.
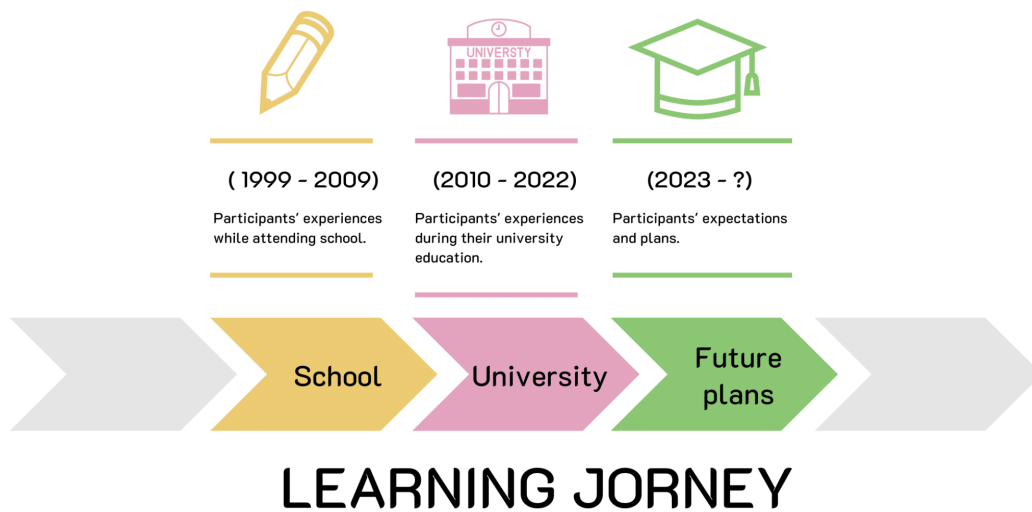
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The first macro category found was the *Emotional impact of the NBP in the lives of the interviewees*. In this category participants shared and described the different feelings they experienced during their learning journey. The analysis of the data contained in this category allowed us to interpret the type of emotions participants felt when being exposed to the English language in Colombian schools and universities. We also examined through the stories of the interviewees the *Implications that the implementation of the NBP has had on the lives of the participants*. With the data contained in this macro-category we contrasted the goals of bilingual educational policies with their actual influence in Colombian classrooms. Finally, the data analysis showed *the diversity of scenarios in the participants' learning path* and how the homogeneous vision of the NBP's policies moves away from it.

Following the methodology proposed by Sampieri (2014), we assembled the stories of each participant in a new general narrative identifying the most common sequence of events in the macro-categories. Once we located each category in the sequence we developed a general story in which we color coded, implementing three colors to organize the narratives in a sequential way (See figure 3). The yellow color indicates the school stage, the green color indicates the university stage, and the purple color future plans. We observed this in Figure 2: The sequence of events.

*In 2004, the National Bilingualism Act was created to transform language competencies across the entire education system.

*In 2012, two thirds of university entrants were at A1 or less in English, according to standardised test results.

*The goals of the national English language policy include mandatory English in schools and, by 2019, fluency at B1 for secondary school graduates, B2 for university graduates and B2 or C1 for teachers of English.

Figure 3. Sequence of events, NBP implementation data (The British Council, 2015)

11.1 Results

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The main goal of this study was to understand how participants' learning paths were shaped and influenced by NBP implementation. A narrative design was implemented to achieve a deeper understanding of participants' learning journey.

The proposed research question for this project was:

How have Environmental Engineering Eighth-semester students´ L2 learning paths been shaped and influenced by the Colombian NBP?

Therefore, in this section, we present the main categories and subcategories that were found to understand how the participants' learning journeys have been influenced by the NBP. The first macro category obtained was the *Emotional impact of PNB policies on student learning.* This macro category contains three subcategories: *What emotions students experienced during second language learning; How difficult it is for the students to achieve learning a second language in Colombia;* and *Students´ expectations and dreams.* The next macro category identified was *Implications of NBP policies on students' academic and professional performance.* Likewise, this macro category contained three subcategories: *How university students face the English requirements; How the university implemented the NBP standards; a*nd *How the NBP has impacted the education market.* The last macro-category found was

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Acknowledging Colombian diversity as a key factor for second language learning. The last macro category also entails three subcategories: *How changing schools shaped the participants' learning journey; Similarities and differences between public and private schools;* and *Similarities and differences between going to school in urban and rural areas.* Those categories will be described in light of the data.

11.2 Emotional impact of NBP policies on student's learning journey

Most participants had their first English language exposure during childhood. Stories took place during NBP implementation in Colombian schools and universities. Their earliest memories elapse during elementary school and capture NBP influence in their emotions. In the following interview fragments depict some of these memories:

> *The first time I studied English was in the third grade of elementary school. I've always liked it, but all my life it's been difficult for me, or maybe I haven't put much effort into it. I learned basic things like colors, numbers or how to introduce myself in English.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *I think my first experience with English was very young, when I was four or six years old, it was also at school.*
> *(Silva - Date 8-18-22)*

> *I remember at school it was just English worksheets and basic topics.*

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(Silva - Date 5-27-22)

I also started learning English at school, the truth is I never paid much attention to it.
(Jaime - Date 8-18-22)

In elementary school I did not care about English class.
No one spoke English, I attended it just to pass the subject.
(Andres - Date 5-16-22)

While participants attended secondary school, the scope of the NBP implementation

progressed throughout the national territory. English teaching brought out all kinds of emotions

in Colombian classrooms. A predominant element identified in the stories was self-confidence

issues. According to Pekrun (2014), self-confidence empowers students, but it also makes them

feel responsible for failure. Unstimulating topics and high levels of self-confidence can lead to

boredom, disinterest, or lack of motivation. The interview excerpts below illustrate how

participants reported feeling bored and unmotivated when attending their English classes at

school:

> *In my experience studying English at school seemed very monotonous, always repeating*
> *the topics, always the same schemes, the same methodology, English classes at school*
> *were Writing, Repeating ,Copying over and over again everything was very monotonous.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

 On the other hand, lack of self-confidence increases anxiety and hopelessness. All

participants have experienced negative emotions during their learning journey, and these

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experiences have triggered self-confidence issues. Although the participants dedicated time and effort to learning English, they did not achieve a significant improvement. This widespread problem was a real challenge for the participants when facing the English requirements at the university. The experiences of the interviewees show the influence of self-esteem in the process of learning English.

Lack of self-confidence is a factor that could interfere with participants' learning a foreign language. Power relations in the classroom and the fact that the participants could not understand, or express themselves fluently in English, generated a state of anguish, fear, and shame. The following artifact serves as an example of how the participant has experienced self-confidence issues:

Figure 4. (Jaime - Date 8-18-22): The drawing made by the participant shows himself with an expression of concern, confusion and sadness.

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Data triangulation demonstrated how, since these issues were not resolved at school, they persisted during university. Pekrun (2014) defines negative emotions as emotions that are experienced as unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anxiety and shame, block information processing, this is depicted in the following excepts:

> *At the university there were classmates who already spoke English or at least it was easier for them.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *I was embarrassed to speak in English, when I had to go to the front of the classroom I always got very nervous. My accent was a cause for ridicule, when I had to take classes virtually I could feel better.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *Honestly, I'm really worried right now.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*

Participants see higher education as an opportunity and a motivator to learn English. Upon enrolling in the university, the participants stated that they had experienced a change in their way of thinking. During this stage, the participants narrated how their opinion about the relevance of learning English changed. The interviewees' stories also suggest metacognitive processes, self-awareness, a more mature view of the learning process, and emotional management:

> *When you enter university you realize that English is not only a requirement but also a tool with which you can handle many situations professionally and personally. At university you put a little more effort into it and therefore you learn more.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

> *English caught my attention when I started university. Studying English at university is a little more didactic than at school.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I am improving at English and I am going to finish my degree.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*

As the participants portrayed their experiences at university, positive and negative emotions surfaced. Each story is particular and has a unique emotional nuance; however, data analysis showed a general concern regarding the requirement of English at university, as the following extracts illustrate it:

> *It is affecting me and other classmates because in order to graduate we have to learn English. Almost all my classmates are thinking about how to graduate.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*

> *Most of my classmates find this requirement difficult because nobody pays much attention to English.*
> *(Silva - Date 5-27-22)*

Data analysis evidenced the emotional impact that the English requirements have had on the participants. Likewise, it is a topic in casual conversations between classmates, the

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participants not only showed concern about it but also shared it with each other. (At the same time,)They consider it important to learn English so they agree with the requirements (even when they find this requirement difficult to fulfill).

> *To get the diploma as a technologist and professional I need a certain level of English, for this reason I have been interested in learning English. I think it is very good that this level of English is required.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

Figure 5. Focus group activity: reacting to advertisement pieces.**

> *I identify with the stress and anguish seen in the girl in the advertisement. I think the ad seeks to generate stress and worry people.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-18-22)*

> *What that advertising says happens to me, I leave English for last.*
> *(Jaime - Date 8-18-22)*

> *English is quite difficult for me and right now at the university it is a problem for me because to graduate I must have a B2 level so it is a bit difficult.*

(Jaime - Date 8-18-22)

I have to improve my English level since the university requires it.
(Silva - Date 5-27-22)

At university, English caught my attention because it is a degree requirement.
(Pipe - Date 8-18-22)

The above excerpts reveal how all the participants have reported experiencing emotions related to success and failure, such as anxiety, shame, despair, hope, or pride. Stories also display the relationship between emotion and motivation.

The data collected and analyzed show the influence that the implementation of the NBP has had on the emotions related to success and failure and emotions related to social interactions in the classroom. These emotions had a strong influence on participant's motivation and self-confidence. Likewise, the implementation of the PNB permeated the social dynamics in the participants´ classrooms and the way in which they related to their peers.

Taking into account the great variety of cultures and the extension of the national territory, we can suggest that the goal proposed by the NBP was really ambitious. We certainly believe if the educational policies in Colombia had not had such an approach, probably the majority of the participants would not consider it relevant to learn English. Therefore the

influence of these policies has permeated all dimensions of the participants' lives, mainly their

emotional one.

11.2.1 What emotions students experienced during a second language learning

We identified four sets of recurring emotions in the participants' academic settings. First,

data saturation evidenced the predominance of achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2014). Next we

will present some interviews fragments in which the participants express their enjoyment of

learning a second language; hope and pride related to academic success:

> *Learning English was something new, right? something cool at the time because it was
> another language.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *I think I do well in English tests, I don't feel under pressure taking English exams.*
> *(Silva - Date 5-27-22)*

Data analysis also revealed how participants experienced negative emotions related to

failure such as anxiety and shame:

> *In my case, when taking English exams I felt embarrassed and frustrated*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *When I speak English, I get a little nervous or maybe embarrassed.*
> *(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)*

The participants have also faced what Pekrun (2014) calls social emotions, the next

fragments show evidence of how peer competition triggered anxiety:

> *At school, my classmates understood and spoke English so I was the one who stayed*
> *behind, who was made fun of.*
> *(Jaime - Date 8-18-22)*

> *I was embarrassed to speak, when I had to go to the front I was very nervous. The teacher*
> *tried to handle it but that kind of thing is difficult to handle or avoid.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

However, some participants' experiences prove how friendship networks and effective

teaching practices foster learning. Teachers also influenced the social emotions experienced in

the classroom:

> *(My) Math teacher was from the coast, it was the first time I met people from there, I had*
> *classmates from the coast and I liked this mix of cultures, the English teacher was from*
> *Medellin or nearby, I had classmates from Bogota, from Boyaca, It was the year 2009 or*
> *2008.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *In tenth grade when I was already in my hometown, I had an English teacher, she was a*
> *teacher who was doing pre-service, she was a young teacher, I don't think she was more*
> *than twenty-eight years old at the time, she was young and had another mindset, she had*
> *studied in the United States, she had already been in two countries studying English so*
> *her dynamic was very cool.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *I remember very well that the English teacher I had was my group director, I learned a lot*
> *with her, I think that with her I learned what I did not learn in all of high school.*

(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)

Data saturation also revealed how aggressive behavior, bullying, and student

victimization lead to depression and social anxiety in the victims:

English pronunciation is very difficult for me, so it was always very hard to deal with the ridicule of the other classmates.
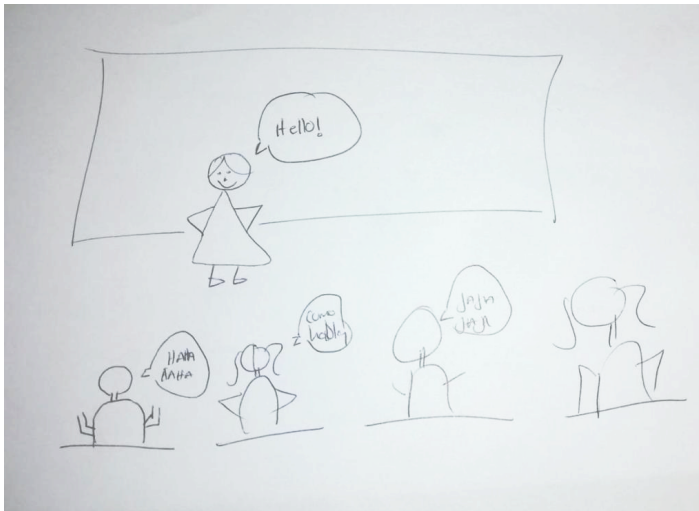*(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

Figure 6. (Sofia - Date 8-18-22):In the drawing, the participant represents how her classmates laughed at her for her accent and pronunciation.

We also identified emotions triggered by cognitive situations like confusion or

misunderstanding:

> *I have always liked English but all my life it has been difficult for me, I have made many*
> *attempts to learn it but for various reasons I have stopped halfway.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*
>
> *It has been very difficult for me, I am very bad at English!*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*
>
> *English is not difficult for me but I feel that I still have a lot to learn.*
> *(Pipe - Date 5-16-22)*

Participants demonstrate a broad sense of self-awareness. They are also aware of their

limitations and learning process. Whether they are positive or negative emotions, they have had a

powerful influence on decision making. Finally, data analysis allowed us to identify emotions

triggered by specific topics, generally feelings such as boredom are described, however some

topics aroused the interest of some participants:

> *Even if it is in English and you don't understand it at first, since it is a topic that interests*
> *you, you will understand more later.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*
>
> *The first memories I have of English are the repetitive topics at elementary school.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

In the following excerpts from interviews we can appreciate the motivation shown by the

participants when talking about topics of their interest:

This school was really cool because it is a technical school. In that school they taught you carpentry, foundry, auto mechanics, electricity. I have very good memories of this school even though it was a bit dangerous.
(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)

Since the school has an agreement with the Santo Tomas University, we were able to attend first-semester engineering classes. Attending those classes motivated me to study environmental engineering.
(Silva - Date 5-27-22)

In high school I thought the environmental specialty was cool and I enrolled in the technical course for Environmental Management. I found that experience very cool, I liked it a lot so I decided to become a professional.
(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)

The above emotions have had a powerful impact on participants' English learning process. The emotions that all the participants said they felt are closely related to self-esteem issues. ***Emotions such as embarrassment, or insecurity have impacted significantly the learning journey of each of the participants. Data analysis also allows us to understand the lack of motivation of some participants during their English learning process, mainly at school. The narratives of the participants also reveal a serious scourge that permeates the dynamics in relationships between peers. The bullying experienced by some participants is a direct result of the NBP's hegemonic competitive approach.

11.2.2 How difficult it is for the students to achieve learning a second language in Colombia

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None of the participants comes from a bilingual family, the predominant language in their lives has always been Spanish. It is important to take into account that we are a country with different problems and one of them is access to quality education if you don't have enough resources, besides we get used to applying our (mother? native? first language?) language in every moment and situation, leaving aside the second language:

> *I use Spanish to speak every day, at work, at university, Always.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I speak Spanish all the time, one hundred percent.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *I speak Spanish every day in my daily life at the university and in my workplace.*
> *(Silva - Date 5-27-22)*

> *I always speak Spanish.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I use the Spanish language all the time, I consider that I am very good at it.*
> *(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)*

In the last two decades the English language has permeated many scenarios in Colombia, some words have been borrowed from English and have gained popularity in the daily communication of Colombians. Culture has also been influenced by global trends, Therefore some participants were exposed to the English language through the media:

> *When I was 4 or 5 years old I can remember that the radio often played music in English.*

(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)

On television you could also see that there were other countries and other languages.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

As the first category described, the vast majority of the population find it difficult to learn

English, however, each participant's learning path is unique, precisely due to the diversity of

contexts of each of the participants. In addition, the stress generated by the NBP guidelines has

triggered even more negative emotions such as anxiety and insecurity:

Learning English has been very difficult for me.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

English has been very difficult for me, I have already finished 6 English levels, but to be
honest, it is quite difficult for me and right now it is a problem because I need to prove a
B2 level to graduate, so it is even more difficult.
(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)

The analysis revealed that the monolithic vision of bilingualism implemented during the

past decade in Colombia has made it more difficult for students who do not match the model

student proposed by the NBP. According to the ACD developed by Guerrero (2008), in this

model the students are a monolithic population. Participants' life stories allow us to recognize

that not all Colombian children have equal opportunities or access to education. Besides, not all

participants attending public schools have access to the same type and quality of materials and

human resources.

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Analyzing the data portrays how each participant faced particular challenges. These challenges and privileges change according to socio-economic and cultural contexts, for instance the differences between rural and urban areas or between private and public schools. We will discuss these differences in more detail later.

11.2.3 Students' expectations and dreams

Participants not only chose themselves to tell their stories but also shared their expectations and future plans. When the participants were asked about their motivation to learn English, most of them revealed a desire to migrate in search of better opportunities:

> *As soon as I finish my degree I would like to go abroad for a year to learn English in a country where it is spoken.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I have seen that many times engineers are hired in other countries other than Colombia because Colombia has many employment problems, so many prefer to go to other places and English is the universal language.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I believe that currently there are jobs where just by speaking English you can earn a better salary than even a professional. In the short term, I could work in a bilingual call center and in the long term, I would like to pursue my career in another country.*
> *(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)*

> *I think that English is necessary and it opens many doors in the labor field, student, or to go to other countries.*
> *(Silva - Date 8-16-22)*

On the other hand, some participants stated that they do not find English useful if they

stay in Colombia:

> *If I stay here in Colombia, I really don't think I'll use English much.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*
>
> *When studying English, sometimes I wonder when am I going to use that, when am I going to travel abroad? In Colombia English can be very useful but, I think it depends on what the person wants to do, for study, work or travel.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*
>
> *If I stay here in Colombia, I really don't think I'll use English much.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*
>
> *In the Colombian labor field, some people may not see English as something necessary.*
> *(Silva - Date 8-16-22)*
>
> *English is useful for many things, not only what those advertisements show, such as to get a job, to work there, to be a subordinate in the United States.*
> *(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)*

Here are some drawings made by the participants in which they share their dreams for the

future:
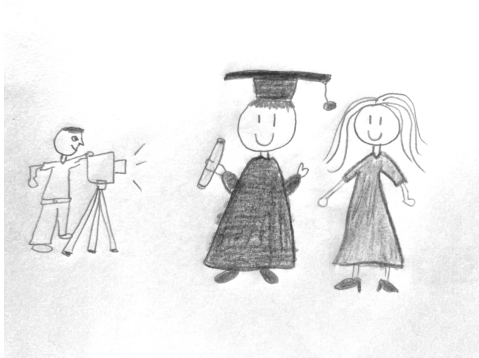
Figure 7. (Silva - Date 8-18-22):In the drawing, the participant visualizes his graduation, for him and his family it is a very valuable achievement.
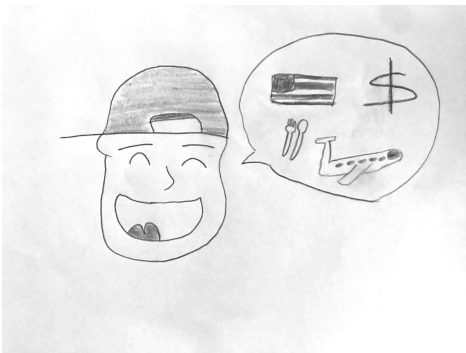
Figure 8. (Pipe - Date 8-18-22): In the drawing, The participant explains a goal for his future. In the drawing is the flag of the United States, a plane, some silverware and a dollar sign, the participant also draws himself very happy.

Evidence collected through artifacts and interviews illustrates how future goals enhance

motivation and learning. This finding helps us understand the role of the future in student

motivation. The main motivations of the participants were mainly to acquire knowledge of

English for university, also to improve employment prospects. Some participants also claimed to

be able to access more sources of information. Participants also agreed that it was mandatory

during school:

> *Mastering a second language is essential and even more so if we want to compete in a job*
> *market with a very good position. To move abroad or just travel, learning English is*
> *fundamental.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

> *Colombia has many employment problems, so many prefer to go to other countries.*
> *(Silva - Date 8-16-22)*

> *English opens many doors.*
> *(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)*

> *Colombia has many employment problems, so many prefer to go to other countries.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

> *When you do field work sometimes there is not enough information in Spanish, in those*
> *cases it is better to resort to literature in English So you can see how they did and also*
> *adjust it to the parameters of Colombia. Learning English is important to promote the*
> *exchange of information and knowledge.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I see English as a tool that can open our minds, it shows us other ways of seeing the*
> *world and it also helps us find more information on the internet about things that perhaps*
> *cannot be found in Spanish. It is important because the vast majority of information is*
> *handled in the English language.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

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The analysis of this evidence suggests that more and more young Colombians are choosing to seek job offers abroad. Hiring global talent is a multilateral phenomenon, no longer limited to certain countries. Therefore, more and more Colombians seek access to a better job by mastering English. The narration of the participants portrays the employment problems in Colombia, this is the main reason for the participants to want to leave Colombia or work remotely for a foreign company. The data shows how the participants see learning English as a possibility to climb the social structure and how they see English as a tool to access specialized information. They also found in learning English a way to expand their worldview.

11.3 Implications of NBP policies on students' academic and professional performance

In this category we will examine the implications that the NBP has had on participants' academic and professional lives. We will start with one of the main concerns of the interviewees, the English requirement:

> *The university requires a certain level of English or certain approved courses in order to graduate as a professional.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

> *The university requires you to prove an English level to graduate.*
> *(Silva - Date 8-16-22)*

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Although some participants feel qualified to demonstrate their proficiency in the English language, others see their academic process and professional lives affected, since not being able to graduate, their professional development is delayed while they accomplish the requirements, we can see it clearly in the following cases:

I graduated from school in Zipaquira in 2009 and in 2010 I started studying environmental engineering but I have not been able to graduate because of the English requirement.

(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)

I already graduated from the university but I was a little late because of English and obviously I couldn't graduate without that requirement.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

I think the pressure affects my English learning process.
(Jaime- Date 8-16-22)

Therefore, the results display how the academic and professional development of the participants has been directly affected by the NBP policies. Participants who did not meet the English requirement have taken much longer than expected to graduate from the university. They have not been able to enter the job market as environmental engineers, even though English was not a requirement in their workplace. Additionally, this situation triggers negative feelings that make it even more difficult for them to learn English.

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11.3.1 How university students face English requirements

As we exposed it in the previous categories, the participants have demonstrated an awareness of their own learning process. This independent character of the participants has prompted them to look for alternatives to achieve their objectives. The following interview excerpts illustrate the above:

I have to review a lot to be able to graduate.
(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)

I have to take 4 levels of English offered by the university.
(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)

I will have to go looking for alternatives to do it. Moreover, I have already started some English courses offered by the university. I am trying to reach that level.
(Silva - Date 8-16-22)

According to the results, the English proficiency tests also had a relevant influence on the emotions and academic performance of the participants. Most of them reported experiencing test anxiety, a feeling experienced in situations where performance matters a lot or there is great pressure to do a task successfully. The feeling experienced by the participants is a reaction to the anticipation of something stressful. Some participants also said that they did not believe the English tests were a reliable measure of English proficiency. Data presented below illustrates it:

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> *When taking the English tests I felt embarrassed and frustrated.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *I think you can pass tests but it doesn't really indicate whether you know English or not.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I think I do well in English tests, but obviously I take my time.*
> *(Silva - Date 5-27-22)*

Despite the difficulties, the participants showed great willingness and motivation to continue their process despite facing negative emotions such as frustration or embarrassment. It can be seen how the knowledge acquired by the participants during school was not enough to meet the English requirements at the university. Therefore, they had to look for other alternatives. Most of them are taking the English courses offered by the university, these courses have an additional cost. Other interviewees enrolled in private English institutes or international schools. Other participants looked for alternative methods of learning, such as socializing with native speakers. This is exemplified in the following interview pieces:

> *I have already finished six English levels at another university. I have also taken the virtual courses offered by my university. I have learned a lot but I have a lot to improve.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I have a certificate from an International School but it is not valid for my university, so what the university asks me to do is enroll in their courses. But if you know English you can save the money spent on the courses offered by the university.*

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(Andres - Date 5-16-22)

*I have taken English courses in private institutes to solve doubts that sometimes the
school did not deepen. Additionally, I am preparing myself by involving English in my
daily life.*
(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)

*There are other ways to learn English, one of them can be traveling in the hostels here in
Colombia. Many foreigners arrive there so you can learn from them.*
(Daniel - Date 8-18-22)

Each participant has had to face particular challenges during their English learning
journey. The difficulties experienced by the participants reveal the limitations of the
implementation of the NBP while they attended school. During their process at the university,
each of them has tried different English learning methods that brought an economic impact on
the lives of the participants.

11.3.2 How the university implemented the NBP standards

Higher education in Colombia includes technical and vocational education as well as
undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Universities are autonomous institutions, therefore the
English language requirements and teaching vary between institutions and faculties. Private
universities may be more strict or demanding regarding these requirements. Private higher
education is becoming more and more popular in Colombia and most of these higher education
institutions are located in metropolitan areas. This is why participants who live in rural areas
have to travel to the city to study. In general, the language faculties offer English courses within

the academic program, although in the case of the university that these participants attended, they

had to pay extra for the English courses offered by the university:

> *I have also taken the virtual courses offered by the University. I have learned a lot but I*
> *have a lot to improve.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*

> *That university course is virtual, it's like worksheets but digital.*
> *(Silva - Date 8-16-22)*

> *If you know English you can save the money spent on the courses offered by the*
> *university.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

> *In order to graduate as a technologist in environmental development I have to take four*
> *English courses up to A2 level and I feel that it is the same as what I learned in high*
> *school so I had to pay for the courses anyway and I did not like the idea very much.*
> *(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)*

Universities also certify English level through proficiency exams based on the common

European reference framework CERF, tests designed to assess and standardize the English level

of students around the world. For that reason Colombian students take many English exams

throughout their school and university careers:

> *At school they pressured me at that time to be able to pass the Ielts exam.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

To skip English courses at the university, I have to take an exam. In these exams you feel
more comfortable with some questions than with others.
(Andres - Date 5-16-22)

Many people are studying English to obtain a diploma, a certification or pass an exam,
not really because of the need to use the language to communicate.
(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)

Sometimes the policies of each university vary for which some certificates are not valid,

the above is evidenced in this case:

I have a certificate from the Colombo American School but it is not valid for the
university, so what the university asks me to do is enroll in their courses.
(Andres - Date 5-16-22)

Once again, the data analysis shows how the participants have a critical stance towards

the university's implementation of the NBP:

I agree that students can learn English not necessarily as a requirement, it can be as an
option or a voluntary course.
(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)

Each institution must take responsibility, if it is simply required as a requirement, the
students will comply with it as a checklist.
(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)

Under the NBP, the participants' university requires a level of proficiency in English to

graduate as a technician or environmental engineer. According to the data collected during this

research, this requirement has impacted the academic life and professional development of the

participants which answers the research question posed as the core of this project.

11.3.3 How the NBP has impacted the education market

Students often enroll in private language schools to improve their communication skills

in the English language. This has caused a vertiginous growth in the Colombian educational

market. From private English academies to institutes that certify the level of English through

exams, the offer of educational services is very varied.

 Next, we exemplify with some pieces of data how this situation is evidenced in the

stories narrated by the participants:

> *I have taken private English courses. I think the courses I took were good for me but it depends on the place or the person who teaches the course, they are also expensive and not everyone finds it easy to learn.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *In a school they teach the verb to be, traffic signs in English and things like that, instead if you take a course what they teach you is to learn English depending on what you know depending on your experiences and things you like to do.*
> *(Andres - Date 8-18-22)*

> *The private courses are much better. With the private course I have approached the language I was going to classes for two months in a private institute where I studied there were only four students and we had a slightly more interactive relationship with the person who was teaching us.*
> *(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)*

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As this business grows, so does advertising. It is becoming more and more common to find advertising pieces on social networks that offer all kinds of services for university students. Based on critical discourse analysis, we designed an artifact for the participants.

The following excerpts from the activity describe the participants' views regarding this type of market:

Figure 9. Focus group activity: reacting to advertisement pieces.*

I believe that advertising is capitalized because it is important, for example, if it is a requirement to graduate, if the person completes their subjects and English remains, it is something to worry about because the person could not finish their university degree. (Silva - Date 8-18-22)

Figure 10. Focus group activity: reacting to advertisement pieces.

I would not sign up for that English course, it seems to me that it is a scam.
 (Sofia - Date 8-18-22)

I think that advertising is quite disrespectful to people who really need to graduate,
especially here in Latin America.
 (Pipe - Date 8-18-22)

All participants were skeptical about the ads presented, especially regarding the

guaranteed English certification. On the other hand, English courses in private language

institutions have a generalized credibility with the participants, most of them in fact, have taken

some of these courses. Certainly, the implementation of the NBP and the influence of

globalization have made bilingual schools become more and more popular. Many Colombian

families, despite being monolingual, enroll their children in full-immersion international schools

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with the hope that this educational model gives them better opportunities to be successful in the near future.

> *Most of the classmates go to study English thinking that they will get a better job with a better salary.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

11.4 Acknowledging Colombian diversity as a key factor for second language learning

In this last macro-category we will explore the diversity of possible scenarios within the social, economic and cultural context in Colombia. We will reconstruct the narratives of the participants in order to understand the differences between rural and urban education and also the difference between public and private education. We will also present the impact this had on the learning journey of our study population, especially when participants migrated or changed schools.

11.4.1 How changing schools shaped the participant's learning journey

As the participants told their stories, changing schools emerged as a recurring experience. Being the new student in the classroom is a great opportunity to establish new social relationships, however it also presents a series of challenges for the student. The success of this process lies largely in the student's ability to adapt. Below we present some excerpts from interviews in which the participants shared their processes of adaptation to a new environment:

Later, in high school, I went to a public school called the Zipaquirá Technical Business Institute.
(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)

I was adapting to such a drastic change. Regarding English, living in the city changed my perspective, it opened my mind, so English caught my attention much more because I managed to learn much more.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

The change of university was super drastic. Honestly, it was difficult for me to enter a private university, so not everyone with limited resources entered those types of universities.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

When I entered the sixth grade, I changed to a private school called the English Pedagogical School. Changing from a public school to a private one was like a very drastic change. It was a drastic change because at the age of sixth grade you are already entering adolescence and you cannot understand that clash of knowledge and culture.
(Andres - Date 5-16-22)

My change was in sixth grade to a bilingual school, I felt it was a good change, I think I got used to listening in English all the time.
(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)

The participants' school changes were mostly influenced by economic factors. Data

demonstrated how both in childhood and adulthood, the change of school or university had had a

strong impact on the life and learning of the participants. Having started the school year or

semester with other classmates and teachers posed a number of challenges for the participants.

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Changing schools was not easy for the participants, they needed a period of adaptation to feel comfortable with their new reality.

Regarding English, in the cases in which the English level of the school changed, it was a challenging process for the participants:

> *When I changed to the bilingual school I had to repeat eleventh grade.*
> *(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)*

> *Going from knowing nothing or hearing nothing in English to hearing and reading everything in English in a private school was difficult, but I know it helped me. The school I entered had a much higher level of English than I had.*
> *(Andres - Date 5-16-22)*

The circumstances were particular in each case, some of the participants changed from a public school to a private one as their families' income allowed. In other cases, the opposite happened. Also, some participants from rural areas attended public schools since the offer of private educational services was not available. Some students went from a monolingual school to an institution where English immersion was offered. Consequently, diverse socioeconomic backgrounds did have an impact on the students' L2 learning process since they had to adapt or move to different institutions and some of them had better chances to improve their second language.

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11.4.2 Similarities and differences between public and private schools

Education in Colombia is divided into public and private spheres. Education in universities is offered by both sectors. Most of the participants studied English in public schools that offered English as part of the curriculum with the aim of ensuring that all students would be at level B1 at the end of grade 11 by 2019, a goal that the participants of this study did not achieve:

> *I did my elementary school at a private school but I did not learn much English. After elementary school I attended high school at the Zipaquirá industrial school,*
> *It is a very large public school, although it is a technical school the English they taught us was very basic, they just taught basic verbs and basic sentences. Education in public schools has low quality and English is something temporary taught so that people know only the basics but it is not very structured.*
> *(Jaime - Date 5-16-22)*

> *I graduated from a public school in Paz de Ariporo and I also went to a public school in Bogota. At that time, I believe that the educational system was only to fulfill the requirement.*
> *(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)*

> *I attended a public school, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán school.*
> *(Silva - Date 8-18-22)*

> *I studied my elementary school in a public school located in Kennedy. The economic situation influences whether a person can learn English, in the place where I grew up is the south of Bogotá, as I say the economy is not the same as in other areas of the city*

I studied elementary school in a public school and later the economic situation in my family improved so I was able to go to a private school. Changing from a public school to a private one was like a very drastic change.The school I entered had a much higher level of English than I had.
(Andres - Date 5-16-22)

The school I entered had a much higher level of English than I had. The school is still operating and is located in the south of the city. We studied the verb to be over and over again throughout elementary school.
(Daniel - Date 5-16-22)
I studied high school in a bilingual school. I feel it was a good education. I felt it was a good change.
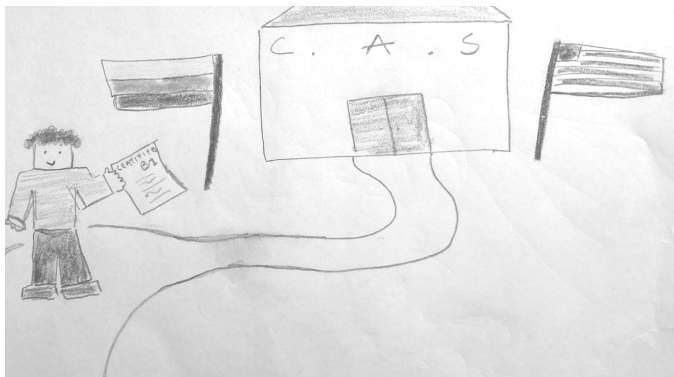*(Pipe - Date 8-16-22)*

Figure 11. (Andres - Date 8-18-22): In the drawing, The participant describes how he felt graduating from his high school with a B1 level certification in English. The school the participant attended was an exclusive bilingual school.

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There are clear differences in favor of private schools at the urban and rural levels. The teaching of English in private schools is also a government mandate. However, private schools generally have more and better resources, including English teachers, so language learning in these schools is generally more successful. A small number of exclusive and elite bilingual schools offer a full immersion education, where English is the language of instruction in all subjects. These schools produce graduates with a strong command of English. The cost of attending a private school is high and is not an option for most families, especially in remote areas.

It is relevant to highlight the adaptability narrated by the participants, despite facing challenges and difficulties such as bullying. The participants managed to use this situation to their advantage. These experiences were a motivating factor in their learning journey.

11.4.3 Similarities and differences between going to school in urban and rural areas

The gap between the countryside and the city in Colombia is not only limited to the educational field. Not all Colombians have the same access to water, public services, internet, health services, supply, transportation, among others. The differences between the countryside and the city also have socio-cultural characteristics, deeply rooted in each community mindset:

I was born in a small town in the department of Casanare called Paz de Ariporo, it is located an hour and a half from Yopal, the capital of Casanare. By then, the only place that I had gone outside my hometown had been Yopal and other municipalities in the

department, but I was very young, I was five years old or less. I was there practically all my childhood.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

In my town the neighbor takes care of you, the lady in the store also takes care of you, everyone takes care of each other. On the other hand, in the city, no, if you went out and didn't take care of yourself, no one was going to care for you, each person was in their business.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

A town is something very small, people do not see beyond their nose.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

When I was a child, due to the fact of being in such a small town, I did not realize that there were other countries so other languages at school were like a fairy tale, like an illusion.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

Inequalities have caused citizens who traditionally live in rural areas to migrate to the capitals in search of opportunities. Likewise, the centralized educational offer causes many people to move to cities for a university degree. Mostly this decision is motivated by the desire to improve the quality of life. However, moving to the city meant for the participants to face discrimination and economic problems:

When I moved to the city I could no longer go to school on my own. When I moved to Bogotá I was about 13 years old and it was quite strong for me because the way we speak here is a bit strong, and in Bogotá people speak very softly, very delicately so my classmates made fun of me because of my accent.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

Having moved to the capital city of the country really changed my mindset. When I went to Bogotá and saw the buildings, I lived in a small apartment, it was a big change because where I am, the houses are very spacious, they are very large old houses with a huge hall where you can run, back then I could go out and playing in the street until late and nothing happened but in the city I couldn't do that anymore. I was adapting to such a drastic change.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

The lack of access to media means that in the Colombian countryside the foreign

language is perceived as something unreal:

It caught my attention and I started to get a little interested in English when I was in Bogota because people spoke and thought differently. In Bogota even the English teacher had been abroad, so it was no longer so imaginary or like an illusion.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

 Educational material conditions do not favor learning in Colombian rural areas,

additionally social factors play a fundamental role, phenomena such as teenage pregnancy, armed

conflict or drug trafficking trigger school dropout:

The level of education at that time was much better in Bogota.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

When I returned to my hometown, I found classmates who were pregnant, they were unwanted pregnancies. Being in the city made me think that I didn't want a life like that. Narco's soap operas were very popular and around that time it became very normal for all girls or adolescents to end up pregnant.
(Sofia - Date 8-12-22)

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The analysis suggests that the low quality of education is particularly concentrated in rural areas of Colombia, this result was alarming and illustrated how education policies are disconnected from the daily lives of the country's rural areas residents.

12. General narrative

The following general narrative was a product of merging the life stories our participants shared with us. After carrying out a rigorous data analysis and codification process, where three moments were identified: the beginning, the struggle, and the future. We identified narrative elements like the sequence of main events, the settings, the characters, the plot, and the conflict. Once these elements were identified, we organized the story into three acts based on the categories found in the data analysis. (Brütsch, M. 2015)

The three act narrative structure was chosen to represent the three main categories. So the plot was composed of three moments: Setup, Confrontation and Resolution. These three acts are located sequentially in a timeline.

Finally, stylistic elements from frame stories and anthology films were used to make the problem the main character and enrich the description. Like this, we share this story, in which several moments are merged, and elements from the previous results are evident as narratives that portray participants' experiences when learning English as a second language under the policies of the NBP.

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12.1 The Rooster's Crow

It was February thirteenth, 1999, fifteen minutes before five in the morning. Jaime knew it precisely, although the battery of the clock in the room would be dead. The Rooster's Crow announced that a new day had begun. Jaime had been awake for a while. He wondered if the stories about the school principal that his older sister told him were true. Like when she said that the school principal had a baseball bat to hit children who got into mischief or the time she said that the principal had thrown a child in the trash can.

Meanwhile, more than two hundred kilometers from Jaime's house, another rooster announced the beginning of the day. There, Sofía helped her mother feed the chickens before going to school. Her father had already gone out to milk cows an hour ago. The days in her family began very early. Sofia loved the cool weather in the mornings. After feeding the chickens, Sofia said goodbye and went to school.

Sofia went to school in a small town near her parent's farm. She was a very kind girl. On her way to school, Sofia used to greet almost the entire town. The baker, the vet, the market ladies, and the butchers said hello to the children as they approached the only school there. It was a very safe place so it was usual for children to go to school on their own.

Sofia and her classmates were learning numbers in English. It was a bit difficult for them to remember those strange words. She thought that those words seemed like something

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imaginary. After all, She was just six years old and all Sofia had known in her life was her parents' farm and this small town. She was not aware of the existence of other countries or other languages. However, when Sofia heard the teacher speaking English, she couldn't stop paying attention to her. Listening to other languages was something new for Sofia.

Meanwhile, Jaime had fallen asleep on his desk because he hadn't slept well the night before. The teacher said aloud —Jaime, Jaime—. He woke up terrified as he was dreaming about the school principal. The director and owner of the school was an ex-military man with a passion for the English language. He had opened this small private bilingual school five years ago. The rude appearance of the principal and his discipline made the boys and girls of the school afraid of him.

Jaime and Sofía began their English learning journey in elementary school. Living in a rural area did not impede starting this process at that age. Their parents firmly believed that education was the way to improve their lives and overcome poverty.

Jaime was usually bored to tears at school, especially in English class. When Jaime was in fourth grade he worked as a caddy at nearby golf courses. He worked in all of them, so he knew them perfectly. Working as a caddy was strenuous labor for a ten-year-old. Jaime cared more about money to help his mother than to memorize a strange word in English class. Every afternoon he dragged a heavy golf bag with impetus. That was why he fell asleep in class. Jaime was exhausted.

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As years passed, Jaime became a teenager, and his performance as a caddy improved remarkably. The most experienced golf players required his services. Jaime was very respectful and quiet. He had memorized every hole, every obstacle. No matter which golf course Jaime chose, customers were guaranteed. As he received the payment that afternoon, Jaime thought he would like to work harder. The technical school did not leave him as much free time as when he studied in elementary school.

The small bilingual school only offered elementary education, so Jaime had to attend his high school in a technical school located in Zipaquira, a larger town nearby. That public school was massive. The school was also known for being the most dangerous in the region. It was a technical school with more than a thousand students. It offered mechanical, electronic, and carpentry specialties. That was what Jaime liked the most.

A rooster crowed again. Gas stove fogged up the kitchen windows when Jaime's mother broke her solemn silence. —Jaime! Breakfast is getting cold.— she said out loud. He quickly put his shoes on and had breakfast with his sister and her baby. Jaime loved eating melted cheese in hot chocolate, it was the last vestige of his childhood. The technical school was very far away, and Jaime practically burned his lips finishing the chocolate cup. He took his backpack and hurried to leave the house. Before closing the door, he gave his mother money and asked for her blessing, — God bless you, my son— She replied and put the money in a jar.

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Jaime's cheeks were red like every morning while he waited for the bus to go to

Zipaquirá. Once again, the bus had no seats available. He arrived late, so the teacher did not let

him enter the classroom. Jaime decided to take advantage of this situation and sat in the hallway

to do his English homework. He tried to solve the exercises over and over unsuccessfully. The

English language looked like hieroglyphics to him, so he decided to copy the answers from a

classmate later. Jaime didn't like to study. He studied to see a smile on his mother's face, the most

important person in his life.

Meanwhile, Sofía stood on tiptoe and squinted her eyes to see the top of the buildings.

That city was completely different from the rural region where she grew up in. Even Monserrate

touching the clouds seemed surreal to her. She had always heard about Bogotá but being there

and seeing it with her own eyes was unique. Sofia realized that her classmates were already

entering the planetarium. She ran to catch up with them. Sofia was on a pedagogical trip from

her high school. She had recently moved to the city and lived with her aunt. The 60 square meter

apartment where her aunt lived was minuscule compared to the spacious houses she came from.

Actually, she thought her aunt's apartment was as tiny as a box of matches.

Sofia and her worldview were changing abruptly. After leaving the planetarium with her

teacher and her classmates, she wondered what her old classmates from her hometown would say

if they visited that place. The last class that day was English, and Sofia had to go to the front of

the class to read an exercise. When she began to read, Sofia froze, her hands shook, and a shiver

ran down her spine; Sofia's classmates laughed at her and ridiculed her for her accent even

though the English teacher tried to handle the situation. Sofia felt she did not deserve this. All in

all, this motivated her even more.

Jaime was already used to the dangerous environment of his high school; fights after

class, hidden couples having sex, or drug traffic became something normal for him. Later that

day, his friend Miguel came running, agitated and told him that a student from tenth grade was

looking for Jaime to fight. Jaime had no time to waste, so he ran out and went to a bus stop

further away. Jaime got home without a problem, greeted his mother, went into his room, took

off his uniform, and got ready to work.

Sofia was not allowed to take the bus on her own. She usually waited an hour or two after

school for her aunt to pick her up. Sofia used to wait with Juana, a classmate. Sofia's classmates

came from various regions, like Juana, who was from the Colombian Atlantic coast. Juana's

family had to move to the city nine years ago. Sofia loved that about her new school. There were

students and teachers from many Colombian regions. While they waited, she asked Juana to

describe what the sea was like, but she replied that she did not remember it well.

After almost one hour on public transport, Sofia and her aunt arrived at the apartment.

Sofia liked to sit in the living room for a few minutes to see the sunset from the window. Despite

the beauty of the view, Sofía missed walking around her hometown in freedom. She missed her

spacious parents' house. She missed listening to frogs croaking by the pond in the evening and

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the cocks crowing at sunset. Sofia even missed the 40-degree afternoons in summer. Her aunt

broke her meditative state and asked — Sofi, would you like to have pancakes with eggs for

dinner?— . Sofia said yes and thought that living in the city had its advantages.

The electric iron's steam was escaping into the upstairs apartment. Sofia was getting

ready to go to school, she was checking that the uniform had no wrinkles. She liked it

impeccably. In general, her academic performance was exemplary, except for one class, the

English class. The fact that her classmates made fun of her accent made everything worse. No

matter how much she practiced, she couldn't even try to pronounce a single word when someone

was listening. Fortunately, that day was the final parents' meeting at school. There would be no

English classes for a while. Besides, she had already told her aunt that she had not passed that

subject. It was going to be the first time Sofia spent Christmas away from her family's farm.

After the meeting, her aunt took Sofia to the Christmas lights and fireworks show. There were no

giant Christmas trees or shopping malls in her hometown. Sofia had never seen anything like

this. Her eyes were overshadowed by the light show. She knew that something in her had

changed.

It was 2009 , a new school year started, and Sofia was no longer the new girl. She knew

the school well and had made friends from different regions of the country. She understood

English much better, identified grammatical structures, and had a much larger vocabulary, but

she was still speechless when speaking in English. Despite that, English was no longer imaginary

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for her. Learning English became real, like her English teacher who had studied in the United States and told her what the people were like there. Her improvement in English was the product of her effort. Sofia spent hours memorizing vocabulary.

At the end of that year, when she finally adapted to her new life, Sofia returned to her hometown. Upon arriving in Paz de Ariporo, she found that most of her friends were pregnant. She couldn't believe it. By then, teenage pregnancies were becoming more and more common in Colombia. Sofia thought that she did not want this for her life. Sofia wanted to study and become a successful professional like Miss Susan, a preservice teacher that had recently arrived in town. She taught English in tenth grade, Sofia's group. Susan was young but had already been in two countries studying English. She made Sofia feel very inspired.

The rooster crowed. It was a special day, Sofia and Jaime's high school graduation. Each family prepared early for the event. Sofia's aunt had traveled from (or to?) Bogota and had brought Sofia a dress for the ceremony. Jaime's sister had also looked for a suit for her brother. When Jaime received the diploma, his mother felt like the proudest woman in the world. Jaime looked at her smiling and thought all his effort had been worth it.

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12.2 Another coffee?

After finishing high school, Jaime and Sofia began to study at the University. Sofia began her process at a private university like Jaime, however, due to her mother's illness, she could not continue paying for that university and had to postpone her process. Once Sofia got a job and her mother got better, Sofia decided to continue at a public university. Sofia had the same problems with the English language there. She felt very insecure when she spoke in English or when she took English tests. She had already finished the canon subjects but she couldn't graduate without passing the English course offered by the university.

Sofia returned to university in 2019. Most of her classmates were younger than her and had an intermediate or advanced level of English. Sofia's nightmare returned. Her new classmates laughed at her for the way she spoke, and Sofia was terrified of what they thought. Suddenly, the pandemic came and Sofia had to continue studying English virtually. Sofia felt very comfortable studying English that way, she could go at her own pace, no one would laugh at her mistakes. Sofia could try over and over again without fear of what her classmates would think of her. In 2021, after eleven years, she graduated from university. Sofia had been working as an engineer's assistant for years, now she could finally aspire to get a better job.

Meanwhile in Cajicá, Jaime was wearing the suit with which he graduated from high school. He was at his mother's funeral, and Jaime was devastated. He had been awakened for more than twenty hours. With a fried voice he said — another coffee please —. Jaime was

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supposed to graduate in 2016 as a Environmental Engineer, but five years later, he still hadn't. He had had to postpone a few semesters since he did not have enough money to afford it. That night, with his broken heart, Jaime promised his mother that he would re-enroll in university.

Next month, Jaime returned to the faculty. He parked his motorcycle, walked again through the corridors, and met up with two old classmates, Andres and Silva. They told him that they were about to graduate, and Jaime replied that he was too. Jaime just had to finish the English courses. They hadn't seen each other in a long time so they decided to meet up that night after classes in the cafeteria to catch up.

Andres and Silva were from Bogota, they had grown up in neighborhoods in the south of the city, and both had studied elementary school in public schools. By that time, Andres' parents' business improved considerably, so Andres' family moved to an apartment at Usaquen, a neighborhood in the north of the city. Andres' parents enrolled him in a private bilingual school to finish high school.

Andres' life had changed completely. At that time, Andres noticed that everything was different in that school, his classmates understood English, the facilities were better, and the classrooms were better equipped. The teachers were really good and fluent in English. The groups were small, he thought everything was better.

Silva, on the other hand, stayed in Kenedy. There were many economic and social problems there, and enrolling in a bilingual international school was a luxury that Silva's family

could not afford. By the way, there were no such institutions in the area. But it wasn't all bad at

public school. Silva's school had an agreement with a prestigious university. So he and his

classmates attended a class about the environment. This experience motivated Silva's decision to

study this career.

Later that night, Jaime met with Andres and Silva in the cafeteria. They arrived with two

classmates and introduced them to Jaime. Their names were Pipe and Daniel. Jaime thought they

were much younger than him and were in the same semester. Jaime used to feel ashamed that he

hadn't graduated yet.

Pipe was from Mosquera, a town near Bogotá, he had moved to the city a few years ago

to be closer to the university. He studied in a bilingual high school in Mosquera. It was difficult

for him to adapt to that kind of institution, he even had to repeat the eleventh grade. Fortunately,

Pipe met a teacher who helped him achieve his goals. He remembered that teacher with much

gratitude, her name was Ana. Miss Ana was a teacher committed to the process of her students.

She noticed the difficulties that Pipe had and dedicated a special effort so that he could enhance

his learning process.

Daniel was also very young, he was 23 years old. He was from the south of the city and

had studied in public schools all his life, Daniel thought that he had not had good English

teachers but he always liked to learn the language on his own. Although the English classes at

school were monotonous, Daniel loved his school. It was located in front of a natural park and

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offered technical careers in which each student chose a specialty. He thought that the specialty of the environment was very cool and chose it without hesitation. It was very convenient to study environmental management in a natural park. He liked it a lot and decided to become a professional.

In the cafeteria, the conversation flowed without looking at the clock. They discussed their plans for the future. Daniel, Pipe and Jaime said that they would like to move abroad; Daniel wanted to move to Canada and Pipe to the United States, Jaime didn't even know which country he wanted to go to, he was only interested in making money. Andrés replied he had seen more and better job offers for engineers in other countries, but he would prefer to stay and work in Colombia to help farmers to technify their practices and take care of their lands to keep them productive. Andres believed that the countryside was very important, he continued saying that everyone in the city ate thanks to the farmers' hard work. All of them were very passionate about environmental engineering, Daniel for example had worked in a legal consulting firm focused on environmental regulation, and Jaime had developed his own waste management business.

Jaime told them that he was really worried about the English requirement at the university. He knew he had to improve his English proficiency level to fulfill what he promised to his mother. Silva and Daniel were also in the same situation. Daniel told them that he was taking classes in a private institute. He felt that he was improving and didn't feel as nervous as he used to. Private English institutes were becoming more and more popular in Colombia. In the

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institute where Daniel took classes there were only five students per group. He felt that his interaction with his instructor was much closer. Daniel also had a certificate from an international school but this was not valid at his university.

On the other hand, Andres and Pipe didn't feel as pressured as his classmates. They told them that they also felt that way when they first enrolled in the bilingual school when they were teenagers. But that experience made them feel confident now. In fact, Pipe said that he had just applied to a very well paid job in a bilingual call center, he strongly believed that speaking English could improve his life. Jaime wondered why his level of English was so basic, after all he had also attended a bilingual school.

Jaime asked his colleagues their opinion about English requirements at university. Daniel replied that he agreed and Pipe said that it might be a voluntary course, not necessarily a graduation requirement. Then Andres replied —English is not only useful to graduate, when you do field work sometimes there is not enough information in Spanish, in those cases it is better to resort to literature in English so you can see how they did and also adjust it to the parameters of Colombia—. As they discussed whether learning English should be compulsory, Silva said, —"Another coffee?" — Jaime replied that he had to go, it had already stopped raining so it was better for him to go, he had a long way home and they had been talking for nearly an hour.

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12.3 Way home

The wet asphalt reflected the traffic lights and the cold wind hit Jaime's knuckles as he changed gears on his motorcycle. Since 2020 he hadn't smiled like he used to. His waste management business had gone bankrupt, his girlfriend had broken up with him, his mother passed away, and his family was in the middle of a legal dispute because they wouldn't agree to sell a small piece of rural land that belonged to his mother.

Despite his problems, he found peace when he saw the city shrink in the rearview mirror of his motorcycle every night after classes. The vibration produced by the engine calmed him down, it was his favorite part of his day. As Jaime skillfully eluded traffic jams, he thought about what his classmates had told him in the cafeteria. He wondered if he could graduate from university this year. Jaime knew that it would not be easy to demonstrate the English level that his university required him and the worry on his face gave it away, Jaime was exhausted.

13. Discussion

The aim of this section is to connect, contrast, and discuss the previously depicted findings with the literature and theoretical framework that guided this research project. In doing so, three main topics arose to make connections and discuss the implications of this study.

13.1 NBP influence on Colombian students' emotions

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First of all, it is important to mention the emotional impact of NBP Policies has had on students' learning process of a second language. Through this research, the participants' narratives allowed us to notice the emotional impact of NPB on students learning journey taking into consideration that emotions are short-term individual phenomena that include an affective, cognitive, physiological, and motivational component, and expressive, and tend to dominate our consciousness (Palmer, 2017).Therefore, it was possible to evidence the kind of emotions students experienced in their L2 learning process, such as confidence when mastering the material. Thus, when students are engaged, positive emotions like enjoyment will arise; and, on the other hand, when students are not interested, emotions like anger and frustration (Pekrun, 2014). In this line, data from this research depicts that most of the emotions that participants experience during their journey were frustration and pressure to overcome and succeed in their academic life in relation to the NBP policies. Additionally, these English learning experiences aligned to the NBP caused participants to think some of their dreams had to be interrupted or put aside.

13.2 Impact of NBP policies on student academic and professional lives

Another objective of carrying out this investigation was to indicate how the implications policies of NBP were influencing the professional performance of the students and to do this, a CDA approach was implemented. CDA is a type of analysis that primarily studies the way social

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problems such as abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. Therefore, as Fairclough (1995), stated it, policies such as the Colombian NBP can be, in fact, exclusive and have a poor vision of Bilingualism due to the fact that for the government and policy makers, being bilingual means learning English and reaching a B2 CEFR level without considering the needs, contexts and other languages of the country, thus ignoring diverse life stories and realities (Guerrero, 2008).

On the other hand, as we implemented CDA from the advertising of learning English point of view in our focus groups, it was visible the relationship between the need to become bilingual and the economic benefits of it. From these data, it could be inferred that the participants' opinions were not passive, but instead, active since they could contrast, evaluate, criticize and draw judgements and conclusions relating their lives and learning paths to what the current society demands in terms of bilingual education (Fontcuberta, 2009).

On the other hand,it is important to take into consideration the English standards, because according to the CEFR, English language speakers fall into one of six categories, ranging from A1, for basic users, to C2, for those who have mastered the language. The NBP stated that by 2019, all secondary school graduates should be at B1, while university graduates should be at B2 (British Council, 2015), however this affirmation is wrong according to the sample participants' life stories. Data analysis shows that when they were in their high school years, their English

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proficiency was basic, and that they never obtained a B1 level when they graduated from high school.

Like this, it can be stated that the implementation of the NBP in Colombia has indeed influenced the academic and professional lives of the participants of this research, and the such implementation has been related to hidden power dynamics that have omitted Colombian rural contexts.

13.3 Diversity, a key factor for second language learning in Colombia

Another important reason to develop this research was to identify the diversity in terms of second language learning in different and diverse social contexts. Thus, according to Danielewicz (2010), identities are determined by the social class and the economic conditions of families. Such elements affect the L2 learning process since they influence and might even conflict with the attempt of a person to become bilingual.

During the data collection process some participants expressed that attending bilingual schools gave them better opportunities than private or public schools. This relates to how we are represented by the positions that we take in different times and places, and the social roles we play in each varying circumstance, that make us momentarily who we are (Hall, 1997).

Hence, diverse contexts influence diverse identities, and diverse identities relate to how a second language is learned. Our research shows how a general National Bilingualism Plan does

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not work in the same way in contexts such as the rural one, and, therefore, use this knowledge to adapt curricula to the different scenarios that exist in our diverse and multicultural country.

14. Conclusions

This section summarizes the key findings obtained from the research questions raised at the beginning of the study which seeks to understand how have Environmental Engineering Eighth-semester students' L2 learning paths been shaped and influenced by the Colombian NBP taking into consideration how students feel when they are exposed to a second language in a Colombia's Educational context.

- A Narrative design was developed to narrate and understand the participant's stories taking into consideration the implications of the NBP through their learning process in a second language and their experiences with the aim to achieve a deeper understanding of participants' learning journey.

- The stories of the participants were reconstructed through three main aspects which were: I. The emotional impact of NBP Policies on students' learning journey, II. Implications of NBP policies on students' academic and professional performance and, III. Acknowledging diversity as a key factor for second language learning in Colombia. Those categories were obtained thanks to a rigorous data analysis process.

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- Three different types of instruments were implemented to obtain the results in this research. First, the semi-structured interview, which is ideal to adapt to the narrative of each participant in search of possible new information; the Focus groups are usually understood as group interviews due to their similarity, however, this technique maximized the benefits mentioned above and gives greater reliability to the data collected, and some artifacts like drawings and advertising items that were analyzed. Then, the data was triangulated and its analysis provided an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and life stories that enabled us as researchers to learn about their personal attitudes, beliefs, and identities.

- The major revelation from this study was NBP's emotional impact on participants. Participants shared how these emotions either boosted or hindered their English learning process. However, they felt that NBP policies could generate stress and difficulties in their lives. It was remarkable how the most common situation participants faced on their English learning journey was confidence issues.

- The results portray the NBP implementation process in the Colombian territory during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the year 1994 the General Law of

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Education was approved, this allowed that in all the schools of Colombia English classes were a requirement, three years later the Ministry of Education announced the opening of the 'National Bilingualism Program' aimed at expanding the knowledge of English in Colombian students by the year 2019. All the participants were studying during that time and regardless of the region or type of institution they attended, the scope and progress of the NBP was observable in their narratives about their experiences.

- Surprisingly, the data evidenced how the main motivations of the participants to learn English were to migrate to a developed country. In light of these results, the participants see in learning English an opportunity to improve their quality of life, or access a well-paid job.

- It was possible to observe how the English teaching services market has become a successful business the last twenty years in Colombia. The participants in this study have recognized having a positive experience, which allows students to better understand the use of English with methodologies and practical approaches, however they manifest that this kind of services do not work for everyone.

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- One of the main frameworks of this narrative work is focused on identities, each
  participant with their testimonies and experiences helped us to have a better
  understanding of the influence of people's identities when they learn a second language.
  Data indicates that most of the time, the multiple identities141that exist in Colombian
  schools are overshadowed, and this shows that public policies are not designed to
  enhance the learning processes of the various Colombian student identities, they are
  designed based on a hegemonic model of identity.

- It was noticeable how not all Colombian students have the same access to public services,
  transportation, materials, technologies, facilities, and human resources. Despite the
  efforts of public policies in Colombia, the gap between the countryside and the city or
  between public and private schools remains wide. This inequality generates power
  dynamics around the teaching of English, making English proficiency a privilege.

- Upon review of these findings, we can conclude that the monolithic vision of
  bilingualism implemented in NBP was not adapted to the needs of Colombian students in
  the rural area where they grew up. It clearly indicates a disconnection between public
  policies and the realities of the communities.

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- Finally, these results reveal how the participants who did not accomplish the university English requirements could not graduate and access a better job. As the participants cannot work as engineers until they demonstrate a B2 level of English, data suggests that the implementation of the NBP has impacted their professional lives.

15. Limitations

This section seeks to explain the limitations that appeared throughout the study of this population throughout this research project. First of all, we tried to understand the phenomenon of why it is difficult for environmental engineering students to graduate having English proficiency tests and courses as a requirement. Although one of the aims of this research was to include a diverse population- both men and women- , our study included mostly men. It was a challenge to find a woman who recently graduated from engineering and supported us with valuable information that is quite helpful to try to give an answer to the question of why students have problems when it comes to getting their university degree. However, we were able to include a female experience in the project. We comprehend the importance of sharing diverse narratives in this kind of research, since this is the way to guarantee authentic and equitable knowledge production in the research field. For that reason, we recommend future researchers in this field to work and open spaces for female representation.

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On the other hand, another limitation was that many of the interviews were difficult to carry out face-to-face, and we had to carry them out through the use of virtual technological tools. It is worth clarifying that, on certain occasions, it was difficult to have good audio to record ? their experiences, since the quality was not exactly the best. In addition, the interviews were not carried out continuously (or simultaneously, or at the same time?), this means that, although the best effort was made to carry them out at the same time in all the participants, some were carried out before others, therefore the experiences and memories participants shared might have been influenced by these technical issues and by the time factor. For this reason, we advise future researchers to carry out these interviews in a face-to-face format so that the participants' focus is on the information they are sharing, and not on other elements such as technology and devices.

Additionally, we set out to do the best possible in terms of the details of each story, each point of view, each experience,, this in order to imprint on this work emotions, challenges, positive and negative aspects that would prove the veracity of the data of each participant. However it is slightly difficult to generalize the experience of these students in these educational sectors, both rural and urban with those of all the diverse populations of Colombia. Therefore, it is important to take into account that this work is exclusively based on a population in the rural area of Cajicá Cundinamarca near Bogotá of Eighth-semester environmental engineering students. Nevertheless, this does not mean that this career is the only one that experiences this

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problem of having to learn English to graduate. As it was explained before, the NBP is a policy that is implemented throughout the whole country. Apart from this, as higher education institutions count with diverse kinds of students from different contexts and backgrounds, they might offer different scaffolding approaches. Like this, it is paramount that other research projects like this one are carried out in other institutions in the quest to comprehend the phenomena from different perspectives.

Another challenging factor was the inaccuracy* of the narrated events as participants recalled events from their childhood and adolescence. The data was carefully processed given the subjective nature of memory and the passage of time.

Finally, another limitation that we had with the population that we were studying was that some of the participants were not in the same context. This means that each experience of the interviewees was completely different and, therefore, as the interview progressed we had to cover topics that came out of their answers in short periods of time and try to carry the thread that would lead to the questions that we had been previously established, and sometimes to add new questions that enriched the interviews, giving each participant sufficient freedom of expression without omitting any information and trying to answer how these Eighth-semester environmental engineering students professional lives had been significantly affected in their path of learning English.

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16. The way forward

This section will provide some recommendations for future researchers interested in developing research on the field of how bilingual education policies can impact students' lives from different contexts and scenarios.

In order for researchers to follow this path of research, it is necessary to mention that there are different factors that might influence second language learning processes, such as institutions, resources, feelings, places and contexts, formal and non-formal education, amongst others. Therefore, it is important to mention that it is not an easy task to do an investigative work that yields with complete certainty the answers to the questions posed from the beginning of why people, when arriving at a university program with diverse requirements and educational goals, might face challenges (such as standardized tests) that prevent them from completing their studies, and therefore create a significant impact on both their emotions in the short and long term, even frustrating finishing a professional career.

In addition to this, it is recommended to carry out a study that aims to investigate how learning can be improved in early childhood in Colombian rural contexts since at this advantageous period could be boosted by providing contextualized public policies. It is recommended that further research is carried out in order to provide accurate conditions and methodologies for students in the rural area to learn and use English in line with the NBP, but in

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a conscious and coherent way regarding their contexts and needs, as well as their emotional, academic and professional lives and realities. As researchers in the field of Language Teaching it is our responsibility to include diverse perspectives and to construct knowledge that aims at improving the quality of education in all the territories of Colombia, and this is why this project sheds light on how human lives are indeed impacted by the implementation of national bilingual policies.

Another important aspect to take into account is not only to focus on how students have problems when it comes to getting their university degree, but also why the education received during their years at school was not enough to develop certain skills, and and how this phenomenon is an obstacle difficult to overcome for many students when they are about to graduate in Colombian schools. Although proficiency tests are required in many places of study and thus verify the level of each student when using a second language, in this case English, not many times the desired result is achieved and that is what future research projects should be able to comprehend. Further research could be carried out in order to understand how these second language learning processes and their relationship with standardized testing affect students' lives and performances in different spheres of our society.

Finally, in-depth studies on the educational needs of each community throughout the country would be especially useful for the design of much more equitable educational policies.

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Regarding bilingualism in Colombia, after making a critical review of the implementation of the NBP through the stories of the participants. We believe that it is necessary to encourage the construction of a broader concept of bilingualism that integrates languages that have been overshadowed by the influence of the English language in the last twenty years.

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Annexes

Coding charts

Annex 1: Researcher 1. Coding chart

Annex 2: Researcher 2. Coding chart

Annex 3: Researcher 3. Coding chart

Unified Codification Chart

Annex 4: Unified Codification Chart

Axial Coding

Annex 5: Axial Coding

Interviews Transcription

Annex 6: Daniel's Interview Transcription

Annex 7: Pipe's Interview Transcription

Annex 8: Jaime's Interview Transcription

Annex 9: Sofia's Interview Transcription

Annex 10: Andre's Interview Transcription

Annex 11: Silva's Interview Transcription

Artifacts

Annex 12: Daniel's Artifact

Annex 13: Pipe's Artifact

Annex 14: Jaime's Artifact

Annex 15: Sofia's Artifact

Annex 16: Andre's Artifact

Annex 17: Silva's Artifact

Focus Group

Annex 18: Focus Group

Annex 19: Focus Group Transcription

Appendices

Appendix 1: Informed consent

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

LICENCIATURA EN BILINGÜISMO CON ÉNFASIS EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN

UNIVERSIDAD EL BOSQUE

Título del proyecto de investigación:

Impact of NBP English policies in university students' professional lives.

Investigadores principales:

Estiven Alfonso Gutiérrez

John Edisson Duarte

José Luis Rodríguez Barrera

Sede o lugar donde se realizará el estudio:

Universidad privada

Apreciado Compañero:

Gracias por la oportunidad de darle el tiempo de leer este documento. Para nosotros es

muy importante contar con su consentimiento para el desarrollo de nuestro trabajo de investigación. Para ello, hemos desarrollado este consentimiento informado para que conozca nuestro proyecto y lo que pretendemos lograr. Si contamos con su consentimiento, lo invitamos a hacer lectura del documento en su totalidad y firmar en el espacio provisto como aceptación.

Los datos solicitados son anónimos, por tal razón en ninguno de los formatos se verá forzado a proporcionar información de su nombre, número de cédula o algún dato que permita identificarlo. Adicionalmente a ello, la información que se recolecta es de uso confidencial y será empleada con fines investigativos, por lo que podrán ser publicados en la terminación de este proyecto. Así mismo el manejo de la información estará a cargo del grupo de investigación del proyecto y será archivado con contraseñas junto con otros mecanismos de seguridad para proteger y salvaguardar la información. Es importante aclarar que NO existe ningún tipo de beneficio o desventaja económica ni financiera por la participar en la investigación.

Con el propósito de comprender el impacto de las políticas educativas nacionales en la vida de los estudiantes universitarios los participantes responderán una serie de preguntas abiertas acerca de sus experiencias de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera, de esta manera compartirán con los entrevistados historias y vivencias durante su proceso educativo.

He leído y entendido este documento de Consentimiento Informado o el mismo se me ha leído o explicado. Todas mis preguntas han sido contestadas claramente y he tenido el tiempo suficiente para pensar acerca de mi decisión. No tengo ninguna duda sobre mi participación, por lo que estoy de acuerdo en hacer parte de esta investigación. Cuando

firme este documento de consentimiento informado recibiré una copia del mismo. Autorizo el uso y la divulgación de mi información a las entidades mencionadas en este Consentimiento Informado para los propósitos descritos anteriormente. Acepto voluntariamente participar y sé que tengo el derecho de terminar mi participación en cualquier momento. Al firmar esta hoja de consentimiento Informado no he renunciado a ninguno de mis derechos legales.

Sí, deseo participar: _____   **No deseo participar: _____**

Además, si se presentara el caso, autorizó lo siguiente:

Grabar la entrevista en audio o todo tipo de interlocución oral   **SI ___ NO ___**

Firma: _____

Fecha: _____

Ciudad: _____

Institución: _____

Teléfono (extensión): _____

Dirección de correo institucional: _____

Si tuviera alguna pregunta respecto a la presente entrevista, me pondré en contacto con:

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JOSÉ LUIS RODRÍGUEZ BARRERA

Estudiante de Licenciatura en bilingüismo con énfasis en la enseñanza del inglés

Universidad El Bosque

Correo electrónico: jlrodriguezb@unbosque.edu.co