

FDP Handbook

A learner's guide

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RESUMEN

El “Manual FDP” está diseñado para ayudar a los estudiantes de pregrado a realizar su Trabajo Final de Carrera (FDP). Escrito por investigadores académicos experimentados, el manual se divide en tres partes para guiar a los estudiantes a lo largo de su viaje de investigación. La Parte I cubre las etapas iniciales, incluida la selección de un tema, la formulación de una pregunta de investigación, la navegación por los recursos de la biblioteca y la realización de una revisión de la literatura. Esta sección ayuda a los estudiantes a establecer una base sólida para su investigación. La Parte II se centra en la metodología de la investigación, la recopilación y el análisis de datos, lo que permite a los estudiantes comprender y aplicar varios métodos para recopilar e interpretar datos de manera efectiva. La Parte III enfatiza las convenciones de escritura académica y orienta a los estudiantes a presentar sus investigaciones de forma clara y sistemática. Destaca la construcción de argumentos bien razonados respaldados por evidencia, crucial para la comunicación eficaz de los resultados de la investigación. El “Manual FDP” proporciona consejos prácticos en lugar de una guía estricta paso a paso, enfatizando los matices de la escritura académica y la importancia de argumentos claros y bien fundamentados. Organizar el trabajo, redactar, citar fuentes adecuadamente, adherirse a las pautas de formato y finalizar el artículo son pasos críticos que se enfatizan en el manual. Estas pautas ayudan a los estudiantes a producir trabajos de investigación bien estructurados, coherentes y presentados profesionalmente que contribuyan significativamente al conocimiento existente. En el campo de la enseñanza y práctica de idiomas, el manual subraya el papel de la investigación en el avance de enfoques pedagógicos, abordando desafíos y fomentando la innovación. A través de una investigación rigurosa, los educadores pueden explorar nuevas metodologías, evaluar los impactos de la integración de la tecnología y mejorar las estrategias de adquisición del lenguaje.

Palabras claves

FDP; investigación; métodos; escritura académica; disertación

ABSTRACT

The “FDP Handbook” is designed to support undergraduate students completing their Final Degree Project (FDP). Authored by experienced academic researchers, the handbook is divided into three parts to guide students through their research journey. Part I covers the initial stages, including selecting a topic, formulating a research question, navigating library resources, and conducting a literature review. This section helps students establish a solid foundation for their research. Part II focuses on research methodology, data collection, and analysis, enabling students to understand and apply various methods to gather and interpret data effectively. Part III emphasizes academic writing conventions, guiding students to present their research clearly and systematically. It highlights constructing well-reasoned arguments supported by evidence, crucial for effective communication of research findings. The “FDP Handbook” provides practical advice rather than a strict step-by-step guide, emphasizing the nuances of academic writing and the importance of clear, well-supported arguments. Organizing work, drafting, citing sources properly, adhering to formatting guidelines, and finalizing the paper are critical steps emphasized in the handbook. These guidelines help students produce well-structured, coherent, and professionally presented research papers that contribute meaningfully to existing knowledge. In the field of language teaching and practice, the handbook underscores the role of research in advancing pedagogical approaches, addressing challenges, and fostering innovation. Through rigorous research, educators can explore new methodologies, evaluate technology integration impacts, and enhance language acquisition strategies. Moreover, the research process hones essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. Engaging in research develops the ability to analyze information, synthesize perspectives, and articulate compelling arguments, valuable in both academic and professional contexts. By conducting relevant research, students can make significant contributions to language teaching and practice and equip themselves with essential skills for the 21st century.

Keywords

FDP; research; methods; academic writing; dissertation

PROLOGUE

The journey of completing a Final Degree Project (FDP) is both challenging and rewarding, marking a significant milestone in an undergraduate student's academic career. It is a time when students are encouraged to delve into areas of personal and academic interest, applying the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout their studies. The "FDP Handbook" is an invaluable resource crafted to support students in navigating this complex process, offering insights and guidance from experienced academic researchers.

The handbook is thoughtfully structured into three comprehensive parts, each addressing critical phases of the research journey. Part I lays the groundwork, guiding students through the crucial steps of selecting a research topic and formulating a compelling research question. It emphasizes the importance of choosing a topic that not only sparks curiosity but also contributes to the field of study. Additionally, this section provides practical advice on navigating library resources and conducting thorough literature reviews, essential for building a strong theoretical framework.

Moving forward, Part II delves into the heart of the research process: methodology. It equips students with the tools needed to select appropriate research methods, collect data systematically, and analyze it effectively. This section demystifies various research methodologies, offering clear explanations and examples to help students make informed choices that align with their research goals. Understanding these methodologies is crucial, as it enables students to produce reliable and valid findings that can withstand academic scrutiny.

Finally, Part III focuses on the art of academic writing, a skill that is often underestimated but is vital for the clear and effective communication of research findings. The handbook provides detailed guidance on structuring research papers, constructing well-reasoned arguments, and adhering to academic conventions. It also covers the nuances of citation, referencing, and formatting, ensuring that students' work is presented professionally and meets scholarly standards.

The “FDP Handbook” is more than just a step-by-step guide; it offers nuanced insights into the process of academic research and writing. It emphasizes the importance of clarity, coherence, and logical argumentation in scholarly work. The handbook also recognizes the unique challenges and opportunities within the field of language teaching and practice. It highlights how rigorous research can lead to the development of innovative pedagogical approaches, address existing challenges, and explore the impact of technology on language acquisition.

Furthermore, engaging in research fosters essential skills that are highly valued in the 21st century, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication. Through the process of analyzing information, synthesizing diverse perspectives, and crafting persuasive arguments, students not only contribute to their chosen fields but also prepare themselves for future professional and academic endeavors.

In conclusion, the “FDP Handbook” serves as a comprehensive guide and a source of inspiration for undergraduate students embarking on their research journeys. It equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to produce meaningful and impactful research. By following the guidance provided in this handbook, students can make significant contributions to the field of language teaching and beyond, while also developing a skill set that will serve them well in their future careers.



INTRODUCTION

Navigating the Research Landscape

The journey of academic research is both exciting and daunting, especially for undergraduate students embarking on their Final Degree Project (FDP). This comprehensive handbook serves as a trusted guide, shining a light on the path ahead and empowering students to navigate the intricate world of research with confidence and clarity.

Narrowing down a research topic is a pivotal step that demands strategic thinking and careful analysis. Students are encouraged to explore broad areas of interest within their field and gradually refine their focus onto specific themes or questions that align with their expertise and aspirations. As emphasized by the Office of Research Integrity (ORI), a strong foundation in the basic elements of research, including variables, associations, sampling, and randomization, is essential for ethical and robust research practices (Module 3: Elements of Research, 2001).

This handbook is designed to be a friendly and approachable companion, offering clear and organized guidance through the initial stages of the research process. By providing context and detailing the nature of the research problem, along with its social, economic, and cultural implications, we set the stage for a meaningful exploration of the topic.

The art of the literature review is a key focus of this handbook. We emphasize its critical role in building a solid theoretical framework, identifying knowledge gaps, and positioning the student's research within the broader academic conversation. By mastering this skill, students will be equipped to make their own unique contributions to their field of study.

As students progress through the handbook, they will gain a deep understanding of research fundamentals, including data collection and analysis techniques. They will also develop the skills needed to effectively communicate their findings, ensuring their research makes a lasting impact.

Crafted by seasoned academic researchers with a wealth of experience in scholarly writing, this handbook is a testament to our commitment to supporting the next generation of scholars. Through three meticulously designed parts, we guide students through the entire FDP development process, from topic selection to the articulation of their research in clear and compelling academic prose.

Common Challenges and How This Handbook Helps

Research for graduation, especially the FDP, can present a series of challenges. Students often find themselves lost in the maze of academic inquiry, overwhelmed by the complexity of the research process. This handbook aims to address these common struggles and provide practical solutions:

Topic Selection Made Easy: We understand the dilemma of choosing a research topic. Our handbook offers strategies for narrowing down broad interests into focused research questions, helping students find the perfect balance between passion and feasibility.

Navigating the Literature: The literature review process can be daunting, but we simplify it. Students will learn to synthesize scholarly literature, identify gaps, and situate their research within the academic landscape, feeling confident in their ability to contribute to the discourse.

Methodological Clarity: Confusion around research methods is addressed head-on. We guide students through the selection of appropriate methodologies, and data collection techniques, and ensure methodological rigour, demystifying the array of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.

Mastering Academic Writing: Academic writing is an art, and we provide the tools to master it. Students will learn to craft clear and concise prose, adhere to formatting guidelines, and construct compelling arguments supported by evidence, elevating their scholarly communication skills.

Time Management Strategies: We recognize the importance of time management and offer practical strategies to balance the demands of research with other commitments. Through effective planning, students will stay on track and meet deadlines with ease.

Empowering Student Success

Our last goal is to contribute to student success by providing a supportive and insightful resource. Through clear explanations, real-world examples, and actionable strategies, we aim to demystify the research process and equip students with the skills to excel.

As students embark on their research journey, this handbook will serve as their trusted companion, inspiring them to overcome challenges, unlock their potential, and produce exceptional work that reflects their academic passions and aspirations.

In the following sections, we delve into the heart of the research process, covering topic selection, literature review execution, research methodology, data analysis, and the art of academic writing. This handbook is more than just a guide; it is a catalyst for academic excellence, creativity, and diligence in the pursuit of impactful research.

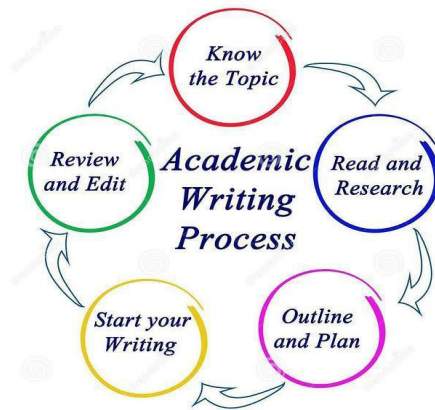
Let the research journey begin, and may this handbook illuminate your path to success!

Part 1.

Delving into research

Delving into research

This section provides an in-depth exploration of the importance and characteristics of research writing within academic disciplines, by considering different elements to be presented, among them, the concept portrayed by Lahanier-Reuter, D., & Reuter, Y. (2002), in which learners' activities (in this case, reading and writing) are best analyzed in the forms whilst they are actualized as practices (Reuter 1996: 58-59, as cited by Lahanier-Reuter, D., & Reuter, Y. (2002)), which implies that we must take into account several important features: the modalities of the activity (for example, writing, as opposed to reading, imposes more limited postures, produces linguistic signs, and transforms the actual object onto which written text is transcribed), the articulation among the different dimensions in play (language-based, cognitive, psycho-affective, socio-cultural...), the actualization (context, space-time, postures, gestures, tools, medium), the integration into a socio-institutional sphere of practices (in this case, the sphere of school), the fact that learners are inscribed in both an individual and a collective history, the modes of relationship with the student-subject's other practices, and the meaning attributed by the subject. We define research writing as a distinct style characterized by its objectivity, critical analysis, and presentation of well-structured arguments based on evidence and reasoning, which could be summarized in the following illustration Fig. 1.:

Figure 1

Thus, we emphasize that engaging in research writing cultivates critical thinking and analytical skills, which are highly valued not only in academia but also in professional settings across various industries, since the ability to articulate ideas clearly, communicate complex information effectively, and produce well-reasoned arguments are highlighted as key strengths sought after in the academic world and beyond. When communication is effective, all parties involved are satisfied and feel fulfilled. By conveying messages clearly, there is no room for misunderstandings or message alterations, which decreases the potential for conflict. In conflict situations, effective communication is a key factor in ensuring that the situation is resolved in a respectful manner. The way one communicates can be a deciding factor in getting a job, maintaining a healthy relationship and expressing oneself in a healthy manner (Stevenson University, n.d.) We further elaborate on the role of research writing in fostering intellectual curiosity, challenging assumptions, and contributing to the advancement of knowledge within specific fields of study. We underscore the importance of proficiency in research writing as a gateway to numerous career opportunities, both within and beyond academia.

Writing academic research papers is an invaluable activity that can significantly enhance your credibility. It meets academic and professional standards, develops critical thinking, improves communication skills, promotes lifelong learning, and provides networking opportunities. Embracing the challenge of research and writing is an investment in your career and personal growth that can lead to success in many industries. Furthermore, writing academic research articles is a crucial skill that can significantly enhance your credibility within the academic community and beyond. Whether you are an expert, student, or researcher, engaging in academic research offers numerous benefits that foster both professional and personal growth, for it is characterized by different elements (Potentia, 2024).

Develop Analytical and Critical Thinking Skills

Writing a research report requires extensive study, analysis, and synthesis of data. This process involves evaluating sources, identifying key information, and constructing logical arguments, which develop critical thinking skills. These skills are highly valued in both professional and academic settings.

Contribute to the Knowledge Base

Writing academic research articles allows you to expand the body of knowledge in your field. By conducting original research or synthesizing existing material, you contribute to the academic community. This contribution can gain you recognition and establish you as a trusted source in your area of expertise.

Establish a Credible Online Presence

Publishing academic articles is a powerful way to build a professional reputation. It demonstrates your expertise and dedication to your field. A strong publication record can be beneficial when applying for research funding, industry opportunities, or academic positions. It

showcases your ability to produce high-quality work and your active participation in advancing knowledge.

Improve Communication Skills

Writing research papers enhances your ability to convey complex concepts clearly and concisely. This skill is crucial for success in any profession, as it improves stakeholder engagement, project management, and teamwork. Research writing requires you to present facts accurately, organize ideas logically, and make persuasive arguments, all of which are valuable in any field.

Promote Lifelong Learning

Engaging in research and writing academic articles fosters a mindset of continuous learning. It keeps you updated with the latest developments in your field, leading to a deeper understanding and broader perspective. This commitment to lifelong learning can open doors to new collaborations and opportunities.

Opportunities for Networking and Collaboration

Academic research publications can facilitate networking and collaboration. As your work gains recognition, other academics, professionals, and researchers may seek to collaborate with you. This can lead to joint projects, conference invitations, or job offers. Building your professional network through academic channels is a highly effective strategy.

Fulfill Career and Academic Requirements

Writing research papers is often a requirement for graduation, promotion, or advancement in many academic programs and professions. Conducting academic research meets these requirements and sets you up for future success. A strong publication record can also help you stand out in competitive job or program applications.

In a few words, research forms the foundation of scholarly inquiry and academic pursuit. It is a systematic process of asking questions, gathering data, analyzing information, and drawing conclusions – all with the aim of contributing to the existing body of knowledge in a particular field. This first part of the handbook is designed to guide you through the initial stages of embarking on your research journey for the Final Degree Project (FDP).

We will explore strategies for identifying and refining a research topic that aligns with your interests and academic goals. You will learn how to formulate well-defined research questions that will shape the direction and scope of your study. Additionally, we will delve into the art of conducting a comprehensive literature review, which will not only provide a solid theoretical foundation for your work but also help you identify gaps and opportunities for your own unique contribution.

By the end of this part, you will have a clear understanding of the foundational elements of research, positioning you to navigate the subsequent stages of data collection, analysis, and ultimately, the communication of your findings effectively.

21st Century Skills and Educational Research in Language Teaching

Definition of 21st Century Skills

21st century skills refer to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are crucial for success in today's world. These skills go beyond traditional academic learning and encompass a range of competencies necessary for effective participation in the global economy. Key 21st century skills include:

- **Critical Thinking:** The ability to analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs to make reasoned judgments.
- **Problem-Solving:** The capability to find solutions to difficult or complex issues.
- **Creativity:** The use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness.
- **Collaboration:** Working effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.

- **Communication:** Articulating thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills.
- **Information Literacy:** The ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.
- **Technological Literacy:** Understanding and using technology tools and resources effectively.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Adjusting to varied roles, responsibilities, schedules, and contexts.
- **Initiative and Self-Direction:** Managing goals and time, working independently, and being a self-starter.
- **Social and Cross-Cultural Skills:** Interacting effectively with others in diverse environments.
- **Productivity and Accountability:** Managing projects and producing high-quality work.
- **Leadership and Responsibility:** Guiding and inspiring others, demonstrating integrity, and ethical behavior.

Educational Research in Language Teaching

Educational research in language teaching is a systematic investigation aimed at contributing to the knowledge base in the field of language education. It involves studying various aspects of language acquisition, instructional methods, curriculum development, assessment, and the integration of technology in language learning. This research plays a pivotal role in informing teaching practices, developing new instructional strategies, and improving language education outcomes.

Connection Between Writing Academic Papers and Developing 21st Century Skills

Writing academic papers, particularly in the field of educational research in language teaching, is a powerful avenue for developing 21st century skills. Here's how the process of academic writing fosters these essential skills:

1. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:

- **Research Process:** Engaging in educational research requires the identification of a research problem, formulating research questions, and developing hypotheses. This process demands critical thinking to evaluate existing literature, identify gaps, and propose solutions.

- **Analysis:** Analyzing data and interpreting results involves problem-solving to understand and explain complex phenomena in language teaching.

2. Creativity:

- **Research Design:** Designing innovative research studies and exploring novel instructional strategies in language teaching necessitates creative thinking.
- **Presentation of Ideas:** Crafting compelling narratives and presenting research findings in a clear, engaging manner reflects creative communication skills.

3. Collaboration:

- **Peer Review:** Engaging with peers, mentors, and colleagues for feedback and collaborative research projects fosters teamwork and collaborative skills.
- **Interdisciplinary Research:** Working across different fields within educational research encourages collaboration with experts from various disciplines.

4. Communication:

- **Writing Skills:** Academic writing enhances the ability to articulate complex ideas clearly and concisely, using appropriate academic language and style.
- **Oral Presentations:** Presenting research at conferences and seminars improves verbal communication skills.

5. Information and Technological Literacy:

- **Literature Review:** Conducting a comprehensive literature review develops the ability to locate, evaluate, and synthesize information from diverse sources.
- **Use of Technology:** Utilizing software for data analysis, reference management, and online research tools enhances technological literacy.

6. Flexibility and Adaptability:

- **Research Challenges:** Navigating the dynamic nature of research, such as changing research questions or adapting methodologies, builds adaptability.
- **Revisions:** Responding to feedback and revising research papers cultivates flexibility.

7. Initiative and Self-Direction:

- **Independent Research:** Conducting independent research projects fosters self-direction, initiative, and time management.
- **Goal Setting:** Setting research objectives and timelines encourages self-directed learning and productivity.

8. Social and Cross-Cultural Skills:

- **Global Research:** Engaging with research from diverse cultural and linguistic contexts enhances cross-cultural understanding and social skills.

9. Productivity and Accountability:

- **Project Management:** Managing research projects from inception to completion promotes accountability and productivity.
- **Ethical Research:** Adhering to ethical guidelines in research practices underscores responsibility and integrity.

10. Leadership and Responsibility:

- **Mentorship:** Leading research projects or mentoring junior researchers builds leadership skills.
- **Academic Integrity:** Demonstrating ethical behavior in research and writing emphasizes responsibility and professional ethics.

The intersection of 21st century skills and educational research in language teaching underscores the importance of a holistic approach to academic and professional development. Writing academic papers not only contributes to the body of knowledge in language teaching

but also hones a wide array of skills essential for success in the 21st century. By engaging in rigorous research, developing strong writing and communication abilities, and embracing collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches, educators and researchers can significantly enhance their effectiveness and impact in the field of language education. This, in turn, prepares them to navigate the complexities of the modern world, equipped with the critical competencies needed for lifelong learning and professional growth.

About research writing

Research writing is a fundamental mode of communication within academic circles and research communities. It serves as a powerful tool for scholars to convey their ideas, insights, and discoveries to their peers and the broader intellectual community. As Sultan (2013) astutely observes, research writing is characterized by its “detached objectivity, critical analysis, and presentation of well-structured, clear arguments based on evidence and reason” (p. 139). This unique style of writing demands an objective and analytical approach, where arguments are meticulously constructed, supported by empirical evidence, and grounded in logical reasoning.

The process of engaging in research and research writing is not merely a means of conveying information but also a transformative journey that cultivates critical thinking and hones analytical skills. Scholars embark on a quest for knowledge, delving into existing literature, evaluating sources, and synthesizing diverse ideas to form their own unique perspectives. This intellectual endeavor demands a high level of proficiency in academic writing, encompassing precise language usage, coherent structure, and adherence to scholarly conventions.

The very act of crafting research papers necessitates a meticulous approach to language. Authors must strive for absolute clarity, ensuring their arguments are coherent, concise, and free from ambiguity. This precision in language use enhances the overall effectiveness of communication, ensuring that complex ideas are conveyed accurately and accessibly to the intended audience. The iterative nature of writing, revising, and refining research manuscripts further contributes to the development of sophisticated language skills.

As students and researchers engage in the iterative writing process, they gain a nuanced understanding of language and its strategic use in conveying intricate concepts. They learn to navigate the complexities of academic discourse, employing precise terminology, constructing elegant sentences, and crafting compelling narratives that capture the essence of their research. This continuous improvement in language proficiency is invaluable, not only within the confines of academia but also in broader professional contexts.

Proficiency in research writing is a highly prized skill that extends beyond the walls of academia, finding application in diverse professional settings. The ability to articulate ideas with clarity, communicate intricate information effectively, and construct well-reasoned arguments are strengths that are sought after in various industries. Research writing equips individuals with the tools to navigate complex topics, analyze data critically, and present findings persuasively, making them invaluable assets in the business world and beyond.

Moreover, research writing fosters a suite of essential soft skills that are integral to success in any professional environment. Attention to detail, time management, and perseverance are cultivated through the rigorous process of research and writing. These competencies are particularly advantageous in roles that demand meticulous analysis, problem-solving, and clear communication. Whether in finance, consulting, or entrepreneurship, the soft skills honed through research writing enhance one's ability to tackle challenges, make informed decisions, and communicate effectively with stakeholders.

The value of strong research writing abilities extends far beyond the corporate realm, opening doors to a myriad of career opportunities. Academia, research institutions, government agencies, and private organizations all seek individuals with exceptional research and writing skills. The critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and communication skills developed through research writing are highly transferable and prized across diverse fields.

Individuals with a solid foundation in research writing find themselves well-prepared for a multitude of career paths. They may pursue roles as academic researchers, contributing to the advancement of knowledge in their chosen disciplines. Alternatively, they could apply their skills

in industry settings, conducting market research, analyzing consumer behavior, or developing innovative products. The ability to effectively communicate complex ideas positions individuals as valuable assets in marketing, public relations, or corporate communications roles.

The impact of research writing extends beyond the written word; it shapes the very landscape of knowledge and innovation. Through research writing, scholars contribute to the collective understanding of their disciplines, challenging existing paradigms and proposing novel theories. This dynamic process fuels intellectual curiosity, fosters collaboration, and drives progress across all fields of study. Whether in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, or interdisciplinary domains, research writing serves as a catalyst for exploration, discovery, and the dissemination of groundbreaking ideas.

Furthermore, research writing plays a pivotal role in addressing societal challenges and informing policy decisions. Scholars conducting applied research often engage with policymakers, community leaders, and practitioners to translate their findings into actionable solutions. Effective research writing ensures that evidence-based insights reach the right audiences, influencing policies, programs, and practices that have the potential to positively impact communities and societies at large.

The act of research writing is not merely a solitary endeavor; it fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing among scholars. Through the publication process, researchers engage in a dialogue with their peers, inviting critique, feedback, and further exploration of their ideas. This collaborative aspect of research writing enriches the academic community, promoting intellectual exchange, interdisciplinary cooperation, and the co-creation of knowledge.

In the digital age, research writing has evolved to embrace new mediums and formats. Online journals, open-access repositories, and multimedia platforms have expanded the reach and accessibility of research outputs. Scholars can now engage global audiences, fostering international collaboration and cross-cultural exchanges of ideas. The impact of research writing is no longer confined to traditional academic circles but resonates across virtual forums, social media platforms, and online learning environments.

The art of research writing demands a commitment to ethical standards and academic integrity. Authors must uphold the principles of honesty, accuracy, and originality in their work, ensuring proper attribution and avoiding plagiarism. Research writing requires a deep respect for the intellectual property of others, as well as a commitment to contributing original insights that advance knowledge in their respective fields.

In conclusion, research writing is a powerful tool that shapes the landscape of knowledge, fuels innovation, and drives societal progress. It is a cornerstone of academic discourse, enabling scholars to contribute to their disciplines, challenge existing paradigms, and inspire future generations of thinkers and innovators. Through research writing, individuals develop a sophisticated understanding of language, cultivate critical thinking, and hone their analytical skills.

As Sultan (2013) aptly summarizes, “Research writing is a distinct and powerful form of communication that enables scholars to convey complex ideas, present compelling evidence, and advance knowledge in their fields” (p. 140). By embracing the challenges and rewards of research writing, individuals not only enhance their language skills but also develop the competencies sought after by employers across diverse industries. Proficiency in research writing opens doors to a multitude of career paths, empowering individuals to make meaningful contributions that resonate within and beyond the academic realm.

The Final Degree Project (FDP)

The Final Degree Project (FDP) is a pivotal milestone in the culmination of undergraduate studies, offering students a unique opportunity to showcase their intellectual growth and practical application of knowledge. This comprehensive project serves as a platform for students to demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply the concepts learned throughout their academic training within a relevant context in their chosen field of study. The FDP is designed to challenge students, fostering the development of critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis skills, while also enhancing their written and oral communication abilities.

The FDP process is a transformative journey that demands deep engagement with a specific area of interest within the student's discipline. This immersive experience encourages students to explore their chosen topics extensively, fostering a profound understanding and expertise that prepares them for future academic or professional pursuits. Whether they aspire to continue their education through postgraduate studies or embark on a career path, the FDP equips students with valuable experiences, competencies, and a heightened level of self-discovery.

The FDP experience is about more than just completing a project; it is an opportunity for personal and professional growth. By embracing the challenges inherent in the FDP process, students unlock a multitude of benefits that will serve them well in their future endeavors:

Enhanced Subject Matter Expertise: The FDP demands a deep exploration of a specific topic, encouraging students to become subject matter experts. This immersion in a particular area of interest cultivates a profound understanding and a nuanced perspective that sets the foundation for future academic pursuits or career choices.

Critical Thinking and Analysis: The research process at the heart of the FDP fosters the development of critical thinking and analytical skills. Students learn to evaluate sources critically, identify biases, and synthesize diverse perspectives to form their own evidence-based conclusions. These skills are invaluable in today's knowledge-driven world, enabling individuals to navigate complex information effectively.

Research and Project Management Skills: The FDP requires students to manage a comprehensive project from inception to completion. This experience hones project management and organizational skills, teaching students to set realistic goals, create timelines, and manage resources effectively. These competencies are highly prized by employers and essential for success in any professional setting.

Advanced Language Proficiency: The rigorous demands of academic writing within the FDP push students to refine their language skills. Through drafting, feedback, and revision, students enhance their ability to communicate complex ideas clearly, coherently, and persuasively. This iterative writing process improves their overall writing proficiency, making them more effective communicators.

Communication Skills for Professional Success: Presenting FDP findings, whether through written reports or oral presentations, develops essential communication skills. Students learn to convey their ideas clearly, confidently, and persuasively, an asset that translates directly to professional settings. The ability to articulate complex information effectively is a highly valued competency in any career.

As students embark on their FDP journey, it is important to approach this project with a strategic mindset, ensuring a successful and rewarding experience:

Early Planning: Begin the FDP process early, allowing sufficient time for topic selection, literature review, data collection, and analysis. Set realistic milestones and create a detailed plan to stay on track. Early planning reduces stress and allows for a more thoughtful and deliberate research process.

Engage with Faculty: Faculty members are invaluable resources throughout the FDP journey. Seek their guidance in topic selection, research design, and data analysis. They can provide insights, offer feedback, and help students navigate potential challenges. Building a strong relationship with faculty advisors enhances the overall research experience.

Master Academic Writing: Academic writing is a critical component of the FDP. Familiarize yourself with the conventions, citation styles, and formatting requirements specific to your discipline. Strive for clarity, coherence, and precision in your writing, ensuring your arguments are well-supported and accessible to your intended audience.

Embrace Feedback: Feedback is a gift that helps students improve their work. Encourage constructive feedback from faculty and peers during the writing process. Be open to suggestions for revision, as this iterative process enhances the quality and impact of the final product.

Time Management: Effective time management is essential for success. Break down the FDP into manageable tasks, set deadlines, and create a schedule that allows for a balanced approach to research and writing. Balancing the FDP with other commitments teaches valuable time management skills applicable to future endeavors.

Embracing the FDP Journey

The FDP is a transformative experience that equips students with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to excel in their future academic and professional pursuits. By embracing the challenges and opportunities presented by this comprehensive project, students not only enhance their subject matter expertise but also develop essential competencies sought after by employers.

As students embark on this intellectual journey, they will cultivate a deeper understanding of their discipline, hone their analytical skills, and refine their communication abilities. The FDP experience fosters a mindset of inquiry, curiosity, and critical engagement with knowledge, preparing students to become lifelong learners and contributors to their fields.

Let this guide serve as a compass, providing direction and strategies for successfully navigating the FDP process. By understanding the importance of research writing and embracing the multifaceted benefits of the FDP, students can approach their academic endeavors with enthusiasm, resilience, and a sense of purpose.

The FDP is not just a requirement for graduation; it is a gateway to personal growth, intellectual discovery, and the development of highly transferable skills that will serve students throughout their careers and beyond. With dedication, perseverance, and a spirit of inquiry, students can unlock their full potential and make meaningful contributions to their chosen disciplines.

Selecting a Topic

For educators, the classroom serves as a fertile ground for research endeavors, much like a laboratory where hypotheses are tested, data is gathered, and theories are refined. Daily experiences frequently spark curiosity and a desire to delve deeper into understanding the intricacies of teaching and learning. A student's thought-provoking query, a recurring instructional challenge, or even a meticulously crafted lesson plan can ignite a yearning to understand better and ultimately enhance pedagogical practices and student learning experiences. These authentic encounters within the teaching and learning environment often raise questions that warrant further exploration through rigorous research.

In the classroom-as-laboratory paradigm, educators can leverage their firsthand observations and immersive classroom encounters to identify areas ripe for investigation. By selecting topics that deal with social, linguistic, and didactic matters, educators aim to gain insights that will inform and refine their professional practice, driven by an intrinsic motivation to continually improve and provide enriching learning opportunities for their students. This commitment to ongoing growth and enhancing the educational experience lies at the heart of many educational research pursuits undertaken by dedicated educators.

Social Matters

Research topics in the realm of social matters might include exploring the impact of socio-economic backgrounds on student engagement and performance, understanding cultural diversity within the classroom, or examining the effects of peer interactions on learning outcomes. These topics are crucial as they address the broader context within which education takes place, acknowledging that students' social environments significantly influence their learning experiences.

Linguistic Matters

Linguistic research in the classroom might focus on the acquisition of second languages, the effectiveness of different language teaching methodologies, or the role of language in cognitive development. For instance, an educator might investigate how bilingualism affects cognitive flexibility or how specific instructional strategies can better support language learners in achieving fluency. These studies not only contribute to our understanding of language acquisition but also inform best practices in language teaching.

Didactic Matters

Didactic research involves examining teaching methods and instructional strategies to determine their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Educators might explore the efficacy of different pedagogical approaches, such as inquiry-based learning, flipped classrooms, or differentiated instruction. By systematically investigating these methods, teachers can develop more effective instructional practices that enhance student learning outcomes.

Action Research Sample

Enhancing Advanced English Learners' Proficiency in Vocabulary, Grammar, and Speech Skills through Action Research (1)

Despite being at an advanced level in English learning, many students of the selected population for the study continue to exhibit low proficiency, particularly in vocabulary building, advanced grammar, and speech skills. This deficiency hampers their overall communicative competence and academic performance, limiting their ability to engage effectively in both academic and professional settings.

Preliminary assessments indicate that these students struggle with the acquisition and application of complex vocabulary, the accurate use of advanced grammatical structures, and the ability to articulate thoughts fluently and coherently in speech. The existing instructional methods appear insufficient in addressing these specific areas of weakness, suggesting a need for targeted interventions that can bridge these gaps.

The purpose of this action research is to identify the underlying causes of these deficiencies and to develop, implement, and evaluate strategies that can enhance vocabulary acquisition, advanced grammatical understanding, and speech proficiency among advanced English learners. By employing a combination of innovative teaching methodologies, including task-based learning, communicative approaches, and inductive grammar instruction, this study aims to foster significant improvements in these critical areas.

This research will contribute to the field of English language teaching by providing evidence-based strategies for enhancing advanced language skills, ultimately supporting students in achieving a higher level of language proficiency and confidence in their academic and professional endeavors.

Issue: Many undergraduate students exhibit strong reading and writing skills in English but struggle significantly with oral proficiency.

Significance: Oral proficiency is critical for academic success and professional students' overall language competence and confidence.

Proposed Approach: The research will employ action research methodology, involving cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The study will implement and evaluate various instructional strategies, such as role-playing, interactive speaking activities, and peer feedback, to determine their impact on students' oral proficiency.

By treating the classroom as a laboratory for research, educators can continuously improve their teaching practices and enhance student learning experiences. Selecting research topics that address social, linguistic, and didactic matters allows educators to tackle relevant and impactful issues within their field. The example of action research conducted with undergraduate students in Colombia demonstrates the practical application of these concepts, providing a clear framework for how research can be systematically approached and executed. Through this process, educators not only contribute to the advancement of knowledge in language teaching but also develop their own research skills and enhance their professional practice.

To illustrate the process of selecting a research topic and its subsequent investigation, let's delve into a practical example of an action research project conducted with undergraduate students in foreign languages at a public university in Colombia. This example will help to concretize the concepts discussed and provide a clear representation of how research topics can be identified and explored within the classroom-as-laboratory framework.

Problem Statement

In this action research project, the problem statement was crafted to clearly outline the issue, its significance, and the proposed research approach. The research focused on identifying effective strategies for improving oral proficiency in English among undergraduate students. This problem was significant because many students struggled with speaking skills despite having adequate reading and writing abilities. The research aimed to investigate the root causes of this discrepancy and to develop instructional interventions that could help students become more confident and proficient speakers.

Identifying your own interests

The learning-styles view has acquired great influence within the education field, and is frequently encountered at levels ranging from kindergarten to graduate school. The term “learning styles” refers to the concept that individuals differ in regard to what mode of instruction or study is most effective for them (Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence, 2015).

Based on our extensive experience in the teaching-research field, we have observed a strong connection between individuals’ learning styles and the topics and methodologies that resonate most profoundly with them in their research endeavors. Just as learning styles shape how we absorb and process information, they also influence the areas of inquiry and approaches that capture our interest and lead to meaningful exploration.

Understanding one’s learning style can provide valuable insight into the types of research topics and methodologies that are most likely to ignite passion and sustained engagement. By recognizing this link between learning preferences and research interests, educators and researchers can tailor their approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles, fostering a supportive and engaging environment for inquiry.

Embracing this connection allows individuals to leverage their strengths, ultimately enhancing the quality, depth, and impact of their research endeavors. Through our collective experiences, we have identified four predominant learning styles: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and textual. Recognizing and catering to these diverse preferences can unlock new avenues for exploration and understanding, enriching the research landscape and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in dynamic ways.

Table 1*Types of learners*

Visual learners	These learners prefer to process information through images or spatial representations, and may be drawn to research topics that lend themselves to empirical investigation. If you are one, you may be particularly interested in conducting experiments, surveys, or observational studies that allow you to visually analyze data and draw conclusions based on tangible evidence.
Auditory learners	These learners thrive in environments where information is presented verbally or through auditory cues and may be inclined towards research topics that involve theoretical inquiry and discourse. If you are one, you may find satisfaction in exploring abstract concepts, engaging in philosophical debates, and analyzing the arguments presented in scholarly literature.
Kinesthetic learners	These learners learn best through hands-on experiences and physical activities and may be attracted to research topics that involve applied research and practical application. If you are one, you may thrive in research settings that allow you to directly engage with materials, conduct fieldwork, or implement interventions in real-world contexts.
Textual learners	These learners prefer to process information through reading and writing activities and may find fulfilment in conducting literature reviews or synthesizing existing research findings. If you are one, you may excel in critically analyzing scholarly texts, identifying gaps in the literature, and formulating research questions based on their readings.

Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2

What type of learner are you?

QUIZ: What type of learner are you?

Everybody learns by a mixture of methods, but one method or type is usually dominant in each person.

By finding out your dominant learning style you can revise in the style that most suits you and improve your grades. This quiz will help you determine which learning style is best for you.

Question: 1. When I study, I like to

- A. Use a highlighter to emphasize points
- B. Use a chanting rhythm to memorize
- C. Explain the information to someone else

Question: 2. I like to study

- A. In a group so I can listen to others
- B. Alone in a quiet place
- C. With one other person using role playing games

Question: 3. I remember things best if I

- A. Write things down and read them back
- B. Make lists and write them over and over
- C. Record the information and listen

Question: 4. I like to learn using

- A. Photographs and diagrams
- B. Rhymes and chants that I make up
- C. Demonstrations, being active

Question: 5. I like to learn by

- A. Draw a picture showing a process I need to understand
- B. Create songs with my homework information
- C. Act out information

Question: 6. I remember things most when I

- A. Read them
- B. Hear them
- C. Say them

Question: 7. I have trouble remembering information if I

- A. Can't take notes
- B. Read it and don't talk about it in class
- C. Can't discuss it in class

Question: 8. I remember

- A. Names and faces if I can shake hands
- B. Faces
- C. Names

Question: 9. When I study for a test I like to

- A. Make it interactive and work with other people
- B. Make pictures, diagrams, and charts
- C. Read out loud

RESULTS

Mostly As = You are a very visual learner.

You probably use visual references a lot and say things like "I see now" or "I get the picture." You like to see demonstrations, diagrams, slides, charts, and other visual aids in the classroom. You take great notes, and you probably use color-coded highlighting. You could benefit by drawing outlines of your notes and creating pictures of processes or events that you study. Always write down explanations and instructions. Use flashcards when available.

Mostly Bs = You are a very auditory learner.

You may have memorized lots of songs since you learn best by listening. You may get distracted by background music. You might do well in a debate class since you are probably a great speaker. You can remember names, but you don't always remember faces. You may not have the best handwriting. When traveling to a new place you may prefer to follow verbal directions instead of a map. You would benefit from recording lectures and listening to the tapes when you study for a test.

Mostly Cs = You are a very kinesthetic learner.

Students with a tactile, kinesthetic learning style want to use their hands while they're learning. They want to touch the clay, work the machine, feel the material, whatever it is. They want to do.

Best ways to learn:

- Conducting experiments
- Acting out a play
- Studying while standing or moving
- Doodling during lectures
- Studying while performing an athletic activity like bouncing a ball or shooting hoops

It's a tie!

You do not have one specific dominant learning style. This is a good thing! You can learn by reading, hearing, and experiencing new things. In a class you probably like to experience a variety of teaching methods; for instance, you enjoy learning by listening to lectures, watching videos, or taking part in labs and role-playing games. You might get bored if the teacher uses only one method in the classroom. You enjoy reading but you're also active. You may have a large collection of music or something else that interests you. Your interests are broad.

Source: <https://www.thinkforward.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/What-type-of-learner-are-you.pdf>

Exploring your topic's relevance to the educational practice

Selecting a research topic that holds genuine significance is a critical aspect of the research process. A topic gains relevance and importance when it addresses the prevailing challenges, opportunities, and trends within the field of education. As educational researchers, it is imperative to ensure that our chosen topics resonate with the broader

educational landscape and, more importantly, address real-world issues faced by educators, students, and communities. Attempting to solve problems that lack substance or practical applicability defeats the purpose of research endeavors.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to identifying a meaningful research topic, some guiding principles can be followed. First, it is essential to engage in critical self-reflection and introspection, considering your unique experiences, observations, and areas of interest within the educational realm. Seek inspiration from your personal encounters, pedagogical challenges, or profound questions that have emerged from your teaching practice.

Some examples of possible topics in the field of academic research in Language Teaching

These topics offer rich opportunities for research that can contribute to advancing knowledge and informing educational practices in the field of language teaching. By carefully selecting a topic that aligns with one's interests, expertise, and academic goals, researchers can make meaningful contributions to the field and address pressing issues in language education.

1. **Impact of Technology Integration on Language Learning Outcomes:** Investigating how the incorporation of digital tools and platforms influences language acquisition and proficiency levels among students.
2. **Multilingual Education Policies and Practices:** Exploring the effectiveness of policies promoting multilingualism in educational settings and their impact on language teaching methodologies and student outcomes.
3. **Cross-cultural Communication in Language Teaching:** Examining strategies for promoting effective communication and intercultural understanding in language classrooms with diverse student populations.
4. **Assessment Methods in Language Learning:** Evaluating the efficacy of different assessment methods, such as performance-based assessments, portfolio assessments, and standardized tests, in accurately measuring language proficiency and progress.
5. **Teacher Training and Professional Development in Language Education:** Investigating the effectiveness of professional development programs and training initiatives for language teachers in enhancing teaching practices and student learning outcomes.
6. **Bilingual Education Programs and Language Maintenance:** Analyzing the role of bilingual education programs in preserving and promoting minority languages, as well as their impact on academic achievement and linguistic identity.

7. Language Anxiety and Classroom Dynamics: Examining the prevalence and impact of language anxiety on student participation, motivation, and learning outcomes in language classrooms, and exploring strategies for mitigating its effects.
8. Task-based Language Teaching Approaches: Investigating the effectiveness of task-based language teaching approaches in promoting language proficiency, communicative competence, and learner autonomy in diverse instructional contexts.
9. Language Policy and Planning in Educational Settings: Analyzing the development, implementation, and impact of language policies in educational institutions, including issues related to language planning, curriculum design, and language use in instruction.
10. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): Exploring the implementation and outcomes of CLIL programs, which integrate language learning with content area instruction, in fostering bilingualism, academic achievement, and cross-disciplinary skills development.

Additionally, immerse yourself in the current discourse surrounding education by reviewing academic literature, attending conferences, and engaging in professional discussions with peers and mentors. This exposure can help you identify gaps, emerging trends, or pressing issues that warrant further investigation. Collaborative brainstorming and seeking feedback from experienced educators and researchers can also provide valuable perspectives and insights.

It is important to approach the topic selection process with an open mind and a willingness to iterate. You may need to refine or even redefine your research focus multiple times as you delve deeper into the literature, gather preliminary data, or encounter new insights. Embracing this iterative process is crucial, as it allows for the organic evolution of your research topic, ultimately leading to a more meaningful and impactful study.

Remember, a well-chosen research topic has the potential to contribute to the advancement of educational practices, inform policy decisions, and ultimately improve the learning experiences of students. Approach this endeavour with diligence, open-mindedness, and a commitment to making a positive impact on the field of education.

To continue with the illustration from a real experience example of research, next, we will show you the description of the research topic, its relevance and methodology (action research). This description

provides a comprehensive overview of the research topic, aligning with the problem statement and outlining the research objectives and methodologies.

Research Topic Description

Enhancing Advanced English Learners' Proficiency in Vocabulary, Grammar, and Speech Skills through Action Research (2)

This research focuses on improving the language proficiency of advanced English learners who demonstrate weaknesses in vocabulary acquisition, advanced grammar usage, and speech skills. Despite their advanced level, these students struggle to meet the expectations of fluency and accuracy required for effective communication in academic and professional contexts.

The research will employ an action research methodology to identify the specific challenges faced by these students and to develop targeted instructional strategies aimed at addressing these challenges. The study will explore innovative teaching methods, such as task-based learning, communicative approaches, and inductive grammar instruction, to enhance the students' language skills.

The primary objectives are to:

- **Identify and Analyze Challenges:** Understand the specific areas where advanced English learners face difficulties in vocabulary building, advanced grammar, and speech skills.
- **Develop and Implement Strategies:** Create and apply targeted teaching strategies to address these deficiencies.
- **Evaluate Effectiveness:** Assess the impact of these strategies on students' language proficiency through qualitative and quantitative measures.
- This research aims to contribute to the field of English language teaching by providing practical, evidence-based solutions to enhance the proficiency of advanced learners, ultimately preparing them for more effective communication and success in their academic and professional pursuits.

Choosing an observational method

Observation may be considered the most important part of research: it requires setting some principles that allow the observers to gather relevant insights into variables and narrow them down. Thus, researchers can handle several observational methods according to interests and goals. We can examine three main observational methods for the effectiveness of collecting behaviors, events, and phenomena in real-life settings.

Critique of Topic Selection by Young Researchers in Language Teaching

Selecting an appropriate research topic is a crucial step in the research process, and it often determines the trajectory and impact of the study. However, young researchers, particularly those in the field of language teaching, frequently face challenges in this initial stage. This critique aims to highlight common pitfalls in topic selection, especially in Latin American settings, where social, cultural, and linguistic contexts play a pivotal role.

Lack of Deep Understanding of the Research Process

One of the primary issues observed among young researchers is a superficial understanding of the research process. This often leads to the selection of topics that are either too broad or too narrow, lacking the necessary depth and focus. Research topics should be grounded in a thorough understanding of existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approaches. However, many novice researchers skip this foundational step, jumping directly to data collection without a well-defined research question or hypothesis. This oversight can result in fragmented studies that fail to contribute meaningful insights to the field.

Overlooking the Relevance of Context

In the realm of language teaching, context is paramount. Language learning does not occur in a vacuum; it is deeply influenced by the social, cultural, and economic environments in which learners operate. Young researchers often overlook this critical aspect, choosing topics that do not resonate with the local context. For instance, a study on the effectiveness of a particular teaching method might yield different results in Latin America compared to Europe due to varying educational systems, cultural attitudes towards education, and socio-economic factors. Ignoring these contextual differences can lead to research findings that are not generalizable or applicable to the intended population.

Misalignment with Learners' Linguistic Needs

Another common issue is the misalignment between research topics and the actual linguistic needs of learners. In Latin American settings, students often face unique challenges such as limited exposure to the target language outside the classroom, lack of access to quality educational resources, and socio-economic barriers. However, young researchers may select topics based on their own interests or trends in the literature rather than the pressing needs of their learners. For example, a study focusing on advanced linguistic theories might be less relevant in a context where students struggle with basic language proficiency. Research should aim to address real-world problems and improve educational outcomes for learners.

Influence of Academic Trends and Personal Interests

Young researchers are sometimes swayed by current academic trends or their personal interests, leading to the selection of topics that are fashionable but not necessarily impactful. While it is essential to stay updated with current developments in the field, research should ultimately be driven by a desire to address significant gaps in knowledge and practice. In the context of language teaching in Latin America, where educational challenges are often acute and multifaceted, it is crucial to prioritize topics that have the potential to make a tangible difference in learners' lives.

Challenges Specific to Latin American Settings

Latin America presents a unique set of challenges for language teaching and research. Socio-economic disparities, diverse cultural backgrounds, and varying levels of access to education are just a few factors that complicate the research landscape. Young researchers need to be acutely aware of these issues and select topics that are both relevant and feasible within this context. For example, investigating the impact of community-based language learning initiatives might be more pertinent and beneficial compared to examining high-tech language learning tools that are inaccessible to many learners in the region.

Analysis of Survey Results applied to intermediate learners-in service teachers of a language Program. The survey gathered responses from students in the FLT English 2024-1 course, focusing on their motivations, perceived impacts, and career aspirations related to studying English. Here is a detailed analysis of the findings: motivations for Studying English.

Primary Motivations:

1. **Love for Languages:** A significant number of respondents indicated a genuine passion for languages as a key motivator.
2. **Cultural Interest:** Many students expressed an interest in English due to its cultural richness.
3. **Job Opportunities:** The desire to enhance job prospects was a common theme, suggesting that students view English proficiency as a valuable asset in the job market.
4. **Personal Fulfillment:** Some students chose English to align with personal values and beliefs, seeking personal satisfaction and purpose.
5. **Social Contribution:** A number of respondents mentioned a desire to contribute to society by teaching English, indicating a sense of social responsibility.

Needs Leading to Career Choice:

1. **Market Demand:** The demand for skills in the job market was frequently cited.
2. **Transferable Skills:** The development of valuable and transferable skills was another common reason.
3. **Financial Stability:** Economic factors, such as generating income and achieving financial stability, were significant motivators.

Perceived Impact of Teaching on Social and Cultural Environment

1. **Social Connections:** Teaching English is seen as a means to foster social connections and networking.
2. **Empathy and Responsibility:** Respondents believe teaching can cultivate empathy and social responsibility among learners.
3. **Passion for Learning:** Many students feel that teaching can inspire a passion for learning and self-improvement.
4. **Educational Equity:** Teaching English is perceived as a way to reduce economic disparities by providing equal educational opportunities.

Economic Impact of Teaching Career

1. **Income Generation:** A teaching career is viewed as a stable source of income.
2. **Financial Stability:** The potential for financial stability through a teaching career is a key consideration.
3. **Reducing Disparities:** Teaching is seen as a way to help reduce economic disparities, benefiting both teachers and their communities.

Conclusions

The survey results provide valuable insights into the motivations of students pursuing a degree in English, shedding light on the intricate interplay between personal aspirations, societal needs, and the specific context in which they find themselves. It is evident that these students possess a multifaceted set of motivations, encompassing intrinsic factors such as a genuine love for languages and cultural appreciation, as well as extrinsic factors like increased job opportunities and financial stability.

Notably, the students' motivations appear to be closely aligned with the realities and necessities of their context, particularly the public education system in Colombia. The desire to contribute positively to society and view teaching as a vehicle for social change and personal fulfillment resonates strongly with the broader educational goals of fostering empathy, responsibility, and a passion for lifelong learning – essential components in shaping well-rounded citizens and future leaders.

Furthermore, the economic benefits of teaching, such as income generation and financial stability, hold particular significance in the Colombian context, where access to quality education and economic opportunities can be limited, especially in marginalized communities. By choosing a career in English language teaching, these students are not only pursuing their personal interests but also addressing a societal need for qualified educators who can equip learners with the language skills necessary for professional and personal advancement.

The survey results also highlight the instrumental motivation of learning English for the purpose of securing employment opportunities, a reality that resonates with many school and high school learners in public contexts. In a globalized world, proficiency in English has become a valuable asset, opening doors to a wider range of career paths and economic mobility. By pursuing a degree in English, these students are positioning themselves to meet this demand and potentially serve as role models for younger learners, inspiring them to recognize the practical benefits of language acquisition.

Moreover, the process of bilingual education in Colombia plays a pivotal role in shaping the motivations and aspirations of these future educators. As they navigate the complexities of language learning and teaching, they develop a deeper appreciation for the challenges and rewards associated with fostering multilingualism. This experience not only fuels their intrinsic motivations but also equips them with the necessary skills and empathy to effectively support learners on their own language-learning journeys. In essence, the survey results highlight the interconnectedness between students' motivations, the necessities of their context, and the broader societal goals of education. These future educators are driven by a combination of personal interests, cultural appreciation, and a recognition of the transformative power of language education. By aligning their aspirations with the needs of their communities and the realities of the public education system, they hold the potential to create a ripple effect of positive change, empowering learners and fostering a more inclusive and globally minded society.

Recommendations for Improvement

To address these issues, several recommendations can be made:

1. **Enhanced Training and Mentorship:** Young researchers should receive comprehensive training in research methodologies, with an emphasis on understanding and integrating context into their studies. Mentorship from experienced researchers can provide valuable guidance and help avoid common pitfalls.
2. **Contextual Relevance:** Researchers should prioritize topics that are directly relevant to the social, cultural, and linguistic contexts of their learners. This involves conducting preliminary needs assessments and engaging with the local community to identify pressing issues.
3. **Aligning with Learner Needs:** Research should be learner-centered, focusing on addressing the actual linguistic needs and challenges faced by students. This might involve more practical, applied research that seeks to improve classroom practices and learner outcomes.
4. **Critical Evaluation of Trends:** While staying informed about academic trends is important, researchers should critically evaluate the relevance and applicability of these trends to their specific context before selecting a research topic.
5. **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Embracing interdisciplinary research can provide a more holistic understanding of the factors affecting language learning. Collaboration with experts in sociology, anthropology, and education can enrich the research process and outcomes.

Selecting a research topic is a foundational step that significantly impacts the direction and success of a study. Young researchers in language teaching, especially in Latin American settings, must navigate this process with a deep understanding of the research process, an appreciation for contextual relevance, and a focus on addressing the actual needs of learners. By avoiding common pitfalls and embracing a more thoughtful and informed approach to topic selection, they can contribute more effectively to the advancement of knowledge and the improvement of educational practices in their field.

Table 2

Three main observational methods for the effectiveness of collecting behaviors, events, and phenomena in real-life settings

Naturalistic observation	A technique used to observe directly in the context where the phenomenon is immersed. The observation is done without interfering or interacting with the population and aims to capture authentic behaviors and patterns.
Participant observation	A technique where researchers can actively be part of the group being studied, participate in activities while building rapport, conduct surveys, take notes, and record videos.
Structured observation	A technique where non-real settings are observed. Labs or simulated environments take the real world's place as the sets for observing specific and limited variables.

Source: own adaptation.

Writing and narrowing down your focus

Embarking on a research journey begins with noting down your initial ideas and areas of interest. However, it's crucial to approach the process of refining your research topic with a pragmatic mindset, considering your skills, time constraints, and available resources. While the allure of a broad-ranging topic may be tempting, narrowing your focus is essential for achieving meaningful and feasible results. The process of fine-tuning your research scope can be divided into seven key steps:

1. **Review the initial scope:** Identify the overarching themes, questions, and objectives that initially sparked your interest. This will serve as a foundation for narrowing your focus while maintaining alignment with your original intentions.
2. **Prioritize research aspects:** Carefully consider which aspects are most essential to address, given your skills, time constraints, and budget. Focus on the elements that align most closely with your intentions and prioritize those for further exploration.
3. **Evaluate feasibility:** Identify potential challenges or limitations that may arise, such as access to resources, data collection methods, or the need for specialized expertise. Prioritize areas that are most feasible within your constraints.

4. Explore alternative approaches: Consider more time and cost-effective alternatives that permit the achievement of your goals. These could include adapting existing methodologies, leveraging available data sources, or collaborating with other researchers or institutions to share resources and expertise.
5. Redefine and rewrite: With a thorough understanding of your project's scope and constraints, rewrite your research focus in a clear and specific manner, ensuring that it aligns with your priorities and feasibility considerations.
6. Develop a detailed plan: Once you have refined your research scope, create a comprehensive plan outlining the specific tasks, timelines, and budget allocations required to execute your research effectively. Ensure that your expectations are realistic and that you maximize efficiency and productivity.
7. Seek feedback: Throughout this process, actively seek input from your peers, mentors, and anyone else who can provide valuable feedback. Collaboration and guidance from experienced researchers can help refine your approach and ensure you are on the right track.

Remember, the key to a successful research endeavor lies in striking a balance between your aspirations and the practical realities of your project. By following these steps and embracing an iterative approach, you can refine your research scope, ensuring a meaningful and achievable study that contributes to the advancement of knowledge in your field.

Formulating research questions or hypotheses

Crafting well-defined research questions and testable hypotheses is a crucial step in the research process, as it provides a clear direction and focus for your study. These research questions and hypotheses act as guideposts, ensuring that your efforts are channeled towards addressing specific aspects of your research topic within the constraints of time and resources.

According to Farrugia et al. (2010)¹, interest in a particular topic usually begins the research process, but it is the familiarity with

¹ Farrugia, P., Petrisor, B. A., Farrokhyar, F., & Bhandari, M. (2010). Research questions, hypotheses and objectives. *Canadian journal of surgery*, 53(4), 278.

the subject that helps define an appropriate research question for a study. Questions then arise out of a perceived knowledge deficit within a subject area or field of study. Indeed, Haynes (2006, as cited in Farrugia et al., 2010), suggests that it is important to know “where the boundary between current knowledge and ignorance lies.”

1. **Identify Key Variables/Categories:** Begin by identifying the key variables or categories that you intend to investigate within your research topic. These variables should be clearly defined and measurable, allowing you to formulate precise research questions and hypotheses.
2. **Formulate Clear Research Questions:** Develop concise and specific research questions that directly address the key variables identified. Each question should be focused and pose a clear inquiry that can be addressed within the scope of your study.
3. **Assess Feasibility:** Evaluate the feasibility of your research questions by considering data availability, research methods, and time and budget constraints. Ensure that the necessary data can be collected, and the proposed methods are achievable within the allocated resources.
4. **Develop Testable Hypotheses:** Based on your research questions, formulate testable hypotheses that propose specific relationships or outcomes between the variables under investigation. These hypotheses should be concise, clearly stated, and capable of being empirically tested.
5. **Consider Alternative Hypotheses:** Anticipate and incorporate alternative hypotheses or potential outcomes that may challenge or contradict your initial assumptions. This approach promotes a comprehensive and balanced investigation.
6. **Refine and Finalize:** Seek feedback from peers, mentors, or colleagues to refine your research questions and hypotheses. Ensure that they are logically structured, feasible to investigate, and aligned with your research objectives. Once finalized, these elements will serve as the foundation for your research design and data analysis.

Research questions and hypotheses: practical examples to consider

Here are six research questions and corresponding testable hypotheses for academic research in the field of language teaching, considering various research methodologies and sub-fields. These research questions and hypotheses cover various aspects of language teaching, including task-based language teaching, collaborative learning, teacher beliefs and practices, technology integration, sociolinguistics, and language acquisition disorders. The hypotheses are testable and propose specific relationships or outcomes that can be empirically investigated using different research methodologies, such as mixed-methods studies, action research, case studies, experimental designs, and sociolinguistic ethnographies.

1. Research Question: How does the implementation of a task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach influence the development of pragmatic competence among advanced-level English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in a multicultural classroom setting? Hypothesis: ESL learners in a multicultural classroom who receive instruction using a task-based language teaching approach will demonstrate significantly higher levels of pragmatic competence, as measured by their ability to interpret and produce appropriate linguistic forms in context, compared to those taught using traditional methods. (Methodology: Mixed-methods study, combining quantitative assessment of pragmatic competence and qualitative observations/interviews)
2. Research Question: What are the effects of incorporating collaborative storytelling activities on the motivation and overall language proficiency of beginner-level French language learners in an immersion program? Hypothesis: Beginner-level French language learners who participate in collaborative storytelling activities will exhibit higher levels of motivation, as measured by self-reported data and classroom engagement, and improved overall language proficiency, as assessed by standardized proficiency tests, compared to those who receive instruction through traditional methods. (Methodology: Action research, involving pre- and post-intervention assessments and reflective journaling)
3. Research Question: How does the language ideological stance of English language teachers influence their instructional practices and interactions with students from diverse linguistic backgrounds? Hypothesis: English language teachers with more inclusive language ideologies, acknowledging the legitimacy of different language varieties and dialects, will demonstrate more culturally responsive instructional practices and more positive interactions with linguistically diverse students, as observed through classroom observations and discourse analysis. (Methodology: Qualitative case study, involving classroom observations, teacher interviews, and discourse analysis)
4. Research Question: To what extent does the use of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) apps enhance the acquisition and retention of vocabulary among intermediate-level Spanish language learners? Hypothesis: Intermediate-level Spanish language learners who use MALL apps as a supplementary learning tool will demonstrate significantly better vocabulary acquisition and retention rates compared to those who do not use such apps, as measured by pre-and post-intervention vocabulary assessments. (Methodology: Experimental study, with a control and experimental group)

5. Research Question: How do sociocultural factors influence language attitudes and code-switching patterns among bilingual (English-Spanish) university students in a specific region? Hypothesis: Bilingual university students' language attitudes and code-switching patterns will be influenced by sociocultural factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and community language norms, as revealed through interviews, focus groups, and naturalistic observations. (Methodology: Sociolinguistic ethnography, involving interviews, focus groups, and naturalistic observations)
6. Research Question: What is the impact of explicit instruction in phonological awareness on the reading and spelling abilities of elementary school students with dyslexia learning English as a foreign language? Hypothesis: Elementary school students with dyslexia who receive explicit instruction in phonological awareness will demonstrate significantly improved reading and spelling abilities in English compared to those who do not receive such instruction, as measured by standardized assessments and diagnostic tests. (Methodology: Quasi-experimental study, with pre-and post-intervention assessments).

By following this structured approach, you can formulate concise and feasible research questions and hypotheses that effectively guide your research efforts, maximizing the impact of your study within the available time and resources.

In continuing with the real-life research illustration, let us present the research question, which succinctly captures the focus of the mentioned study, emphasizing the aim to develop and evaluate specific teaching strategies to enhance the identified areas of weakness in advanced English learners.

Figure 3

Research question for “Enhancing Advanced English Learners’ Proficiency in Vocabulary, Grammar, and Speech Skills through Action Research”

Research Question

How can targeted instructional strategies, developed through action research, improve vocabulary acquisition, advanced grammar proficiency, and speech skills among advanced English learners?

Part 2.

Let´s understand how it works

Conducting Research

Understanding Research Work

Research, like any other concept concerned with knowledge, lies in the desirable inclination of intriguing in the spirit of curiosity to either fix or understand a single phenomenon.

Multiple definitions push scholars to express some outlooks, which vary depending on the criterion to do research in their fields.

We can examine some definitions that reveal a global view: the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines research as an enquiry of examination, especially an investigation or experimentation focused on the findings and interpretation of facts. Creswell (n.d.) claims research is a process followed by steps to collect and analyze data to increase our understanding of a single topic or issue.

On the other hand, Waltz and Bausell (1981) advocate research as a systematic, formal, rigorous, and precise process to obtain solutions to problems to find out and interpret new facts. In the same sense, Leedy and Ormrod (2014) assert that research is a systematic process to collect, analyze, and interpret data information to increase our understanding of a phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned.

All in all, research seems to share a partnership with its systematic process of collecting data for rigorous analysis to interpret or solve a problem through suitable methodologies (research design, research methods, instruments and artifacts) and eventually, it tends to contribute to the advancement of science and the betterment of a social community.

Figure 4

An excerpt of "Enhancing Advanced English Learners' Proficiency in Vocabulary, Grammar, and Speech Skills through Action Research"

Action research as the methodology of this research study	
Action research is highly suitable for this research proposal due to its practical relevance, collaborative nature, iterative process, immediate applicability, and contribution to professional development. By engaging in action research, the researcher can develop targeted instructional strategies that are contextually relevant and continuously refined, leading to significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition, advanced grammar proficiency, and speech skills among advanced English learners. This approach not only addresses the immediate educational challenges but also promotes a culture of continuous improvement and reflective practice. Action research is a participatory and iterative research methodology designed to solve real-world problems through a cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection. It is particularly suitable for educational settings where immediate application and continuous improvement of teaching practices are essential. For this research proposal, which aims to enhance vocabulary acquisition, advanced grammar proficiency, and speech skills among advanced English learners, action research is highly appropriate for several reasons.	
1.	Practical and Contextual Relevance: 1.1 Addressing Real Problems: Action research focuses on solving specific, practical issues faced by learners and educators. In this case, the identified problem is the low proficiency in vocabulary, advanced grammar, and speech skills among advanced English learners. Action research allows the researcher to directly address and find solutions for these specific challenges within the actual educational context. 1.2. Contextual Adaptation: Because action research is conducted in the natural environment where the problem exists, it enables the researcher to tailor interventions to the specific needs of the students. This contextual relevance ensures that the solutions are practical and applicable to the learners' real-world experiences.
2.	Collaborative and Participatory Approach: 2.1. Involving Stakeholders: Action research involves collaboration between the researcher and participants (students, teachers, and possibly other stakeholders). This collaborative approach ensures that the interventions are developed with direct input from those affected by the problem, leading to more effective and accepted solutions. 2.2. Empowering Participants: By involving students and teachers in the research process, action research empowers them to take ownership of the learning and teaching process. This engagement can lead to increased motivation and commitment to the implemented strategies.

3. Iterative Process for Continuous Improvement:
 - 3.1. Cyclical Nature: The iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection inherent in action research allow for continuous refinement of interventions. If initial strategies do not yield the desired results, they can be adjusted and improved in subsequent cycles.
 - 3.2. Reflective Practice: Each cycle involves reflection on the outcomes, which fosters a deeper understanding of the issues and more informed decision-making. This reflective practice is crucial for developing effective teaching strategies and improving educational outcomes.
4. Immediate Application and Feedback:
 - 4.1. Direct Implementation: Interventions designed through action research can be immediately applied in the classroom. This immediacy allows for quick feedback and adjustments, making the research process dynamic and responsive to the learners' needs.
 - 4.2. Real-Time Data: The ongoing collection and analysis of data provide real-time insights into the effectiveness of the strategies being implemented. This immediate feedback loop is invaluable for making timely and evidence-based adjustments.
5. Contribution to Professional Development:
 - 5.1. Enhancing Teaching Practices: For educators, engaging in action research contributes to professional development by enhancing their understanding of effective teaching practices. It encourages continuous learning and adaptation based on empirical evidence.
 - 5.2. Building a Learning Community: Action research fosters a community of practice among educators who share findings, strategies, and experiences, leading to collective improvement and innovation in teaching methodologies.

Introduction to Research Methods

Conducting research is of paramount importance in the field of education for several reasons. First, improving teaching methods and practices. Research helps educators understand how students learn best, what teaching strategies are most effective, and how to address diverse learning needs. By studying various pedagogical approaches, classroom dynamics, and student outcomes, researchers can identify best practices and develop evidence-based teaching methodologies that enhance learning and academic achievement.

The relationship between teaching and research is often assumed and just as often ignored. Research should and does influence

teaching (and vice versa), but the gulf between the two can at times seem large. Teachers are told to use “research-based strategies” and yet such strategies may be presented to them stripped of the very sensitivity to context, analytic rigor, and thoughtful skepticism that are the hallmarks of quality research. Research supports high quality English language arts instruction for all students. Because learners have varying backgrounds, skills, and needs, an important purpose of English language arts research is to ensure that practice and policy decisions are appropriate for the full range of learners in a setting. English language arts research seeks to illuminate both differences among various groups (for instance, students learning English as a second language or students in rural schools) and common principles that can guide decision-making across a range of settings (Mupa, P., & Chinooneka, T. I. (2015); (2023, July 18). *UNESCO*)^{2 3}.

Secondly, advancing educational theory and policy. Educational research contributes to the development and refinement of theories related to learning, cognitive development, motivation, and other aspects of education. These theories inform educational policies, curriculum design, and instructional strategies. Research findings can also influence educational policymaking by providing data-driven insights into issues such as school funding, teacher training, and educational equity.

Also, addressing educational challenges. Research can shed light on persistent challenges in education, such as achievement gaps, student dropout rates, and the impact of socioeconomic factors on learning outcomes. By investigating the root causes of these challenges and evaluating potential solutions, researchers can help educators and policymakers develop targeted interventions and strategies to address them effectively.

Then, promoting innovation and technology integration. Educational research plays a crucial role in exploring the potential of emerging technologies and their application in teaching and learning. Researchers can investigate the impact of digital tools, online learning

2 Mupa, P., & Chinooneka, T. I. (2015). Factors contributing to ineffective teaching and learning in primary schools: Why are schools in decadence?. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(19), 125–132. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1079543.pdf>

3 UNESCO and Colombia call on countries to continue the regional agenda to ensure the right to education for people in situations of human mobility. (2023, July 18). UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-colombia-call-countries-continue-regional-agenda-ensure-right-education-people-situations>

platforms, and educational software on student engagement, knowledge acquisition, and skill development, paving the way for innovative and effective technology integration in classrooms.

Next, fostering evidence-based decision-making. Research provides educators, administrators, and policymakers with reliable data and evidence to inform their decision-making processes. By consulting research findings, stakeholders can make informed choices about curriculum design, resource allocation, professional development programs, and other educational initiatives, ensuring that decisions are based on solid evidence rather than anecdotal observations or assumptions.

Finally, advancing knowledge and understanding. Educational research contributes to the broader body of knowledge in the field, expanding our understanding of learning processes, teaching methodologies, and the complex interactions between various factors that influence educational outcomes. This knowledge can inform future research, fuel academic discourse, and drive continuous improvement in educational practices.

By engaging in rigorous research, educators, policymakers, and researchers can collectively work towards enhancing the quality of education, addressing educational inequalities, and fostering positive learning experiences for students at all levels. In summary, conducting education research is essential for improving teaching and learning outcomes, informing policy and decision-making, addressing educational challenges, promoting innovation, evaluating program effectiveness, supporting professional development, and fostering a culture of inquiry within the education community.

Conducting research in language education, especially in deprived contexts, public schools in Latin America, and areas with limited or no internet connectivity, can be challenging but vital for addressing educational inequalities and fostering positive learning experiences. Here is a list of modern, up-to-date research methods that can be employed in such contexts:

1. **Participatory Action Research (PAR):** This research method involves active collaboration between researchers and participants (teachers, students, community members) to identify educational problems, develop solutions, and implement changes. PAR is particularly suitable for deprived contexts as it empowers stakeholders and promotes locally relevant interventions.
2. **Ethnographic Studies:** Ethnographic research involves immersing oneself in the cultural context of the study participants to gain a deep understanding of their lived experiences, beliefs, and practices. This approach can be invaluable in understanding the unique challenges and opportunities in deprived contexts and informing culturally responsive educational practices.
3. **Classroom Observation and Discourse Analysis:** Systematic classroom observations and discourse analysis can provide valuable insights into teaching and learning processes, teacher-student interactions, and language use in classrooms. These methods can be employed with minimal resources and can inform pedagogical practices and language policies.
4. **Photovoice:** Photovoice is a participatory research method that involves participants taking photographs to represent their experiences and perspectives, which are then discussed and analyzed. This method can be particularly effective in contexts with limited resources, as it leverages participants' own perspectives and experiences.
5. **Mobile-based Data Collection:** With the increasing availability of mobile devices, even in deprived contexts, researchers can explore mobile-based data collection methods, such as surveys, interviews, or digital storytelling, to gather data from participants without the need for internet connectivity or advanced technology.
6. **Participatory Curriculum Development:** Engaging teachers, students, and community members in the process of developing and adapting curricula can lead to more relevant and culturally responsive educational materials. This approach can be particularly effective in deprived contexts where existing curricula may not adequately address the local needs and realities.
7. **Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR):** CBPR involves forming equitable partnerships between researchers and community members to collaboratively identify educational challenges, design research projects, and implement solutions. This approach can empower communities and ensure that research addresses their specific needs and concerns.
8. **Low-tech Interventions and Assessments:** Researchers can explore low-tech interventions and assessments that do not rely heavily on technology or internet connectivity. Examples include using locally available materials for language learning activities, implementing low-cost teaching aids, or developing paper-based assessments.

9. **Oral Histories and Storytelling:** Collecting oral histories and stories from community members can provide valuable insights into local knowledge, cultural practices, and educational experiences. This method can be particularly effective in contexts where literacy levels may be low or where oral traditions are strong.
10. **Collaborative Lesson Study:** Collaborative Lesson Study involves teachers working together to plan, implement, observe, and refine lessons. This approach can promote professional development, foster collaboration, and enhance teaching practices without relying heavily on external resources or technology.

These research methods acknowledge the unique challenges and strengths of deprived contexts, public schools in Latin America, and areas with limited internet connectivity. They emphasize participatory approaches, community involvement, and the utilization of locally available resources. By employing these methods, researchers can conduct meaningful and culturally relevant studies that address educational inequalities and contribute to improving language education in these contexts

Educational research methodologies

Educational research employs a variety of methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, to systematically investigate educational phenomena, gather data, and generate insights that can inform practice and advance knowledge. Here are some common research methodologies and their applications in educational research:

- **Experimental research:**

Experimental methodologies involve manipulating one or more variables and measuring their effects on other variables.

Examples: Randomized controlled trials, quasi-experiments, single-subject designs.

Applications: Evaluating the effectiveness of instructional interventions, teaching strategies, or educational programs.

- **Survey research:**

Surveys involve collecting data from a sample of participants through questionnaires, interviews, or structured observations.

Examples: Cross-sectional surveys, longitudinal surveys, online surveys.

Applications: Gathering information on student attitudes, teacher perceptions, school climate, and educational trends.

- **Qualitative research:**

Qualitative methodologies aim to explore and understand complex phenomena from participants' perspectives.

Examples: Case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology.

Applications: Investigating classroom dynamics, exploring students' learning experiences, and understanding cultural influences on education.

- **Mixed methods research:**

Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study.

Examples: Convergent, explanatory, exploratory sequential designs.

Applications: Providing a comprehensive understanding of educational issues by integrating different data sources and methods.

- **Action research:**

Action research involves educators systematically investigating their own practices to solve practical problems and improve their teaching.

Examples: Participatory action research, and classroom action research.

Applications: Enhancing teaching practices, addressing classroom-specific challenges, and promoting professional development.

- **Historical research:**

Historical research involves analyzing historical documents, artifacts, and records to understand past educational events, policies, and practices.

Examples: Archival research, oral histories, document analysis.

Applications: Tracing the evolution of educational systems, understanding the historical context of educational reforms, and learning from past experiences.

- **Correlational research:**

Correlational research examines the relationships between variables without manipulating them.

Examples: Regression analyses, and structural equation modeling.

Applications: Identifying factors associated with student achievement and exploring relationships between variables in educational settings.

Systematic inquiry

The role of systematic inquiry in advancing knowledge and improving educational practice is crucial. Systematic research methodologies ensure that investigations are rigorous, reliable, and valid, providing a solid foundation for evidence-based decision-making. Through systematic inquiry, researchers can generate new knowledge by following structured research processes, researchers can uncover new insights, challenge existing assumptions, and expand our understanding of educational processes and phenomena.

Evaluating and refining educational practices in systematic research allows for the assessment and refinement of teaching methods, instructional strategies, and educational interventions, leading to continuous improvement and enhanced student learning outcomes.

Subsequently, informing policy and decision-making in research findings based on systematic inquiry provide policymakers and educational leaders with reliable data and evidence to guide decision-making processes related to curriculum development, resource allocation, and educational policies.

The contribution to theory development in systematic research can lead to the formulation, testing, and refinement of educational theories, advancing our conceptual understanding of learning, teaching, and educational systems. Also, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing in systematic inquiry promotes collaboration among researchers, educators, and stakeholders, facilitating the dissemination and application of research findings in diverse educational settings.

By embracing systematic inquiry and employing rigorous research methodologies, the field of education can continually expand its knowledge base, address complex challenges, and enhance educational practices to better serve students and promote lifelong learning.

Figure 5

Excerpt from one of professor Rojas' reports (1)

Achievements in the attitudinal, affective, ethical, aesthetic and social aspects related to the course environment

Attitudinal:

It was possible to maintain the commitment to active participation in the course activities, which can be evidenced in the minimal failures in the entire group. Likewise, it was possible to maintain a positive and open attitude towards learning and collaboration with colleagues. Respecting the opinions and points of view of others, even if they differ from one's own, was constantly encouraged.

Affective:

An environment of support and camaraderie was fostered among students, showing empathy and understanding towards the experiences and difficulties of classmates. When necessary, encouragement and recognition could also be provided for individual and group achievements. This during classes and at the time of PROGRESS REPORT.

Ethical:

At all times, academic integrity was maintained and plagiarism or copying of others' work was avoided. This was achieved thanks to collaborative work and strategies such as carrying out work in class under the supervision of the teacher and writing reports of the final work (research paper). In all the works and activities presented, emphasis was placed on respecting copyright and properly citing the sources of information used in academic works. Likewise, students were asked and they were also able to comply with the policies and regulations established by the educational institution regarding ethical and professional conduct.

Aesthetic:

It was possible to contribute to a clean, orderly and welcoming physical environment in the classroom. ALSO, students were always willing to value and respect the physical environment of the campus and adopt sustainable practices in the use of resources; Also, it was possible to promote aesthetic appreciation and creativity in projects and activities related to the course.

Social:

Inclusion and diversity were promoted, respecting the cultural, linguistic and background differences of colleagues. The students cheerfully managed to participate in community service activities or social projects related to the course topic.

Collaborate with peers on group projects and extracurricular activities to strengthen social ties and a sense of community.

These commitments will contribute to creating a positive, respectful and enriching environment in the course, promoting the personal and academic growth of all students.

Report on Advanced English Language Class

Overview

This term, the English language class was structured around an action research project called "English Pills," designed to elevate students' proficiency to a C1 level. The project was divided into two key stages: reinforcement of previous topics and focused development of oral production. Additionally, students engaged in various extracurricular activities that promoted linguistic and ecological awareness.

Stage One: Reinforcement of Previous Topics

Goals:

Enhance students' grammar, vocabulary, and oral production skills to a C1 level.

Develop comprehensive reading and listening abilities through in-class and extracurricular activities.

Activities:

Grammar and Vocabulary: Conducted intensive grammar and vocabulary sessions to bridge knowledge gaps, ensuring students' proficiency aligned with C1 standards.

Reading Comprehension: Assigned diverse reading materials and facilitated discussions to improve analytical reading skills.

Listening Practice: Integrated listening exercises using authentic audio materials to enhance comprehension and auditory skills.

Stage Two: Focus on Speaking and Oral Production

Goals:

Develop students' oral production skills progressively, culminating in the ability to deliver a 30-minute speech.

Teach students how to structure speeches effectively and use C1 level vocabulary appropriately.

Activities:

Progressive Speech Development: Guided students in developing speeches incrementally, starting with 2-minute presentations and gradually increasing to 30-minute speeches over the semester.

Speech Structure and Vocabulary: Focused on teaching how to structure speeches logically and use advanced vocabulary, ensuring clarity and sophistication in oral presentations.

Mock Exam and Research Paper: Conducted a mock IELTS exam to simulate real test conditions and required students to produce a research paper, reinforcing academic writing and research skills.

Professor Feedback

Activities:

Assignment Feedback: Provided detailed feedback on student assignments and projects, focusing on areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Office Hours: Held regular office hours to offer students additional support, clarification on complex topics, and discussions about their academic performance and progress.

Feedback to Professor

Activities:

Course Evaluations: Collected course evaluations from students to gather honest feedback on the course structure, content, and teaching methods.

Suggestions for Improvement: Solicited suggestions for course improvement based on student learning experiences and observations, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement.

Extracurricular Activities

Oral Debate:

Activity: Organized an oral debate with professors from the language department.

Objective: Enhance students' critical thinking, argumentation skills, and public speaking confidence.

Harmony of Languages:

Activity: Coordinated an interactive, multicultural-multilingual event celebrating native, modern, and ancient languages through poetry and singing.

Objective: Foster cultural appreciation and linguistic diversity awareness.

EcoCrafts:

Activity: Promoted ecological awareness and recycling practices through creative activities that students could incorporate into their teaching practices.

Objective: Instill environmental responsibility and innovative teaching methods.

Outcomes

Enhanced Proficiency: Students demonstrated significant improvement in grammar, vocabulary, and oral production, achieving B2-C1 level proficiency.

Speech Skills: Students successfully delivered structured and coherent speeches, showcasing their ability to use advanced vocabulary effectively.

Exam Preparedness: Participation in the mock IELTS exam and completion of a research paper prepared students for real-world academic and professional challenges.

Cultural and Ecological Awareness: Through extracurricular activities, students gained a deeper appreciation for linguistic diversity and ecological responsibility, enriching their overall educational experience.

Data Collection Methods

Educational research employs various data collection methods to gather relevant information and evidence. Common data collection methods include:

1. **Surveys:** Questionnaires or structured interviews used to collect quantitative and/or qualitative data from a sample population.
2. **Interviews:** In-depth, semi-structured or unstructured conversations with participants to explore their perspectives, experiences, and perceptions.
3. **Observations:** Systematic observation and documentation of behaviors, interactions, and events in educational settings, such as classrooms or schools.
4. **Experiments:** Controlled studies where researchers manipulate one or more variables and measure their effects on other variables.
5. **Document analysis:** Examination and analysis of existing documents, such as policy documents, curriculum materials, or student work samples.

Each data collection method has its advantages and limitations, and the choice depends on the research questions, objectives, and available resources. For example, surveys are useful for collecting large amounts of data from a wide sample but may lack depth and context. Also, interviews provide rich, in-depth insights but can be time-consuming and subject to researcher bias. Observations allow researchers to observe phenomena in natural settings directly but can be intrusive and influenced by the observer's presence. Experiments offer strong internal validity and control but may lack external validity and generalizability. When selecting data collection methods, researchers should consider factors such as the nature of the research questions, the target population, available resources (time, funding, access), and the desired level of depth and breadth of data.

Figure 6

Excerpt from one of Professor Rojas' reports (2)

Data Collection Methods for the Action Research Project

Introduction:

The success of this action research project depends heavily on effective data collection methods that provide comprehensive and reliable information to understand the problem, implement interventions, and evaluate its outcomes. For this project, which aims to enhance vocabulary acquisition, advanced grammar proficiency, and speech skills among advanced English learners, a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods will be used. These methods will ensure a holistic understanding of the issues and the effectiveness of the interventions.

1. Pre- and Post-Intervention Assessments:

1.1 Vocabulary Tests:

Description: Standardized vocabulary tests will be administered before and after the intervention.

Purpose: To measure changes in students' vocabulary knowledge and retention.

Data Type: Quantitative.

1.2 Grammar Proficiency Tests:

Description: Advanced grammar tests tailored to C1 level standards will be conducted at the start and end of the intervention.

Purpose: To evaluate improvements in students' understanding and application of advanced grammatical structures.

Data Type: Quantitative.

1.3 Speech Performance Evaluations:

Description: Students will be required to deliver speeches, which will be recorded and evaluated using a standardized rubric assessing fluency, coherence, pronunciation, and use of advanced vocabulary and grammar.

Purpose: To assess progress in oral production skills.

Data Type: Quantitative and qualitative

2. Observations:

2.1 Classroom Observations:

Description: The researcher will conduct systematic observations of classroom activities, focusing on student engagement, participation, and application of vocabulary and grammar in speaking tasks.

Purpose: To gather insights into student behavior and the dynamics of the learning environment.

Data Type: Qualitative.

2.2 Video Recordings:

Description: Video recordings of classroom interactions and student presentations will be made.

Purpose: To allow for detailed analysis of student performance and interaction patterns over time.

Data Type: Qualitative.

3. Surveys and Questionnaires:

3.1 Student Surveys:

Description: Surveys with both closed and open-ended questions will be distributed to gather students' perceptions of their own vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills.

Purpose: To collect self-reported data on student confidence, perceived challenges, and satisfaction with the interventions.

Data Type: Quantitative and qualitative.

3.2 Teacher Surveys:

Description: Surveys for teachers to provide feedback on the observed changes in student performance and engagement.

Purpose: To obtain additional perspectives on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies.

Data Type: Quantitative and qualitative.

4. Interviews and Focus Groups:

4.1 Student Interviews:

Description: Semi-structured interviews with a sample of students will be conducted to explore their experiences and challenges in depth.

Purpose: To gain deeper insights into individual student experiences and perceptions of the interventions.

Data Type: Qualitative.

4.2 Focus Groups:

Description: Focus group discussions with small groups of students will be organized to discuss their experiences and gather feedback on the interventions.

Purpose: To facilitate peer interaction and gather diverse viewpoints.

Data Type: Qualitative.

5. Reflective Journals:

5.1 Student Reflective Journals:

Description: Students will be asked to keep reflective journals documenting their learning experiences, challenges, and progress throughout the intervention.

Purpose: To encourage self-reflection and provide longitudinal data on student perceptions and development.

Data Type: Qualitative.

5.2 Teacher Reflective Journals:

Description: The researcher and participating teachers will maintain journals to document observations, reflections on teaching practices, and adjustments made during the intervention.

Purpose: To capture the reflective process and insights gained by educators.

Data Type: Qualitative.

6. Academic Performance Records:

6.1 Analysis of Academic Records:

Description: Review and analysis of students' previous academic performance records in English courses.

Purpose: To establish a baseline for comparison and identify trends over time.

Data Type: Quantitative.

By employing a combination of these data collection methods, this action research project will gather comprehensive and robust data to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. This mixed-methods approach will ensure that both numerical data and rich qualitative insights are considered, providing a well-rounded understanding of the impact on students' vocabulary acquisition, advanced grammar proficiency, and speech skills.

Integration of Current Technologies

In this course, I leveraged various current technologies to enhance the learning experience and keep track of student progress:

- **Google Classroom:** I utilized Google Classroom as the primary platform for managing course materials, assignments, and student progress. This tool allowed me to:
- **Organize Content:** Post lectures, readings, and supplementary materials in an accessible and organized manner.
- **Track Assignments:** Monitor submission deadlines, provide feedback, and keep track of students' progress with assignments and projects.
- **Facilitate Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication through announcements and direct messaging, ensuring students stayed informed and engaged.
- **Videos and Audiovisual Materials:** I incorporated a variety of videos and audiovisual resources to support and enrich the learning process:
- **Instructional Videos:** Used videos to demonstrate complex phonetic concepts and transcription techniques, providing visual and auditory examples that enhanced comprehension.
- **Interactive Content:** Integrated interactive audiovisual materials to engage students actively, such as pronunciation practice tools and phonetic transcription exercises.
- **TikTok-Like Videos:** As a creative and engaging way to prepare students for future teaching practices, I had them develop TikTok-like videos:
- **Practical Application:** Students created short, instructional videos explaining grammatical concepts or demonstrating teaching strategies. This exercise helped them to:
- **Simplify Complex Ideas:** Practice breaking down complex topics into concise, understandable segments suitable for a broader audience.
- **Develop Digital Literacy:** Gain experience using video editing tools and social media platforms, skills increasingly relevant in modern education.
- **Enhance Engagement:** Foster creativity and engagement by allowing students to express their understanding in a dynamic, visually appealing format.
- By integrating these technologies, I not only streamlined course management and communication but also provided diverse, interactive learning opportunities that prepared students for the digital demands of contemporary education.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is a critical step in educational research, as it involves making sense of the collected data and drawing meaningful conclusions. Various data analysis techniques are used, depending on the research approach (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods)

and the nature of the data. Let us review just a few of the elements having to do with each approach.

Qualitative data analysis techniques include:

1. Thematic analysis: Identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data, such as interview transcripts or observation notes.
2. Content analysis: Systematically analyzing the content and meaning of textual or visual data, such as documents, videos, or social media posts.
3. Discourse analysis: Examining the use of language and discourse in social contexts, such as classroom interactions or policy documents.
4. Grounded theory: An inductive approach that involves generating theories or explanations directly from the analysis of qualitative data.

Quantitative data analysis techniques include:

1. Descriptive statistics: Summarizing and describing numerical data using measures such as means, medians, standard deviations, and frequencies.
2. Inferential statistics: Drawing conclusions and making inferences about a population based on a sample, using techniques such as hypothesis testing, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.
3. Multivariate analysis: Analyzing the relationships between multiple variables simultaneously, such as factor analysis, cluster analysis, and structural equation modeling.

Mixed method approaches involve combining and integrating both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques within a single study.

When selecting data analysis techniques, researchers should consider factors such as the research questions, the type of data collected (numerical, textual, visual), the sample size, and the desired level of statistical power and significance. Software programs like SPSS, R, NVivo, and MAXQDA can assist with data analysis and provide a range of analytical tools. It is essential for researchers to have a solid understanding of the underlying assumptions, strengths, and

limitations of different data analysis techniques to ensure the validity and reliability of their findings. Seeking guidance from experienced researchers or statisticians can also be beneficial, particularly for complex or advanced data analysis methods.

As part of the assignments in the classes of the course we have been exemplifying, students were asked to develop different assignments. One of them was to create one portion of an IELTS-type exam. This works perfectly for us, on the one hand, as researchers, since we can use these products as a direct source of analysis of the findings and data of the process; on the other hand, these products also work perfectly to demonstrate, at a linguistic and academic level, that the students who were the subjects of the project were able to understand at a higher level the methodology of an international IELTS exam, since, from their perspective as future teachers, they were able to elaborate a portion of the exam. Here are some samples:

Figure 7

Samples of IELTS mock exams designed by Professor Rojas' students

Sample one:

IELTS Mock Exam:

Reading section

By Adrian Camilo Saenz Gonzalez

Instructions:

Read the following text on climate change carefully.

Answer the multiple-choice questions based on the information provided in the text.

Choose the most appropriate answer for each question.

After completing the multiple-choice section, you should answer to the short open questions related to the text.

Climate Change

Climate change is a pressing global issue that demands immediate attention. The rising temperatures and extreme weather events are clear indicators of the impact of human activities on the environment. Scientists warn that failing to act now will have catastrophic consequences for future generations. Governments and individuals must collaborate to mitigate the effects of climate change through sustainable practices and policies.

One of the key factors contributing to climate change is the excessive emission of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, primarily from burning fossil fuels and deforestation. These gases trap heat in the atmosphere, leading to the greenhouse effect and subsequent global warming. As a result, we are witnessing the melting of polar ice caps, rising sea levels, and disruptions in ecosystems.

To combat climate change, countries around the world are adopting renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, investing in energy-efficient technologies, and implementing policies to reduce carbon emissions. Additionally, individuals can make a difference by adopting eco-friendly habits such as conserving energy, reducing waste, and supporting sustainable agriculture.

It is crucial for governments, organizations, and individuals to prioritize climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. By taking immediate action, we can safeguard the planet for future generations and ensure a sustainable future.

Multiple-Choice Questions:

1. What are clear indicators of the impact of human activities on the environment?
 - A) Decreasing sea levels
 - B) Extreme weather events
 - C) Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
 - D) Increasing deforestation
2. What do scientists warn will happen if action is not taken to address climate change?
 - A) Immediate benefits for current generations
 - B) Catastrophic consequences for future generations
 - C) Enhanced ecosystem stability
 - D) Decreased global temperatures
3. Which gases contribute to the greenhouse effect and subsequent global warming?
 - A) Oxygen and nitrogen
 - B) Carbon dioxide and methane
 - C) Hydrogen and helium
 - D) Nitrous oxide and sulfur dioxide
4. How do rising temperatures contribute to climate change?
 - A) By promoting snowfall
 - B) By causing glaciers to expand
 - C) By disrupting ecosystems
 - D) By reducing extreme weather events
5. What is a key factor contributing to the excessive emission of greenhouse gases?
 - A) Planting more trees
 - B) Using energy-efficient technologies
 - C) Burning fossil fuels
 - D) Implementing wildlife conservation programs
6. What are some impacts of global warming on the environment?
 - A) Decreased sea levels
 - B) Increased biodiversity
 - C) Melting polar ice caps
 - D) Strengthened ecosystems
7. How can countries reduce carbon emissions?
 - A) By increasing deforestation
 - B) By investing in renewable energy sources
 - C) By promoting air pollution
 - D) By expanding fossil fuel exploration

8. Why is it essential for governments to prioritize climate change mitigation strategies?

- A) To accelerate global warming
- B) To ensure a sustainable future
- C) To ignore environmental concerns
- D) To worsen extreme weather events

9. Which eco-friendly habit can individuals adopt to combat climate change?

- A) Wasting energy
- B) Promoting plastic use
- C) Supporting sustainable agriculture
- D) Ignoring recycling practices

10. What is the final goal of climate change adaptation strategies?

- A) To increase greenhouse gas emissions
- B) To worsen environmental impacts
- C) To safeguard the planet for future generations
- D) To accelerate deforestation

Short Open Questions:

Explain the role of renewable energy sources in combating climate change.

Discuss the importance of individual actions in the fight against climate change.

Answers sheet

Answers (Multiple-choice questions):

- B) Extreme weather events
- B) Catastrophic consequences for future generations
- B) Carbon dioxide and methane
- C) By disrupting ecosystems
- C) Burning fossil fuels
- C) Melting polar ice caps
- B) By investing in renewable energy sources
- B) To ensure a sustainable future
- C) Supporting sustainable agriculture
- C) To safeguard the planet for future generations

Possible answer (Open Questions):

Renewable energy sources like solar and wind power help combat climate change by reducing reliance on fossil fuels, which are major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. Individual actions, such as conserving energy, reducing waste, and supporting sustainable agriculture, play a crucial role in fighting climate change.

Sample two

IELTS Mock Exam

Listening Section

Designed by Karen Daniela Pimiento Villarreal

Multiple-choice Questions

Instructions

Listen to the audio about a conversation between two friends and answer the questions below. Select only one option.

1. What is Karen considering majoring in?
 - a. Psychology and business
 - b. Computer science and business
 - c. Business and clinical psychology
 - d. Clinical psychology

5. Which club/s did Karen recently join?
 - a. Debate club
 - b. Student council
 - c. Sports club
 - d. Debate club and student council

5. What extra-curricular activity/ies is Bill involved in?
 - a. Debate club
 - b. Student council
 - c. Sports club
 - d. Debate club and student council

5. What post-graduation plan is Bill considering?
 - a. Travelling the world
 - b. Starting a business
 - c. Pursuing a master's degree in clinical psychology
 - d. Changing degree to business

5. What does Karen suggest about their future plans?
 - a. Pursuing internships in various fields
 - b. Traveling before making any decisions
 - c. Immediately applying for a master's degree
 - d. Starting a business and save money to travel the world

Sentence-Completion Questions

Instructions

Listen the speech about remote working for women and complete the statements writing no more than 3 words.

Women working remotely often face challenges due to the _____ they carry alongside their professional responsibilities.

In the context of remote work, there are harmful assumptions about _____ and dedication to their jobs.

Setting clear boundaries is essential for women to balance work and _____ effectively while working remotely.

It is crucial for women to stablish _____ both in the workplace and at home to ensure a healthy work-life balance.

Empowering women in remote work environments involves creating _____ culture where all individuals can thrive and succeed.

Answer sheet

Multiple-choice Questions

- b) Computer science and business
- a) Debate club
- b) Student council
- c) Pursuing a master's degree in clinical psychology
- a) Pursuing internships in various fields

Sentence-completion Questions

Excess house-work load

Women's commitment

Personal life

Open communication

Inclusive and supportive

Sample three
IELTS Speaking test
By: Lisneidy Vargas

- part 1.

In the initial segment, the examiner will commence by introducing themselves and requesting confirmation of your identity. Subsequently, they will pose several generic inquiries concerning common subjects like home life, family, occupation, education, and hobbies.

How to response IELTS Speaking part 1.

How long is IELTS Speaking part 1?

You should spend 4 - 5 minutes on this part of the test.

How many questions are there in IELTS Speaking part 1?

We've provided two speaking topics, each containing four questions, totaling eight questions in all. This serves as a representative sample of what you can anticipate during the first segment of your official IELTS Speaking test.

We've provided two speaking topics, each containing four questions, totaling eight questions in all. This serves as a representative sample of what you can anticipate during the first segment of your official IELTS Speaking test.

TOPIC	QUESTIONS
About your home	What type of location is it? What stands out as the most intriguing aspect of your town/village? What occupations are prevalent among the residents of your town/village? Do you consider it a desirable place to reside? (Why or why not?)
About your accommodation	How would you describe the layout and design of your accommodation, and how does it reflect your personal taste and lifestyle? In what ways does your accommodation contribute to your overall well-being and productivity, and how have you customized it to suit your needs? Reflecting on your experiences, how has living in your current accommodation influenced your perspective on the importance of sustainability and environmental consciousness? Considering the cultural diversity in accommodations worldwide, how does your living space reflect or deviate from traditional norms, and what unique features or elements define its character?

IELTS Speaking test - part 2.

In the second segment, the examiner will commence by introducing themselves and requesting confirmation of your identity. Subsequently, they will pose several generic inquiries concerning common subjects like job, studies, free time, animals.

How long is IELTS Speaking part 2?

You should spend 4 - 5 minutes on this part of the test (depending on the teacher).

How many questions are there in IELTS Speaking part 2?

We've provided two speaking topics, each containing four questions, totaling eight questions in all. This serves as a representative sample of what you can anticipate during the first segment of your official IELTS Speaking test.

We've provided three speaking topics, each containing four questions, totaling 12 questions in all. This serves as a representative sample of what you can anticipate during the first segment of your official IELTS Speaking test.

TOPIC	QUESTIONS
Job and studies	Reflecting on your professional journey, describe a pivotal moment or project that significantly influenced your career trajectory, and how did it shape your approach to work?
	In what ways have your past work experiences, both successes and challenges, contributed to your development as a professional, and how do you leverage these lessons in your current role?
	Considering the dynamic nature of today's workplace, discuss a recent innovation or trend in your field that has captured your attention, and how do you anticipate it will impact your future career path?
	Drawing from your professional expertise, propose a novel solution to a prevalent issue or challenge within your industry, and outline the potential benefits and implementation strategies of your proposed approach.
Free time	Amidst your busy schedule, how do you carve out moments of relaxation and rejuvenation, and what activities do you find most conducive to unwinding and recharging?
	Reflecting on your cultural background, how has it influenced your choice of leisure activities, and in what ways do you incorporate elements of your heritage into your free time pursuits?
	As an advocate for work-life balance, what strategies do you recommend to individuals seeking to optimize their leisure time and cultivate meaningful experiences outside of their professional obligations?
	Considering the evolving landscape of leisure trends, discuss a recent shift or development in recreational activities that has captured your attention, and how do you envision it influencing societal attitudes towards free time in the future?
Eight Wonders of the World	Among the Eight Wonders of the World, which one do you find the most intriguing, and what aspect of its architecture or history captures your fascination?
	Reflecting on your travels, have you had the opportunity to visit any of the Eight Wonders of the World, and if so, how did the experience compare to your expectations?
	Considering the symbolic significance of the Eight Wonders, how do you think they contribute to global cultural exchange and understanding, and what role do they play in promoting tourism and cross-cultural appreciation?
	In your opinion, what makes a landmark worthy of being considered one of the Eight Wonders of the World, and are there any lesser-known marvels that you believe deserve greater recognition on the international stage?

IELTS Speaking test - part 3.

In the third segment, the examiner will talk about an imaginary scenario related to jobs, study, and Eight Wonders of the World.

How long is IELTS Speaking part 3?

You should spend 5 - 7 minutes on this part of the test.

How many questions are there in IELTS Speaking part 2?

We've provided two speaking topics, each containing four questions, totaling eight questions in all. This serves as a representative sample of what you can anticipate during the first segment of your official IELTS Speaking test.

We've provided three speaking topics, each containing three questions, related to the last part. This serves as a representative sample of what you can anticipate during the first segment of your official IELTS Speaking test.

Questions:

- If you could change your university major, which program would you choose and why?
- If you could travel back to the year 2000 B.C. and realize that your work doesn't exist, how could you link it and guide the people of that time to start doing it?
- You are an architect, and you are asked to create the ninth wonder of the world, what kind of construction would you do and what would it represent?

In the following box, we will provide a preliminary version of the conclusions of the project we have been describing to illustrate the process we have been dealing with throughout this book. We hope that this work will be as inspiring as it was for us.

Figure 8

Preliminary versions of the conclusions for the project described throughout this book

Preliminary conclusions

The Advanced English Language Class project "English Pills" was a comprehensive and well-rounded initiative aimed at elevating students' proficiency to a C1 level while fostering crucial 21st-century skills. The project's conclusion can be summarized as follows:

Linguistic Aspect:

The project successfully enhanced students' linguistic competencies, enabling them to achieve a B2-C1 level of proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, and oral production. Through intensive grammar and vocabulary sessions, coupled with rigorous reading comprehension and listening practice activities, the project bridged knowledge gaps and equipped students with a robust foundation in the English language.

Methodological Aspect:

The project employed a progressive and structured approach to developing students' oral production skills, culminating in their ability to deliver well-organized and coherent 30-minute speeches. By gradually increasing the complexity of speech assignments and providing guidance on effective speech structure and advanced vocabulary usage, the project ensured that students acquired practical public speaking skills and the confidence to communicate at a high level.

Furthermore, the incorporation of a mock IELTS exam and the requirement to produce a research paper reinforced students' academic writing and research capabilities, preparing them for real-world academic and professional challenges.

21st-Century Skills:

The project went beyond linguistic development and emphasized the cultivation of essential 21st-century skills:

1. **Critical Thinking and Argumentation:** The oral debate activity fostered critical thinking and argumentation skills, enabling students to analyze complex issues, formulate well-reasoned arguments, and defend their positions effectively.
2. **Cultural Appreciation and Diversity:** The "Harmony of Languages" event celebrated linguistic diversity, promoting cultural appreciation and raising awareness about the richness of native, modern, and ancient languages.
3. **Environmental Responsibility and Innovation:** The "EcoCrafts" activity instilled environmental responsibility by encouraging recycling practices and creative thinking, equipping students with innovative teaching methods that integrate ecological awareness.
4. **Continuous Improvement:** The project's commitment to gathering student feedback through course evaluations and suggestions for improvement exemplified the importance of continuous learning and adaptation, invaluable traits in the rapidly evolving 21st-century landscape.

Overall, the Advanced English Language Class project successfully integrated linguistic development with the cultivation of critical 21st-century skills. By adopting a holistic approach that combined language acquisition, cultural awareness, environmental responsibility, and a commitment to continuous improvement, the project prepared students not only for linguistic proficiency but also for the diverse challenges and opportunities they will encounter in their academic and professional pursuits.

Part 3.

It's all about the sources

It's all about the sources

Navigating Library Resources

Navigating library resources is a crucial aspect of conducting educational research. Libraries serve as treasure troves of information, providing access to a wealth of scholarly materials, including books, journals, databases, and online resources. Effective use of library resources can greatly enhance the quality and depth of research in the field of education. Here's why navigating library resources is important and the process involved, along with some helpful tips:

Importance of Library Resources:

Access to high-quality, peer-reviewed sources: Libraries offer access to reputable academic journals, books, and other publications that have undergone rigorous review processes, ensuring the reliability and credibility of the information.

- **Comprehensive coverage:** Libraries house extensive collections spanning various educational topics, theories, and research methodologies, enabling researchers to explore diverse perspectives and gain a comprehensive understanding of their area of study.
- **Historical and archival materials:** Libraries often maintain archives and special collections that contain historical documents, reports, and primary sources, which can be invaluable for researchers studying the evolution of educational practices or policies over time.
- **Cost-effective access:** Many library resources are available at little or no cost to researchers, making it a cost-effective way to access high-quality information that might otherwise be prohibitively expensive.

On the other hand, in the Process of Navigating Library Resources:

- a. **Identify your research topic and key concepts:** Clearly define your research question or area of interest to help focus your search for relevant materials.
- b. **Consult librarians:** Librarians are knowledgeable professionals who can guide you through the library's resources, suggest appropriate databases, and provide valuable research tips.
- c. **Utilize library catalogs and databases:** Libraries offer online catalogs

and specialized databases that can be searched using keywords, subject headings, or other criteria to locate books, journal articles, dissertations, and other relevant materials. d. Evaluate and select relevant sources: Critically evaluate the sources you find based on criteria such as relevance, credibility, and currency, and select those most pertinent to your research. e. Access and retrieve materials: Once you've identified relevant sources, libraries provide various options for accessing them, such as borrowing physical books, downloading electronic resources, or requesting interlibrary loans for materials not available in their collection. f. Manage and organize your research: Develop a system for organizing and managing the sources you've collected, such as using citation management software or creating annotated bibliographies.

Tips for Navigating Library Resources:

- Attend library workshops or research consultations to learn about available resources and effective search strategies.
- Utilize subject guides or research guides created by librarians, which can provide valuable starting points and recommended resources for specific topics.
- Explore interdisciplinary databases and resources, as educational research often intersects with fields like psychology, sociology, and technology.
- Stay up-to-date with new resources and services by following library newsletters, social media accounts, or attending library events.
- Don't hesitate to seek assistance from librarians; they are experts in navigating library resources and can save you time and effort in your research.
- By effectively navigating library resources and leveraging the expertise of librarians, educational researchers can access high-quality information, uncover relevant literature, and ensure that their research is well-informed, comprehensive, and grounded in reputable sources.

Literature reviews

Effective literature reviews in educational research should provide a comprehensive overview of the existing knowledge, highlight key theories and debates, and critically analyze the strengths and limitations of previous studies. They should also clearly articulate the research gap or problem that the proposed study aims to address. Conducting a comprehensive literature review is essential for situating research within the existing body of knowledge, identifying gaps, and avoiding duplication of efforts. A literature review involves the following steps:

1. Define the scope and search terms: Identify relevant keywords, concepts, and databases related to your research topic.
2. Search and retrieve relevant studies: Use library databases, search engines, and other sources to locate peer-reviewed journal articles, books, dissertations, and other relevant publications.
3. Evaluate and select sources: Critically assess the relevance, credibility, and quality of the sources, and select those most pertinent to your research.
4. Synthesize and analyze findings: Organize and summarize the key findings, methodologies, and theories from the reviewed literature, identifying patterns, contradictions, and gaps.
5. Identify gaps and establish a research rationale: Based on the literature review, identify areas that require further investigation and establish the rationale for your research study.

An example brought up from reality

In this section, to illustrate how referencing works in a research project, we will share with you, samples of some work done by students in semester I of academic research in an undergraduate program in Colombia. We hope that these examples will be of help to inspire you and help you to carry out your bibliographic searches with enthusiasm and under a clearer orientation.

Figure 9
Project sample

General description of the course: Research I

Overview

Throughout the semester, the Research 1 class focused on developing students' understanding of the epistemological foundations of research, various research types and approaches, and practical research skills. The course utilized a constructivist perspective and task-based learning to promote interaction, critical thinking, and research competency among students.

Key Activities

- Epistemological Foundations of Research:
- Classroom Discussions: Engaged students in discussions on the nature and purpose of research, exploring different epistemological perspectives and their implications for research design and methodology.
- Readings and Analysis: Assigned readings on epistemological theories and methodologies, followed by critical analysis and group discussions to deepen understanding.
- Library Visit and Database Exploration:

University Library Visit: Organized a visit to the university library, where students learned how to navigate library resources, including books, journals, and databases.

Database Exploration: Conducted hands-on sessions on searching databases, identifying relevant sources, and evaluating their credibility and reliability.

- Research Paper Development:

Guided Research Paper: Guided students through the process of developing a research paper, from selecting a topic to conducting literature reviews, formulating research questions, and writing the paper.

- Summary Analysis: Required students to produce summary analyses of key research articles and papers related to topics discussed in class, promoting critical reading and synthesis of information.
- Discussion on Research Topics:

Brainstorming Sessions: Facilitated discussions on potential research topics for future terms, encouraging students to explore areas of interest and relevance to their academic and professional goals.

- Peer Feedback: Encouraged students to provide feedback on each other's research proposals, fostering collaboration and refining research ideas.

Methodological Approach

Constructivist Perspective:

Interactive Learning: Promoted interaction among students and between students and the instructor, creating a collaborative learning environment where knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue and inquiry.

Reflection and Critical Thinking: Emphasized reflective practice and critical thinking skills, encouraging students to question assumptions, evaluate evidence, and construct meaning from their research experiences.

Task-Based Learning:

Practical Application: Designed activities that required students to apply research concepts and methodologies in practical contexts, such as conducting literature reviews and analyzing research articles.

Authentic Tasks: Engaged students in tasks that mirrored real-world research processes, enabling them to develop research skills that are directly applicable to their academic and professional endeavors.

Professor Feedback

Activities:

Assignment Feedback: Provided detailed feedback on student assignments and projects, focusing on areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Office Hours: Held regular office hours to offer students additional support, clarification on complex topics, and discussions about their academic performance and progress.

Feedback to Professor

Activities:

Course Evaluations: Collected course evaluations from students to gather honest feedback on the course structure, content, and teaching methods.

Suggestions for Improvement: Solicited suggestions for course improvement based on student learning experiences and observations, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement.

Outcomes

Enhanced Research Skills: Students developed a solid foundation in research methodology, including an understanding of epistemological principles, research types, and approaches.

Information Literacy: Equipped with the ability to navigate library resources and databases effectively, students gained valuable information literacy skills essential for academic and professional success.

Critical Thinking and Inquiry: Through constructivist learning and task-based activities, students honed their critical thinking abilities and inquiry skills, preparing them for future research endeavors.

Extracurricular Activities

Oral Debate:

Activity: Organized an oral debate with professors from the language department.

Objective: Enhance students' critical thinking, argumentation skills, and public speaking confidence.

Harmony of Languages:

Activity: Coordinated an interactive, multicultural-multilingual event celebrating native, modern, and ancient languages through poetry and singing.

Objective: Foster cultural appreciation and linguistic diversity awareness.

EcoCrafts:

Activity: Promoted ecological awareness and recycling practices through creative activities that students could incorporate into their teaching practices.

Objective: Instill environmental responsibility and innovative teaching methods.

Outcomes

Enhanced Proficiency: Students demonstrated significant improvement in grammar, vocabulary, and oral production, achieving a better level proficiency.

Speech Skills: Students successfully delivered structured and coherent speeches, showcasing their ability to use advanced vocabulary effectively.

Cultural and Ecological Awareness: Through extracurricular activities, students gained a deeper appreciation for linguistic diversity and ecological responsibility, enriching their overall educational experience.

Course Methodology

This course employed an eclectic methodology, integrating task-based, problem-based, and communicative approaches grounded in a constructivist framework. This multifaceted approach ensures a comprehensive and engaging learning experience:

Task-Based Learning: Students engage in hands-on transcription exercises, phonetic analyses, and practical assessments to apply theoretical concepts in real-world contexts, promoting active learning and skill development.

Problem-Based Learning: Through action research projects and case study analyses, students tackle real-life phonetic and phonological issues, developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Communicative Approach: Emphasizing interaction and collaboration, the course incorporates group discussions, peer reviews, and presentations, fostering communicative competence and collaborative learning.

Constructivist Foundation: The methodology is rooted in constructivist principles, encouraging students to build their own understanding through reflective practice, self-evaluation, and the integration of diverse teaching materials and strategies for future application.

This eclectic approach ensures that students not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also develop practical skills and reflective practices essential for their future teaching careers.

Integration of Current Technologies

In this course, I leveraged various current technologies to enhance the learning experience and keep track of student progress:

Google Classroom: I utilized Google Classroom as the primary platform for managing course materials, assignments, and student progress. This tool allowed me to:

Organize Content: Post lectures, readings, and supplementary materials in an accessible and organized manner.

Track Assignments: Monitor submission deadlines, provide feedback, and keep track of students' progress with assignments and projects.

Facilitate Communication: Maintain open lines of communication through announcements and direct messaging, ensuring students stayed informed and engaged.

Videos and Audiovisual Materials: I incorporated a variety of videos and audiovisual resources to support and enrich the learning process:

Instructional Videos: Used videos to demonstrate complex phonetic concepts and transcription techniques, providing visual and auditory examples that enhanced comprehension.

Interactive Content: Integrated interactive audiovisual materials to engage students actively.

By integrating these technologies, I not only streamlined course management and communication but also provided diverse, interactive learning opportunities that prepared students for the digital demands of contemporary education.

During the research course 1 that we had the opportunity to work on and that we are bringing up for the purpose of better conceptual understanding that concerns us, the students had the opportunity to explore the bibliographic record tool. In the box below, we will show you an example of an index card made by one of our students.

A bibliographical card is a tool used in academic research to organize and record information about the sources (books, articles, websites, etc.) that are relevant to a particular research topic. It is essentially a small card or slip of paper on which key details about a source are written or typed. Also, researchers might want to utilize online tools in order to create their cards. The main benefits of using bibliographical cards in academic research include:

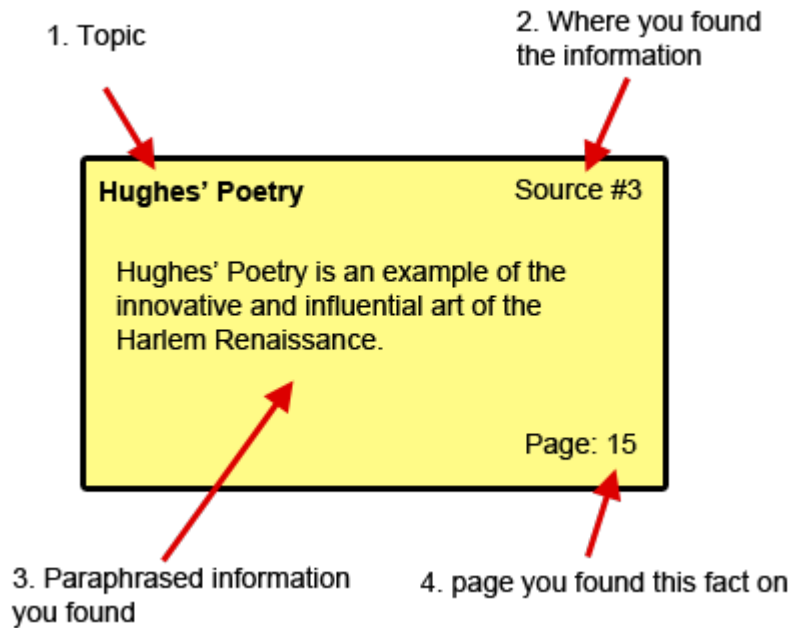
1. **Organization and efficiency:** Bibliographical cards help researchers keep track of the various sources they consult during their research process. By recording the essential information about each source on a separate card, researchers can easily organize and categorize their sources based on different criteria (e.g., author, subject, publication date), making it easier to locate and reference specific sources when needed.

2. **Accurate citation and referencing:** One of the primary purposes of bibliographical cards is to ensure accurate citation and referencing of sources. By recording all the necessary bibliographic information (author, title, publisher, date, page numbers, etc.) on the card, researchers can easily transfer this information into their reference lists or bibliographies when writing their papers or dissertations, reducing the risk of errors or omissions.
3. **Portability and accessibility:** Bibliographical cards are compact and portable, allowing researchers to carry their source information with them wherever they go. This accessibility ensures that researchers have the necessary information at hand when they need to consult or reference a specific source, whether they are in the library, at home, or elsewhere.
4. **Note-taking and annotation:** In addition to bibliographic information, researchers can use bibliographical cards to record notes, summaries, or annotations related to each source. This practice helps researchers keep their thoughts and observations organized and associated with the relevant source, facilitating the process of synthesizing information and developing their arguments or analyses.
5. **Collaboration and sharing:** Bibliographical cards can be easily shared among researchers working on the same or related topics, enabling collaboration and the exchange of information about relevant sources. This sharing of resources can save time and effort, as researchers can benefit from the work already done by others in identifying and evaluating sources.

While the use of bibliographical cards is a traditional method, many researchers now use digital tools or reference management software (e.g., Mendeley, Zotero, EndNote) to manage their sources and create citations and bibliographies. However, the principles of organization, accurate referencing, and note-taking remain the same, regardless of the format (physical or digital) used to record and manage source information.

Overall, bibliographical cards are a valuable tool in academic research, helping researchers stay organized, maintain accurate citations, take notes efficiently, and facilitate collaboration, ultimately contributing to the quality and rigor of their research endeavors.

Figure 10
Bibliographic card



Source: The Note Card System - Pre-writing, Writing and Revising | Gallaudet University, 2022.

Figure 11
Digital Biographic Card Sample 1

Authors	Key information
Domínguez Pérez David Alfredo Y Pérez Rul María Natalia	This research work mentions the backwardness of the traditional system, not only because of its achievements and results, but also because it is unable to meet the demand (especially in higher education) that comes with the growth of the population and its need for education. The population is growing but the educational infrastructure is not. The study concludes that "Due to the rapid growth of the population and the cost of having to expand its facilities, it would be less expensive to develop virtual programs and contents to be able to absorb all this educational demand..." however, it also recognizes limitations such as the maintenance and updating of computer equipment as well as eventualities such as lack of energy and loss of information. Fuente: http://repositoriodigital.ipn.mx/handle/123456789/3160
Yasmín Ivette Jiménez Galán, Josefina Hernández Jaime y Eduardo Rodríguez Flores	Title: Educación en línea y evaluación del aprendizaje: de lo presencial a lo virtual- Online education and learning assessment: from the face-to-face to the virtual This study analyzes the implementation of online education in the context of the 2020 pandemic caused by covid-19. It also investigates the pedagogical adaptations that teachers implemented in order to be able to teach online, as well as the obstacles they faced. The study concludes that, with respect to online education, teachers require training in the design of interactive didactic materials, the adaptation of thematic content and mainly in the development of a relevant evaluation model. Regarding this last aspect, the evaluation of learning, it is pointed out that it is an opportunity to improve the quality of education. Fuente: https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2007-74672021000200113
Alvarado García Marta Araceli	Title: Retroalimentación En Educación En Línea: Una Estrategia Para La Construcción Del Conocimiento- Feedback In Online Education: A Strategy For A Strategy For Knowledge Construction This research study analyzes the fact that society has constantly made innovations in the field of education. It mentions that "only a few years ago, the online modality was integrated into this evolution, which is supported by technologies and is basically characterised by breaking time and space barriers during academic training processes. It is with the irruption of this new way of teaching that questions are raised about the need to implement a new way of evaluating, the role of feedback in evaluation and its effectiveness in generating online knowledge. Fuente: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=331431248004
Víctor Fernando Barrera Rea Ana Guapi Mullo	Title: La Importancia Del Uso De Las Plataformas Virtuales En La Educación Superior- The Importance of the Use of Virtual Platforms in Higher Education The study tries to show "how virtual platforms have gained a very significant space in educational institutions in higher education, as a tool for knowledge transfer, which facilitates the acquisition, assimilation and construction of knowledge". It also defines procedures and important points for this tool to remain a key and dynamic resource with the ability to promote the development of critical thinking. Fuente: https://www.eumed.net/rev/atlanter/2018/07/plataformas-virtuales-educacion.html/hdl.handle.net/20.500.11763/atlanter1807plataformas-virtuales-educacion https://www.eumed.net/rev/atlanter/2018/07/plataformas-virtuales-educacion.html?fb_comment_id=1945683888795709_4146938658670210

Source: Jhon A. Yaguara

Figure 12*Digital Bibliographic Card Sample 2*

AUTHORS	SUMMARY	LINK
Gerald M. Nosich	Gerald talks about the importance to be an active learner rather than be a passive recipient of information. Using the critical thinking to appreciate the power of the discipline that is being studied. The model of critical thinking used in the book is related to the elements of reasoning, standard rules, and critical thinking process. By Adapting to reflect about any problem or issue.	https://www.pearsonhighered.com/assets/preface/0/3/2/1/0321857798.pdf
Robert Ennis		https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/710/71028042008.pdf
Daniel T. Willingham	Willingham emphasizes that critical thinking is not a set of skills that can be developed at any time, in any context. In the article he explains that the ability to think critically depends on having adequate knowledge of the contents of study and that it is impossible to think critically about topics about which one knows little or solve problems about which one does not know enough.	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242479451_Critical_Thinking_Why_Is_It_So_Hard_to_Teach
Rolf Dobelli		https://www.amazon.com/dp/0062219693?tag=mostrecommendedbooks-20&geniuslink=true

Source: Daniela Vargas Martínez & Yessica Martínez Sánchez.

Utilizing Online Resources

Utilizing online resources has become increasingly important in educational research due to the widespread availability of digital information and the convenience of accessing materials remotely.

When searching for information online, it's essential to use a search engine that can be trusted. While many search engines are available, some are better than others regarding accuracy and relevance. A reliable search engine should provide accurate and relevant search results based on the keywords entered and be able to filter out irrelevant or low-quality websites. Additionally, it should have

positive user feedback and reviews, with users reporting high levels of satisfaction and trust (Visualwebz, 2024, January 14).⁴ Navigating library resources is an indispensable aspect of conducting educational research. Libraries serve as treasure troves of information, housing a wealth of scholarly materials that can greatly enhance the quality and depth of research endeavors. These repositories offer access to reputable academic journals, books, and other meticulously reviewed publications, ensuring the reliability and credibility of the information. Additionally, libraries maintain extensive collections spanning various educational topics, theories, and research methodologies, enabling researchers to explore diverse perspectives and gain a comprehensive understanding of their area of study.

Moreover, libraries often curate historical and archival materials, including invaluable primary sources, reports, and documents that shed light on the evolution of educational practices and policies over time. Accessing these resources can prove invaluable for researchers delving into the historical context of their chosen topic. Furthermore, many library resources are available at little or no cost, making them a cost-effective means of obtaining high-quality information that might otherwise be prohibitively expensive.

To effectively navigate library resources, researchers must first clearly define their research topic and key concepts to focus their search for relevant materials. Collaborating with knowledgeable librarians can be an invaluable asset, as they can guide researchers through the library's resources, suggest appropriate databases, and provide valuable research tips. Utilizing online catalogs and specialized databases, researchers can search using keywords, subject headings, or other criteria to locate pertinent books, journal articles, dissertations, and other relevant sources.

Once potential sources have been identified, researchers must critically evaluate their relevance, credibility, and currency, selecting only those materials most pertinent to their research objectives. Libraries offer various options for accessing materials, such as borrowing physical books, downloading electronic resources, or requesting interlibrary loans for materials not available in their collection. Developing a systematic approach to organizing and managing collected sources, such as using citation management software or creating annotated bibliographies, can greatly facilitate the research process.

To further enhance their library research skills, researchers can attend workshops or consultations offered by librarians, explore subject guides or research guides tailored to specific topics, and consider interdisciplinary databases and resources, as educational research often intersects with fields like psychology, sociology, and technology. Staying up-to-date with new resources and services by following library newsletters, and social media accounts, or attending events can also be beneficial.

Effective navigation of library resources, coupled with the expertise of librarians, empowers educational researchers to access high-quality information, uncover relevant literature, and ensure that their research is well-informed, comprehensive, and grounded in reputable sources.

Organizing Your Work



Creating an outline is a crucial first step in structuring your research paper. An outline serves as a roadmap, helping you organize your thoughts, ideas, and the flow of information. Begin by identifying the main sections, such as the introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion. Under each section, list the key points and supporting details you plan to cover.

Structuring the paper is essential for presenting your research in a clear and logical manner. The introduction should provide background information, state the research problem or question, and outline the paper's objectives. The literature review should critically analyze and synthesize relevant studies, theories, and concepts related to your topic. The methodology section should describe the research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques employed. The results

section should present your findings objectively, often using tables, figures, or other visual representations. The discussion section should interpret and evaluate the results in light of the existing literature and research questions. Finally, the conclusion should summarize the key findings, highlight the study's contributions, and suggest directions for future research. Using headings and subheadings is essential for organizing your paper and guiding the reader through the different sections and subsections. Headings should be clear, concise, and accurately reflect the content they introduce. Subheadings can further divide and organize the content within each section.

Writing Drafts

Writing the first draft is an essential step in the research writing process. It allows you to translate your ideas, findings, and analyzes into a coherent narrative. Don't worry about perfection at this stage; focus on getting your thoughts on paper and developing a comprehensive draft. Revising and editing are crucial for refining and improving your draft. Read through your work critically, identifying areas that need clarification, additional support, or reorganization. Pay attention to the flow and logical progression of your arguments, and ensure that your writing is clear, concise, and free of errors. Seeking feedback from peers or instructors can provide valuable insights and perspectives. They may identify areas that require further explanation, point out potential weaknesses or strengths, and offer suggestions for improvement. Be open to constructive criticism and use the feedback to enhance your work.

Figure 14*First draft sample for a research proposal***First draft sample
Research proposal**

Education as a formal process officially began with the implementation of standardization in the context of the Industrial Revolution and the need to train cheap labour. Since then, the number of people demanding a training need is immeasurable. Therefore, a new educational modality known as online education has gained a place as a viable option for many people who cannot attend a class in a physical space. Thus, according to a study conducted by the International University of La Rioja, from 2000 to 2020 online education has experienced an exponential growth that places it at a figure of more than 900%. It is necessary to know more about online education since it has become a phenomenon that has not stopped in its development and growth and that additionally has favored the integration of a wide range of students and has increased the educational possibilities available (Ramírez-Montoya, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to further study this field so that the population of the department of Caquetá, where there is little physical presence of higher education institutions, can understand from particular cases how online education can impact and satisfy their training needs. Regarding the positive vision or ideal that people have about online education, some consider it as a great opportunity to be trained as citizens and as qualified professionals in their area of work. However, as many studies on the subject point out, the lack of autonomy is a problem that comes from face-to-face education in which the teacher is the one who takes the active role, the one of authority and the dependent student assumes a passive role in which he/she waits for instructions. In other words, online education provides multiple learning opportunities for those who wish to continue their education, however, it also poses serious challenges for those students who have studied in a face-to-face educational institution, usually with a traditional methodology, in which they are not able to adapt to a new modality that demands high autonomy and independence. In addition, possible solutions to the problems previously raised can be directed to a change of teaching method in the levels prior to higher education, such as the implementation of a more active methodology that allows the student to be more autonomous, and already within online education provide continuous feedback on the designed activities that the student has to carry out. Regarding the research my intention is to carry out a convenience sampling, a data collection through interviews or surveys with open questions.

Finally, as objectives of this research I propose mainly:

- To analyze the opportunities and challenges faced by UNAD/SENA students in the context of online education mainly in the perceptions about the role of autonomy and if they consider it as one of the key factors to carry out normally the learning process.
- To find out how the lack of physical social interaction influences students or if on the contrary virtual interaction is perceived as more meaningful for them.
- To know the views about the difference in quality between face-to-face and online education.
- To analyze the learning strategies applied by students in their online education processes.
- Identify areas of improvement in terms of best practices to improve the quality of online learning.

References

Ramírez-Montoya, M. S. (2020). Innovación educativa con tecnología para la sociedad del conocimiento. RIED: Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia, 23(1), 9-18.

Second draft sample

Research proposal

Approach: Qualitative.

Method: micro ethnographic, comparative case study between first semesters, intermediate semesters, and advanced semesters of the program Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Languages with Emphasis in English.

Research question:

- How does the affective filter affect the development of critical thinking of students in the initial, intermediate, and advanced semesters of the bachelor's degree program in foreign languages with emphasis on English at the Universidad de la Amazonia, what emotions emerge in the students and what responses or attitudes does the teacher receive from the students in the process of developing that skill?

Problematization:

Context and Justification

The development of critical thinking is a fundamental skill for foreign language learners, especially in undergraduate programs with an emphasis on English. The affective filter, a concept introduced by Stephen Krashen, suggests that emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-esteem can significantly influence the language learning process. However, there is little specific research on how the affective filter affects the development of critical thinking at different stages of learning in a university context in Colombia. Therefore, identifying this relationship is crucial for designing pedagogical strategies that foster a positive and effective learning environment.

Main Issue

At the Universidad de la Amazonia there are some students who are afraid of giving their opinions in class, asking questions and freely expressing their thoughts from an analytical and creative perspective when they are in front of professors and other classmates.

There is a lack of understanding about how the affective filter influences the development of critical thinking in undergraduate students in foreign languages with emphasis in English at the Universidad de la Amazonia. In addition, there has not been adequate research on what emotions emerge in students during this process and how these emotions affect their responses and attitudes towards teachers.

Understanding how personality influences this process can help teachers adapt the teaching methods to foster an environment where students feel more confident in expressing their ideas and developing their critical thinking. It is important to know more about this because as future researchers, we need to take into account the relationship between personality, emotions, teacher-student dynamics, and the development of critical thinking in the context of language teaching, as it is essential to create inclusive, engaging and effective learning environments that support the holistic development of all learners.

Objectives:

- To analyze how students' personality influences their ability to express their critical thoughts in the classroom.
- To identify the emotions that arise in students when facing situations where they must express their opinions in front of teachers and classmates.
- To know what the abilities and didactic strategies are used by teachers to reinforce and promote students' critical thinking.
- To evaluate the responses and attitudes of students towards teachers about their ability to express their critical thoughts.

Source: First draft sample for a research proposal wrote by Franklin Andrés Cardona Montoya, and Second draft sample for a research proposal wrote by Daniela Vargas & Jessica Martínez.

Citing Sources

Understanding different citation styles, such as APA, MLA, or Chicago, is essential for properly acknowledging the sources you've used in your research. Each style has specific guidelines for formatting in-text citations and reference lists or bibliographies. Properly citing sources within the text and in the bibliography is crucial for giving credit to the authors whose work you've referenced and for avoiding plagiarism. In-text citations typically include the author's last name, publication year, and page number (if applicable). The bibliography or reference list should provide complete bibliographic information for each source, allowing readers to locate and consult the original materials.

Formatting and Presentation

Adhering to formatting guidelines, such as font size, line spacing, and margin requirements, is essential for maintaining a professional and consistent appearance throughout your paper. Many academic institutions and journals have specific formatting guidelines that must be followed. The title page should include the paper's title, your name, institutional affiliation, and any other required information, such as the course name or instructor's name. Including tables, figures, and appendices can enhance the clarity and accessibility of your research. Tables and figures should be properly labeled, titled, and referenced within the text. Appendices can provide supplementary materials, such as data sets, questionnaires, or additional analyses, that support but do not fit within the main body of the paper.

Finalizing Your Paper

Proofreading for grammar and punctuation errors is crucial for ensuring the quality and professionalism of your work. Read through your paper carefully or consider using online tools or professional proofreading services to catch any lingering errors. Checking for consistency and coherence is also important. Ensure that your writing style, voice, and tone are consistent throughout the paper and that your arguments and ideas flow logically from one section to the next. Formatting the final version according to the required guidelines is essential for submission or publication. Double-check that you've followed all formatting requirements, such as margins, line spacing, headings, and reference styles.

APA Style: History, Importance, and Elements

History of APA Style

The American Psychological Association (APA) style is a widely used format for writing academic and research papers, particularly in the social sciences. The APA was established in 1929 when a group of psychologists, anthropologists, and business managers convened to discuss the best practices for scientific writing. The aim was to create a standardized method for citing sources and structuring research papers, ensuring consistency and clarity. Over the years, APA style has undergone several revisions to adapt to changing technologies and scholarly practices, with the latest version being the 7th edition, published in October 2019. By adhering to APA style, researchers can ensure their work is presented professionally and credibly, fostering clear communication and academic integrity.

Importance of APA Style

1. **Clarity and Precision:** APA style provides clear guidelines on how to structure and format papers, making it easier for readers to follow the author's arguments and findings.
2. **Credibility and Accountability:** Proper citation of sources allows authors to give credit to the original creators of ideas and research, which helps avoid plagiarism and builds credibility.
3. **Consistency:** A standardized format ensures that all papers in the social sciences have a uniform appearance, which facilitates peer review and academic communication.
4. **Accessibility:** APA style emphasizes clarity and simplicity, which helps make research accessible to a broader audience, including those who may not be experts in the field.

Elements of APA Style

1. General Format
 - Paper Size: Use standard 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
 - Margins: Set 1-inch margins on all sides.
 - Font: Use a readable font such as 12-point Times New Roman, 11-point Calibri, or 11-point Arial.
 - Line Spacing: Double-space all text, including references.
 - Page Numbers: Include a page number in the upper right-hand corner of every page.
2. Title Page
 - Title: Centered, bold, and in title case (capitalize major words).
 - Author's Name: Centered, one double-spaced line below the title.
 - Institutional Affiliation: Centered, one double-spaced line below the author's name.
 - Course Number and Name: Centered, one double-spaced line below the institutional affiliation.
 - Instructor's Name: Centered, one double-spaced line below the course details.
 - Due Date: Centered, one double-spaced line below the instructor's name.
3. Abstract
 - Format: A single paragraph, without indentation, typically 150-250 words.
 - Content: Summarizes the key points of the paper, including the research topic, methods, results, and conclusions.
4. Main Body
 - Headings: Use a system of five levels of headings to organize content.
 - Level 1: Centered, bold, title case.
 - Level 2: Left-aligned, bold, title case.
 - Level 3: Left-aligned, bold, italic, title case.
 - Level 4: Indented, bold, title case, ends with a period.
 - Level 5: Indented, bold, italic, title case, ends with a period.
 - In-text Citations: Include the author's last name and the year of publication. For direct quotes, include the page number.
5. References
 - Format: Start on a new page, titled "References," centered and bold.
 - Entries: Double-spaced, with a hanging indent.
 - Order: Alphabetical by the author's last name.
 - Elements:
 - Books: Author, A.A. (Year). Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle. Publisher.
 - Journal Articles: Author, A.A. (Year). Title of article. Title of Periodical, volume number (issue number), pages. DOI
 - Websites: Author, A.A. (Year, Month Date). Title of online content. Site Name. URL
6. Tables and Figures
 - Placement: Either embedded within the text or on separate pages after the references.
 - Labeling: Number each table and figure (e.g., Table 1, Figure 1).
 - Titles: Italicized and placed above the table or figure.
 - Notes: Placed below the table or figure, if needed.

7. Appendices
 - Format: Start each appendix on a new page with a label (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.) and a title.
 - Content: Include detailed information that is supplementary to the main text, such as raw data or extended methodological details.

Citation Examples in APA Style

Book: Smith, J. A. (2020). The art of research. Academic Press.

Journal Article:

Doe, J. B. (2019). Exploring new methods in linguistics. *Journal of Language Studies*, 45(2), 123-145. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jls.v45i2.6789>

Website: American Psychological Association. (2021, March 15). Understanding APA style.

APA. <https://www.apa.org/style>

In-text Citation:

- Paraphrase: (Smith, 2020)
- Direct Quote: (Smith, 2020, p. 123)

Before finishing this chapter, it is best to examine one last element.

Ethical Considerations in Research

Conducting research with human participants requires adherence to ethical principles and guidelines to ensure the protection of participants' rights, well-being, and privacy. Key ethical considerations in educational research include:

1. Informed consent: Participants must be provided with clear and complete information about the research, and their voluntary consent must be obtained before their participation.
2. Confidentiality and anonymity: Researchers must protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants' identities and data and ensure that any identifying information is securely stored and anonymized.
3. Minimizing risks and harm: Research procedures should minimize potential risks, discomfort, or harm to participants, both physical and psychological.

4. Respect for participants' rights: Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and their autonomy, dignity, and well-being should be respected throughout the research process.
5. Ethical review and approval: Most research institutions require researchers to obtain approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Research Ethics Committee (REC) before conducting research with human participants.

Now, to maintain ethical integrity, researchers should develop clear and comprehensive informed consent documents and procedures; implement appropriate data management and security measures to protect participant confidentiality; provide training and guidance to research team members on ethical practices; obtain ethical approval from relevant review boards or committees; continuously monitor and address any potential ethical concerns throughout the research process. This will help the researcher keep a structured, systematized sequence in their research process, and, at the same time, this will serve as a support for the validity and integrity of the process itself.

Practical assignment

You have already reached this last point. You have managed to understand each of the concepts that we have gladly presented to you. Now it's your turn. To close the exploration of the matter, we will share another practical example of a class that was developed during the academic semester corresponding to a phonetics and phonology course at a university in Colombia. We will show you the general description of the course, and other necessary elements so that, in the assigned space, you can write in your own words each of the elements that correspond to the course. In another exercise, you will find a very interesting and practical exercise that will help you a lot in structuring your degree work. ¡Cheer up and ask your teacher to check your answers!

Practical Activity 1

Course Description: Learning Phonetics and Phonology

In this comprehensive course, students delve into the intricate world of phonetics and phonology, exploring the fundamental principles behind speech sounds, their physical properties, and their production and perception. Through a variety of engaging activities, students not only analyze linguistic phenomena but also conceptualize and produce knowledge that contributes to their understanding of language structure and function.

Learning and Analysis of the Topics

Through a series of lectures and assigned readings, students are immersed in the theoretical foundations of phonetics and phonology. These sessions cover a range of topics, from basic sound production mechanisms to the complex patterns and variations found in spoken language. Transcription exercises using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) further enhance students' grasp of phonetic symbols and sound representation. Additionally, students engage in phonetic analysis, where they dissect speech samples to identify phonemes, allophones, and other phonological features, deepening their understanding of sound patterns and structures.

Conceptualizing and Producing Knowledge

Students are tasked with conducting research papers on specific phonetic or phonological phenomena, synthesizing information from academic sources and personal analysis. Through presentations of their research findings, students hone their communication skills, ensuring they can convey complex concepts clearly and effectively. Collaborative discussions provide a platform for students to share insights and engage in collaborative learning, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Self-Evaluation

Throughout the course, students maintain reflective journals to document their learning progress, challenges faced, and strategies for improvement. Peer review sessions offer valuable feedback on assignments and projects, facilitating growth and development in a supportive environment.

Professor Feedback

Detailed feedback on assignments and projects is provided to students, focusing on areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Regular office hours offer students additional support and clarification on complex topics, fostering a conducive learning environment.

Feedback to Professor

Students are encouraged to provide course evaluations and suggestions for improvement, ensuring that the course remains dynamic and responsive to student needs and learning experiences.

Interacting with Different Languages and Cultures

Students engage with various theoretical frameworks in phonetics and phonology, examining their epistemological underpinnings and implications. Organized debates on key concepts and theories develop students' critical thinking and analytical skills.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities, such as oral debates, multicultural-multilingual events, and eco-friendly projects, enrich students' educational experience and promote cultural appreciation and environmental responsibility.

Outcomes

Students demonstrate significant improvement in grammar, vocabulary, and oral production, achieving good level proficiency. They also gain a deeper appreciation for linguistic diversity and ecological responsibility.

Action Research Study

The course includes an action research study aimed at enhancing students' skills in phonetics and phonology. Through initial assessments, targeted interventions, ongoing feedback, and final evaluations, the study provides valuable insights into effective teaching practices.

Reflecting on and Applying Strategies for Future Teaching Practice

Students reflect on and apply a variety of strategies and materials for future teaching practice, including exposure to diverse materials, strategy workshops, reflective practice, application projects, and peer collaboration. By engaging in these activities, students enhance their pedagogical skills and develop a repertoire of effective teaching strategies and materials.

Practical Exercise: Creating a Course Outline

Objective: To synthesize the key components and activities of the course described and develop a comprehensive course outline.

Instructions:

1. **Review the Course Description:** Read through the detailed description of the course, paying close attention to the learning objectives, activities, and outcomes outlined.
2. **Identify Course Components:** Break down the course description into distinct components based on the activities and themes presented. These components may include:
 - Learning and Analysis of the Topics
 - Conceptualizing and Producing Knowledge
 - Self-Evaluation
 - Professor Feedback
 - Feedback to Professor
 - Evaluating Concepts Learned in Class
 - Interacting with Different Languages and Cultures

- Epistemology and Conceptualization
 - Extracurricular Activities
 - Outcomes
 - Action Research Study
 - Reflecting on and Applying Strategies for Future Teaching Practice
3. Organize Components Hierarchically: Arrange the identified components hierarchically, grouping related activities together under overarching themes or objectives. For example:
- Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology
 - Lectures and Readings
 - Transcription Exercises
 - Phonetic Analysis
 - Research and Analysis
 - Research Paper
 - Presentations
 - Collaborative Discussions
 - Evaluation and Feedback
 - Self-Evaluation
 - Professor Feedback
 - Feedback to Professor
 - Evaluating Concepts Learned in Class
 - Cultural and Linguistic Exploration
 - Multilingual Studies
 - Cultural Discussions
 - Action Research Study
 - Reflective Practice for Future Teaching
4. Outline Each Component: Develop a brief outline for each component, highlighting key activities, objectives, and assessment methods. For example:
- Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology
 - Lectures and Readings
 - Overview of speech sounds and their properties
 - Introduction to IPA symbols
 - Transcription Exercises
 - Practice transcribing speech samples
 - Familiarization with IPA symbols
 - Phonetic Analysis
 - Identifying phonemes and allophones in speech samples
 - Analyzing phonological patterns
5. Finalize the Course Outline: Combine the outlined components into a cohesive course outline, ensuring logical flow and alignment with the course objectives. Include details such as course duration, assessment weights, and recommended resources.
6. Reflective Practice: Encourage students to reflect on the process of creating the course outline, identifying areas where they gained deeper insights into course design and pedagogy

Practical Activity 2: Research Proposal Development

Objective: To help students refine their research ideas and develop a well-structured research proposal for their Final Degree Project.

Instructions:

1. **Topic Selection:** Encourage students to reflect on their interests, academic background, and career goals to select a research topic within the realm of language teaching and practice. Provide them with prompts to brainstorm potential topics.
2. **Research Question Formulation:** Guide students through the process of refining their chosen topic into a clear and concise research question. Emphasize the importance of specificity and relevance in formulating research questions.
3. **Literature Review:** Instruct students to conduct a preliminary literature review related to their chosen topic and research question. Encourage them to identify key theories, concepts, and previous studies that inform their research.
4. **Methodology Design:** Introduce students to various research methodologies commonly used in language teaching and practice research, such as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches. Have them select and justify an appropriate methodology for their research question.
5. **Data Collection Plan:** Help students outline a plan for collecting relevant data to address their research question. This may involve designing surveys, conducting interviews, or analyzing existing datasets.
6. **Data Analysis Strategy:** Assist students in identifying appropriate data analysis techniques based on their chosen methodology and research question. Provide guidance on how to interpret and present findings effectively.
7. **Writing Structure:** Discuss the structure and components of a research proposal, including the introduction, literature review, methodology, and anticipated outcomes. Provide examples and templates for each section.
8. **Feedback and Revision:** Encourage students to seek feedback from peers, mentors, or instructors on their research proposal draft. Emphasize the iterative nature of proposal development and the importance of incorporating constructive feedback.
9. **Finalization:** Guide students through the process of finalizing their research proposal, ensuring adherence to academic writing conventions, formatting guidelines, and ethical considerations.

Reflection Questions:

- What challenges did you encounter during the research proposal development process?
- How did feedback from peers or mentors influence your proposal?
- What strengths do you believe your research proposal showcases?
- How do you anticipate your proposed research contributing to the field of language teaching and practice?



A final word from the authors

“Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what
nobody else has thought.”
- *Albert Einstein*

As we draw the curtain on this exploration of the art and science of dissertation writing, we are compelled to reflect on the profound significance of research in our lives, both as scholars and learners. To our esteemed colleagues in academia and the bright minds in our student community, we offer these closing thoughts as a testament to the enduring importance of research as a daily practice. Research transcends the confines of our institutions and scholarly journals; it is a dynamic and transformative process that permeates every aspect of our existence. It serves as the driving force behind innovation, discovery, and progress in every field of study. From the laboratory to the library, from the classroom to the conference hall, research shapes our understanding of the world and propels us toward new horizons of knowledge.

For professors, research stands as the cornerstone of our profession, fueling our passion for inquiry and inspiring the next generation of scholars. Through our dedication to rigorous inquiry and the pursuit of truth, we cultivate a culture of intellectual curiosity and foster the critical thinking skills essential for success in the modern world. Our commitment to research not only enhances our own expertise but also enriches the educational experiences we provide to our students, ensuring that they are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of their respective fields.

For students, research offers more than a mere requirement; it is an opportunity to engage with ideas, challenge assumptions, and make meaningful contributions to our collective understanding of the world. It is through the process of research that we develop the skills of analysis, synthesis, and communication that are essential for academic success and lifelong learning. Engaging in research fosters independence, resilience, and a sense of ownership over one's academic journey, empowering students to become active participants in the creation of knowledge.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of knowledge, let us remember that research knows no boundaries. It is a lifelong pursuit, a journey of discovery that extends far beyond the confines of the classroom or the laboratory. Whether we are poring over archives in the library or engaging in collaborative inquiry with colleagues from around the world, let us embrace research as a daily practice, a way of seeing the world with fresh eyes and an open mind. The pursuit of knowledge is a path that invites us to continually question, explore, and innovate, driving us to uncover new insights and solutions.

In closing, we extend our deepest gratitude to all who have embarked on this journey with us—our colleagues, our students, and all those who share our passion for the pursuit of knowledge. Your dedication and curiosity are the lifeblood of our academic community, and it is through your efforts that we continue to advance our collective understanding and improve the world around us. May we continue to explore, to question, and to discover, confident in the knowledge that research is not merely a task but a lifelong adventure. Together, let us forge a future where the quest for knowledge is a shared endeavor, and the pursuit of truth remains our guiding light.

*With warm regards,
Professors Yaguara and Rojas
April, 2024*

Bonus section: Q&A

To create a comprehensive Q&A section for “FDP Handbook: A Learner’s Guide,” we have covered the main topics and challenges students typically face while working on their Final Degree Project (FDP). This Q&A is structured around the three main parts of the book, addressing common questions and providing practical answers to help guide students through their research journey. Below are some potential questions and answers to assist you in this process:

Part I: Initial Stages of Research

Q1: How do I choose a suitable topic for my Final Degree Project (FDP)?

A1: Start by identifying broad areas of interest within your field of study. Narrow these down by considering the relevance, availability of resources, and your own passion for the topic. Ensure that the topic is neither too broad nor too narrow and that it aligns with your academic goals and feasibility within the given time frame.

Q2: What is the best way to formulate a research question?

A2: A good research question should be clear, focused, and researchable. Begin by reviewing existing literature to identify gaps or areas needing further exploration. Then, refine your question to ensure it addresses a specific problem or aspect within your chosen topic.

Q3: How can I effectively navigate library resources?

A3: Familiarize yourself with the library’s catalog system, online databases, and journals relevant to your field. Use keywords related to your research topic and take advantage of library services such as research consultations with librarians.

Q4: What are the key steps in conducting a literature review?

A4: Start by gathering relevant sources, then read and summarize them to understand the current state of research. Identify patterns, themes, and gaps in the literature. Organize your review logically, typically from general findings to specific studies related to your research question.

Part II: Research Methodology and Data Collection

Q5: What are the main types of research methodologies?

A5: The three main types are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research focuses on exploring phenomena and understanding meanings, quantitative research involves measuring and analyzing numerical data, and mixed methods combine both approaches.

Q6: How do I decide which research methodology to use?

A6: Choose a methodology that best suits your research question and objectives. Consider the nature of the data you need, your research skills, and the resources available. For example, use qualitative methods for in-depth understanding of complex issues and quantitative methods for statistical analysis.

Q7: What are the steps involved in data collection?

A7: Define your data collection methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, experiments), design your data collection instruments, pilot test them, and then collect data systematically. Ensure you follow ethical guidelines and obtain necessary approvals.

Q8: How should I analyze my data?

A8: For qualitative data, use coding and thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes. For quantitative data, use statistical tools and software to perform descriptive and inferential analyses. Ensure your analysis aligns with your research objectives and questions.

Part III: Academic Writing and Presentation

Q9: What are the conventions of academic writing I should follow?

A9: Academic writing should be clear, concise, and well-structured. Follow formatting guidelines specific to your field, use formal language, and avoid colloquialisms. Ensure your arguments are well-supported by evidence and cited properly.

Q10: How do I construct well-reasoned arguments in my research paper?

A10: Base your arguments on a logical structure, starting with a clear thesis statement. Support each argument with evidence from your research and literature. Address counterarguments and demonstrate why your position is valid.

Q11: What are some common challenges in academic writing and how can I overcome them?

A11: Common challenges include maintaining clarity, coherence, and proper citation. Overcome these by outlining your paper before writing, seeking feedback from peers or mentors, and using writing resources such as style guides and citation tools.

Q12: How can I effectively manage my time while working on my FDP?

A12: Create a detailed timeline with specific milestones and deadlines. Break your work into manageable tasks, prioritize them, and set aside dedicated time for research and writing. Use tools like calendars and project management apps to stay organized.

Additional General Questions

Q13: What ethical considerations should I keep in mind during my research?

A13: Ensure you have informed consent from participants, protect their confidentiality, and avoid plagiarism. Follow the ethical guidelines set by your institution and seek approval from ethics committees if required.

Q14: How can I ensure my final paper is of high quality?

A14: Revise and proofread your work multiple times, seek feedback from peers and mentors, and ensure all sources are correctly cited. Use tools like grammar checkers and plagiarism detectors to enhance your paper's quality.

Glossary

This glossary captures the key terms used throughout the book and provides clear definitions to help you understand the concepts essential for their Final Degree Project

Abstract: A summary of a research article, thesis, review, conference proceeding, or any in-depth analysis of a particular subject or discipline. It is often used to help the reader quickly ascertain the paper's purpose.

Academic Writing: A style of writing used in academic essays and research papers, characterized by evidence-based arguments, precise word choice, logical organization, and an impersonal tone.

Bibliographical Card: A tool used in academic research to organize and record information about the sources relevant to a research topic. It typically includes key details such as the author, title, and publication date.

Case Study: An in-depth exploration of a particular individual, group, or event. Case studies are often used in qualitative research to understand complex phenomena.

Constructivist Perspective: An educational approach that emphasizes active learning where students construct their own understanding and knowledge through experiences and reflecting on those experiences.

Critical Thinking: The objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment. It involves rational, skeptical, unbiased analysis, or evaluation of factual evidence.

Data Analysis: The process of systematically examining, organizing, and interpreting data to answer research questions or test hypotheses. The specific methods used for data analysis will depend on your chosen methodology (qualitative or quantitative).

Data Collection: The process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in a systematic fashion that enables one to answer research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes.

Epistemological Foundations: The study of knowledge and justified belief, focusing on the nature, origin, and scope of knowledge and belief in the context of research.

Experimental Design: A research design in which the researcher manipulates one or more independent variables to observe their effect on dependent variables. It is commonly used in quantitative research to establish cause-and-effect relationships.

Final Degree Project (FDP): A comprehensive project undertaken by undergraduate students in their final year of study to demonstrate their ability to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout their course.

Focus Group: A moderated discussion involving a small group of individuals who share similar characteristics or experiences. Focus groups are used to gather in-depth insights, particularly in qualitative research, providing a platform for participants to share perspectives and engage in dynamic conversations.

Hypothesis: A tentative statement about a relationship between two or more variables that can be tested through research. Hypotheses are central to quantitative research but can also be used in qualitative studies.

Independent Variable: In experimental or causal research, the independent variable is the factor manipulated or controlled by the researcher. It is the presumed cause or influence on the dependent variable, allowing researchers to study its effect.

Information Literacy: The ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for various academic and professional purposes.

Interview: A qualitative research method involving a structured or semi-structured conversation between the researcher and a participant. Interviews can be found in-# Part I: Initial Stages of Research

Literature Review: A comprehensive survey of publications in a specific field of study or topic. It provides an overview of current knowledge, allowing the researcher to identify relevant theories, methods, and gaps in the existing research.

Methodology: A system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity. In research, it refers to the theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study.

Peer Feedback: Feedback given by peers or colleagues. In academic contexts, this usually refers to students providing constructive feedback to one another to improve their work.

Pilot Study: A small-scale preliminary study conducted to test the feasibility and effectiveness of research methods and instruments. It helps identify potential challenges and refine the design before full-scale data collection, enhancing the validity and reliability of the main study.

Population: The entire group of individuals or elements to which your research question applies. In most FDP research, the population will be quite large (e.g., all college students in Colombia). Your study will likely focus on a smaller sample representing the population.

Research Design: The overall plan or framework for conducting your research. It outlines the research question, methodology, data collection methods, and data analysis plan.

Research Question: The question around which you center your research. It should be clear, focused, and concise, guiding the direction and scope of your study.

Sample: A subset of the population selected to represent the entire group. Your research will draw conclusions about the population based on the data collected from your sample. The size and representativeness of your sample are crucial for ensuring the validity of your findings.

Sampling Technique: The method used to select a representative sample from the population. There are various sampling techniques (e.g., random sampling, convenience sampling) and the most appropriate method will depend on your research question and resources.

Survey: A research method that involves collecting data from a group of individuals through questionnaires or interviews. Surveys are a common tool in quantitative research for gathering data from a large sample.

Task-Based Learning: An approach to teaching and learning where tasks are used as the central unit of planning and instruction in language teaching.

Theory: A set of interrelated propositions that explains a phenomenon or a set of phenomena. Theories provide a framework for understanding how things work and can be used to guide research.

Thesis Statement: A short statement that summarizes the main point or claim of an essay or research paper. It is developed, supported, and explained in the text by means of examples and evidence.

Variable: A characteristic that can take on different values in your research study. For example, in a study on student motivation, variables might include grade point average, study habits, or time spent studying.

Conclusion

Empowered Researchers, Impactful Contributions

As we bring this comprehensive guide to a close, our hope is that new researchers will feel empowered and inspired to embark on their academic research journeys with confidence and a sense of curiosity. Throughout this handbook, we have endeavored to demystify the complex world of research, providing a practical and accessible framework for navigating its many facets. From foundational principles to the intricacies of structuring and presenting research, we have illuminated a path that new scholars can follow with enthusiasm and purpose.

Reflecting on Key Takeaways

Effective organization forms the backbone of successful research endeavors. We emphasized the importance of crafting meticulous research plans, drafting and redrafting, and maintaining impeccable records of sources consulted. This systematic approach ensures that the research process remains focused and coherent, ultimately facilitating the clear communication of findings. The iterative nature of drafting allows ideas to evolve and arguments to gain clarity and force.

Additionally, we underscored the significance of proper citation and adherence to established formatting guidelines, such as APA style. Maintaining academic integrity by acknowledging the work of others is paramount, as it not only strengthens the credibility of the researcher but also situates their contributions within the broader scholarly discourse. Formatting consistency enhances the professionalism and accessibility of research outputs, facilitating peer review and knowledge dissemination.

The finalization stage, we argued, is a critical juncture where proofreading, attention to detail, and a relentless pursuit of clarity and impact come together to create a polished and compelling research paper. It is through this final stage that the fruits of one's labor are presented to the world, ready to make a lasting impression and contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

Language teaching and practice, a dynamic and ever-evolving field, relies on rigorous research to drive innovation and enhance pedagogical approaches. Research enables educators and scholars to delve into emerging challenges, explore new methodologies, and develop strategies that improve language acquisition and communication skills. It is through this research-informed practice that we can address the diverse needs of language learners and empower them with the tools to succeed in a globalized world.

The research process itself is a transformative journey, fostering the development of essential 21st-century skills. Critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration are honed and refined, equipping individuals with the ability to analyze complex information, synthesize diverse perspectives, and articulate persuasive arguments. These skills are not only invaluable in academic pursuits but also highly sought-after in a wide range of professional contexts.

As researchers continue their academic journeys, we encourage them to embrace a curious and persistent mindset, always seeking to ask questions and explore new avenues of inquiry. Curiosity fuels the fire of discovery, leading to innovative research that pushes the boundaries of existing knowledge. Persistence, on the other hand, enables researchers to navigate the inevitable challenges and setbacks that accompany the research process, fostering resilience and determination.

Collaboration, too, plays a pivotal role in enriching future research endeavors. Engaging in dialogue, exchanging ideas, and seeking feedback from peers, mentors, and experts broadens perspectives, challenges assumptions, and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the research subject. By fostering a collaborative spirit, researchers not only enhance the quality of their work but also expand their professional networks, creating opportunities for interdisciplinary insights and impact.

Clear and effective writing is the lifeblood of knowledge dissemination. It is through the skillful use of language that research findings come alive, inspiring and informing others in the field. Researchers must strive to refine their writing abilities continually, experimenting with different styles and techniques to communicate their ideas with precision and clarity. Effective communication ensures that the fruits

of research are accessible to a broad audience, including practitioners and policymakers, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.

The development of strong writing and communication skills is not just an academic exercise; it is an essential tool for contributing to the advancement of language teaching and practice. By articulating complex concepts succinctly and engagingly, researchers can influence pedagogical approaches, curriculum design, and the integration of technology in the classroom. Effective writing has the power to shape educational policies, inform teacher training programs, and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes.

In their pursuit of research excellence, scholars not only contribute to the advancement of knowledge in language teaching and practice but also equip themselves with a diverse skill set that transcends academic boundaries. Adaptability, critical thinking, and effective communication are highly prized in the 21st century, enabling individuals to thrive in a myriad of professional arenas. By embracing the research process and cultivating a collaborative mindset, individuals develop the agility and resilience necessary to navigate an ever-changing landscape, whether in education, industry, or beyond.

As researchers continue their journeys, we leave them with the wise words of Albert Einstein, a renowned physicist, and eternal seeker of knowledge:

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.”

In conclusion, this handbook has sought to provide a comprehensive roadmap for new researchers, illuminating the path from the initial stages of topic selection and literature review to the presentation of impactful research findings. We trust that the insights and practical guidance offered within these pages will serve as a beacon, guiding scholars through the challenges and rewards of academic research.

It is our sincere hope that this guide will empower individuals to approach their research endeavors with enthusiasm, curiosity, and a deep sense of purpose. By embracing the research process, scholars will not only contribute to the advancement of knowledge but also develop the skills necessary to thrive in a complex and ever-changing world.

Let this handbook be a catalyst for exceptional research, innovative thinking, and meaningful contributions that resonate across disciplines and leave a lasting legacy of intellectual curiosity and discovery.

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We dedicate this effort to our children, the engines of our existence.

*We thank the colleagues who supported us in the construction of this short
work.*