

Learners' Satisfaction and Language Teacher Education Programs: Are we Doing our Homework?

La Satisfacción de los Estudiantes en los Programas de Licenciatura: ¿Estamos Haciendo la Tarea?

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Abstract

This report presents a study carried out by the research group Lenguaje y Pedagogía. The objective of this research was to determine how satisfied students enrolled in teacher education programs at the Linguistics and Languages Department are regarding their preparation to become teachers. 40 students from beginner, intermediate and advanced levels from both programs were surveyed and their responses were classified and analyzed. The findings suggest that learners are indeed satisfied with the preparation they are getting for becoming foreign language teachers. However, there is room for improvement in some areas. The suggestions derived from the study are described next.

Key words: foreign language teacher education, post method, learner satisfaction

Resumen

Este reporte presenta un estudio realizado por el grupo de investigación Lenguaje y Pedagogía. El objetivo de esta investigación era determinar el grado de satisfacción de los estudiantes matriculados en los programas de licenciatura del Departamento de Lingüística e Idiomas respecto a su preparación para convertirse en docentes. 40 estudiantes de semestres principiantes, intermedios y avanzados de los dos programas de licenciatura del Departamento fueron entrevistados y sus respuestas clasificadas y analizadas. Los resultados muestran que los estudiantes están satisfechos con la preparación que están recibiendo como futuros profesores de lengua extranjera. Sin embargo, hay una serie de aspectos que pueden mejorar. Las sugerencias derivadas del estudio se describen a continuación.

Palabras Clave: formación de docentes de lenguas extranjeras, post-método, satisfacción de los estudiantes

Learners' Satisfaction and Language Teacher Education programs at Universidad de Nariño ¿Are we Doing our Homework?

Introduction

“We often hear educators say that teaching is both an art and a science. I take this to mean that teaching is basically a subjective activity carried out in an organized way.”

Kumaravadivelu (2003).

This sentence accurately describes the balance teacher education programs need to keep when preparing future teachers. But, how well are we keeping this balance? This report highlights the results of a study carried out by the research group Lenguaje y Pedagogía regarding learners' satisfaction at the Linguistics and Languages Department from Universidad de Nariño (UDENAR). Let us begin this introduction by stating that teacher education programs have a long tradition at the university and in the department. In 1962 the school of education is created at UDENAR (Agreement No. 6, 1962) as the conclusion of a process that started in 1961 as it is stated in the minute No. 44 from December 5. The Linguistics and Languages Department, which was then called, Modern Languages Department, is then ascribed to this school with one teaching program: Modern languages created through the agreement No. 14 from March 17 1966. As it can be seen, the department has a long tradition of teacher education and the programs have had two main foci: English-Spanish and English-French. The two teaching programs have recognition and prestige among employers in public and private institutions and among the community. However, the self-evaluation processes that have taken place along the history of the department and, more recently, the accreditation processes, lead us to wonder which the perception that future foreign language teachers have regarding those teaching program is. That is why this research was conducted: it is important to know where we

stand in order to improve, to reinforce our strengths and tackle our weaknesses. We know that historically, learning a foreign language and administering foreign language (L2) courses has been a constant need (Celce-Murcia, 2001) for academic, personal and economic reasons. In Colombia, the Ministry of Education established in 1999 curricular guidelines for foreign languages (Lineamientos Curriculares Idiomas Extranjeros). This document made evident that foreign language instruction needs to be included in the educational experience of Colombian students at all levels, and the importance of learning foreign languages as part of the foundations for our professional life is not present just in documents. College students know that they need to learn another language not just to understand texts related to their majors, but also to communicate with colleagues around the world, to take standardized tests, to have access to graduate studies and to be able to work in other parts of the world. Regarding teacher education programs the government has the same view, but in addition, it has been aggressive in terms of establishing high parameters for the institutions offering these programs, for the teacher educators and for the future foreign language teachers aiming for a bilingual country even when bilingualism might not be the most feasible or appropriate goal for Colombia (Cárdenas, 2006; Guerrero, 2008; Sánchez & Obando, 2008). The best evidence of these demands is the Decree 2450 from December 17, 2015. This decree demands high standards for the new teachers in terms of language proficiency (C1 proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference) and regarding the knowledge they should have to be teachers (pedagogy, didactics, methodology, science, and math). Teacher educators are doing their best to keep up with these demands and self-evaluation processes are a way to make the necessary adjustments to curricula. In fact, both teaching programs at the Linguistics and Languages Department have been accredited by the National Accreditation Council NCA (Consejo Nacional

de Acreditación – CNA), which hints that the teaching programs have a high quality and are conducive to providing a satisfactory learning experience. However, there is always room for improvement and this project intends to find information regarding the perceptions learners have about their preparation for becoming teachers, hoping that this information will help teacher educators and administrators understand the satisfaction level our students currently have, so we can introduce strategies that can help raise existing satisfaction levels inside the two teaching programs.

Research Setting and Participants

Setting

This project was carried out with future foreign language teachers who are currently enrolled in the BA in Teaching English-Spanish and BA in Teaching English-French at Universidad de Nariño. These students have been learning foreign languages (L2), focusing on the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These learners have also been exposed to courses that aim at preparing them to become L2 teachers such as pedagogy, morphology, syntax, semantics, educational psychology, foreign language methodology, assessment and second language acquisition (Annex 1).

Participants

The group consisted of 40 students from the two BA in teaching programs belonging to the Linguistics and Languages Department at Universidad de Nariño (UDENAR). They were chosen at random in order to guarantee objectivity, coverage and the collection of reliable information from students from a variety of semesters and experiences. The participants belonged to first, fourth, eighth and ninth semester of both programs.

Theoretical Framework

In order to be able to understand what elements can be related to the satisfaction learners display regarding their progress in the teacher education programs, it is necessary to overview key concepts related to L2 instruction. Namely, foreign language instruction, post method and teacher education in Colombia. Let us begin by briefly discussing the first issue:

Foreign Language Instruction

Foreign language instruction is one of the dimensions future foreign language teachers need to develop before becoming L2 teachers. This dimension is present in the teacher education programs through these courses: psychology and language teaching, cognitive psychology and language, second language acquisition, TESOL I, TESOL II and Evaluation, assessment and testing. All these courses intend to provide future L2 teachers with the necessary tools to face teaching in different contexts, with a variety of audiences and with different resources. Foreign language teaching methodology has been extensively researched and it is a rapidly growing field given the need for foreign language teachers around the world. Richards and Rodgers (2001), Celce-Murcia (2001), Rodgers (2003) and Richards (2008) discuss the evolution of TESOL (Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language) and as Celce-Murcia mentions, there have existed two main trends in L2 instruction: the first one entails teaching a language so that the apprentice can communicate with NSs (Native Speakers) of that language and get involved in that society. The second trend encompasses teaching a language in order to analyze its formal aspects (e.g., grammar and vocabulary). That is, learn about that L2. The different methods that emerged along history reflect the needs of learners at a given point in history. For instance, in the 16th century people learned a language to be able to communicate with Europeans in their vernacular languages, while in the 19th century, learning a language was more a mental drill done

in order to strengthen one`s memory and enhance cognitive skills (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, 2014).

Richards and Rodgers (2001, 2014) also discuss the Coleman Report, which in 1929 suggested that foreign language instruction for college students should be limited to teaching them to read academic texts in other languages.

Academic practices at Universidad de Nariño have been influenced by the different swings of the methodology pendulum, but it is worth mentioning that in the last decades, future foreign language teachers have been exposed to communicative approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT), content-based instruction (CBI), task-based language teaching (TBLT) and cooperative language learning (CLL), which can contribute to help learners reach the proficiency demanded by the government and the needs of the 21st century society, while giving learners exposure to the type of methodology they will need to apply in their own classes in the near future.

We now turn to discussing where we stand, methodologically speaking, in Colombia and around the world.

Foreign Language Teaching Foundations in the 21st Century

After the obvious failure of the idea that one single method can be suitable for any teacher and any learner, in any context, an idea that permeated the 20th century (Brown, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006), it is time for teachers to reflect and reshape the conception of learning and teaching, the conditions we need for learning and which methodological choices are the best in order to enhance learning opportunities for learners. In short, we need to redefine our place in the teaching/learning process. That premise is discussed as follows:

Defining teaching and teachers' roles in the 21st century. Teaching is a complex and multidimensional task and as Brown (2007) suggests, it is both an art and a science.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) cites Hansen (1995) who differentiates the terms job, vocation, work, career, occupation and profession in order to determine which one is more suitable to accommodate teaching.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) summarizes such categorization:

- a *job* is an activity that provides sustenance or survival. It comprises highly repetitive tasks that are not defined and developed by those performing them.
- *vocation* goes well beyond sustenance and survival; it guarantees personal autonomy and personal significance.
- *work* may ensure personal autonomy and can therefore yield genuine personal meaning but, unlike vocation, it need not imply being of service to others.
- a *career* describes a long-term involvement in a particular activity but differs from vocation in similar ways that job and work do, that is, it need not provide personal fulfillment, a sense of identity, nor a public service.
- an *occupation* is an endeavor harbored within a society's economic, social, and political system, but persons can have occupations that do not entail a sense of calling in the same way vocations do.
- a *profession* broadens the idea of an occupation by emphasizing the expertise and the social contribution that persons in an occupation render to society. (p. 6)

Consequently, it is difficult to type-cast teaching. Hansen suggests that vocation would be the term that best defines what teachers do in their professional practice, but the roles of teachers are so varied that it might be accurate to say that teaching covers all the above mentioned

terms. In fact, and given the experiences reported by alumni from both teaching programs, it can be said that teaching is a very complex profession that demands not only high levels of proficiency in the second language and knowledge of how to teach an L2, but it also requires commitment, dedication, self-study and a high sense of the big responsibility they have as educators. The students at the Linguistics and Languages Department are aware of these challenges and of the complexity of their profession, which is also a job and a vocation. They are aware that as Finney (2002) states, teachers need to go beyond the classroom walls and their role is to lead students to “learn how to learn and to keep on learning” (p.69). Hopefully both teacher education programs will provide learners with what they need to keep on learning.

In Colombia there is abundant Research in TESOL, specifically in topics that support this study. Colombian teachers deal, among others, with issues such as teacher education, the professional development of teachers, Colombian policies; methodology, bilingualism, curricular innovation, design and application of materials, the use of technology and assessment (Cárdenas, González & Álvarez, 2010; Cárdenas and Miranda, 2014; Cárdenas, 2006; Castellanos, 2009; Guerrero, 2008, 2010; Lastra, 2009; Rojas, 2007; Sánchez and Obando, 2008; Rogers, 2008). This rich local knowledge is shared with the academic community through relevant journals such as HOW: A Colombian Journal for Teachers of English, IKALA, PROFILE, and Colombian Applied Linguistics among others. The Colombian experiences regarding EFL and teacher education have also been published internationally (González, 2010).

The Postmethod Pedagogy

Given the fact that the Universidad de Nariño needs to prepare undergraduate students to face diverse tasks that include reading a specialized article from a journal or interacting while taking a standardized test, some methodological principles need to be set. It is of paramount importance that teachers in charge of undergraduate foreign language courses are able to plan, deliver and assess lessons in a way that both communicative and academic goals can be achieved. Kumaravadivelu (2006) suggests that foreign language teachers see themselves in the framework of the postmethod condition. This condition, the author explains, should lead us to challenge what we are doing in the classroom. The postmethod pedagogy can be “visualized as a three dimensional system consisting of three pedagogic parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 171). These parameters are intertwined and affect each other and can be summarized as follows:

The parameter of particularity refers to the idea that our pedagogy is not sterile. Teachers need to be aware of the fact that we are teaching a certain group of people, in a certain context, with specific goals, inside an institution with determined characteristics and affected by a sociocultural environment. To explain this, Kumaravadivelu introduces the concept of situational understanding, a term cited by Elliot (1993) stating that “a meaningful pedagogy cannot be constructed without a holistic interpretation of particular situations, and that it cannot be improved without a general improvement of those particular situations” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 171). This parameter gives importance to local knowledge and experience since, blindly adopting certain pedagogy can be threatening for learners. Teachers need to be critical about the teaching conditions in order to make educated and positive choices for them and for their

students. Teachers also need to be critical of themselves, their practices and beliefs in order to really understand what is and what is not feasible in an EFL setting such as Pasto.

The second parameter, practicality, has to do with how we incorporate theory and practice to our teaching and more specifically how teachers assess their own teaching skills. Regarding the dichotomy of theory and practice, it is suggested that teachers immerse in professional theories or those originated by the experts, and in personal theories; those that come from the teacher's experience of bringing into practice professional theories. Teachers, according to this parameter need to make extensive use of action research to build their own and to reflect, question, follow their inner voice, and sort out which professional theories are valuable for their classroom.

Finally, the parameter of possibility is based, as Kumaravadivelu states, on the ideas of Paulo Freire. Freire suggested that pedagogy, power and dominance are not separate entities and that learners should challenge the secret agenda of education. This can be achieved by strengthening both students and teachers' identity, by acknowledging the experiences and knowledge that people bring in the classroom and by allowing those experiences to enrich and transform the teaching/learning process. We cannot see English or any other language as an element dissociated from a sociopolitical context, but again, we need to be critical and make the best choices to maximize the likelihood of success in our classes under the given conditions.

Another piece of the methodology puzzle that has to be considered when implementing changes in foreign language instruction is the need to move towards learner-centeredness. Although this is not a new idea, classrooms in collectivistic cultures like ours seem to revolve around the teacher and students believe that learning is determined by the quality of the teacher. With scarce time in our hands and with the need to move quickly towards the development of

communicative competence, fostering classrooms where students are the center of learning and where autonomy and responsibility are encouraged by the teacher are a must.

Learner centeredness. If we take a look to what psychology and education argue about learning. Evidently, there is nothing as the term mind to disrupt the awkward silence existing between teachers and psychologists. When someone refers to this term, hundreds of voices can be listened coming from everywhere intending to light the path; none of them possible to be neglected. The close relationship between psychology and teaching has been proved in different settings, and as Woolfolk (1998) asserts the importance of including psychological principles or their application in the field of language learning – and teaching of course – has gained major importance in the last decades. This is likely the result of having found new ‘weird’ behaviors within our classrooms which have led us as teachers to look for alternative – more scientific if preferable – theories to face the problem of learning. The result: a crusade to line the way towards effective learning. Language teaching and learning has evolved out of what it used to be: contemporary trends in language, as it is asserted by Nunan (1999), claims for communicative views of language, learner-centered curriculum, research in language acquisition and some other relevant aspects that must be born in mind. Learning is then, conceived as a process possible to be achieved by anyone if it is viewed as the set of cumulative experiences incorporated in life. Those cumulative experiences are integrated by learners. Mayer (2008 p. 49) states that ‘learners actively create their own knowledge based on integrating what is presented and what they already know’. It is possible to discern from this perspective that learning is a process grounded on exchanging, contrasting and incorporating experiences. By asserting such a view we also recognize that everyone plays a role in the process. One major observation from our own perspective as teachers is that learners have their own style to approach to new experiences and

decide which experiences they incorporate or not. It is likely to happen that by providing students with meaningful experiences, they incorporate these experiences as part of their knowledge rather than others. Learning should also be an aggregate of rewarding elements in terms of emotional aspects and personal growth. Meaningful experiences by themselves do not constitute possible sources of learning. For an experience to be meaningful emotional factors such as motivation and personal values or cultural elements should be considered as significant components of learning. Motivation is a very complex term to acknowledge and then for the purposes of this paper, the term would be simple referred as a favorable observable behavior towards learning. Formerly, students' motivation can be enhance by implicating them in their own learning. Schunk (2003 p. 70) explains that if students believe they have a notion of how to perform a task – the sense of ‘understanding the process’ – they would feel more confident in succeeding. Consequently, self-regulatory conditions can be provided to students so they confidently lead their own process in a motivated way. Another source of motivation is provided by the chance of finding sources for personal growth. By stimulating the development of different abilities and skills and also discovering potential ones, learners would find benefit in carrying out the process. Therefore it would become a teachers' responsibility to examine different contexts that supply chances for everyone to explore and develop unknown aptitudes. To summarize learning is a social process only achievable through the exposure to meaningful experiences in a variety of contexts with considerable benefits for the learner.

Second, teaching is the other key element to be considered. In order to establish contemporary elements to the art of teaching and to prepare future foreign language teachers in the teacher education programs, we also need to consider the contributions of important authors such us Nunan (1999) and Kumaravadivelu (2003). Teaching has been redefined since

fundamentals in the field of teaching have evolved. In terms of language teaching for instance, as Nunan (1999 p. 9) asserts, the redefinition of language for communicative purposes redefined the role of teachers. Kumaravadivelu (2003 p. 17 -18) presents a critical view to this evolution and classifies teachers according to their practices. Taking into account this scenery, teaching could be characterized as the conscious act of providing people with enough opportunities to incorporate meaningful experiences in diverse settings, by motivating personal interests and through the exploration of a variety of sources which eventually would benefit students and would permit to discover and promote their aptitudes. Therefore, teaching requires being a clear leading process in which learners participate actively in defining goals and possible outcomes (Nunan 1999 p. 11). It is also desirable that teaching promotes and considers different approaches to learning and essentially that recognizes the existence of different learning styles and promotes those styles by emphasizing metacognitive strategies as part of the process of learning. As learning is an opportunity for personal growth, through teaching there must be chances for promoting values, abilities for living within a society, collaborative skills and so forth. And when considering teaching a conscious act, there must be conscience about the variety of backgrounds existing in a classroom and the potential benefits and difficulties that can arise during the process. Teaching should allow all participants to get involved in it. The role students have to play in learning is crucial. Nunan (1999) promotes the idea of finding learner needs to enhance the process. Since the existence and development of communicative approaches in language teaching, it is more and more evident the need of identifying why people learn a language, what their objectives are and what communicative purposes they want to achieve (Nunan 1999). There exist diverse strategies to implement learner centered classrooms, but obviously, the first components in such a change must be – both from a teacher perspective – 1) finding the usefulness in having such an

approach in teaching a language, and 2) recognize the increasing need and the outnumbered possibilities and benefits of including students perceptions about their own learning process in current syllabi design.

After this brief review of literature has been presented, the question here seems to be: Are we offering future foreign language teachers the necessary tools to face their L2 classrooms, and which feature 21st century parameters and features?

Research Design

The type of research used in this project given the nature of the objectives stated was quantitative, while the design was transversal and descriptive. This combination allowed researchers to register, describe and analyze the students' perceptions regarding their foreign language learning experiences their education as future foreign language teachers at Universidad de Nariño (UDENAR). The study involved different levels of analysis starting from a non-experimental descriptive design that sought to compare the students' ideas regarding their learning experiences to existing literature on the teacher education programs in Colombia.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to collect the data and carry out the intended analysis, a survey created and piloted by members of the research group was applied. In order to create this instrument, some satisfaction surveys in the context of education were used (Muñiz, 2010; Flores-Barboza, 2006; Hernández-Sampieri, 2006). The language used in the surveys was direct and the questionnaire had 32 questions for which the options strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly disagree were provided. The sample was chosen by means of a random

sampling by listings. This allowed us to choose participants with diverse experiences in the teacher education programs in terms of their permanence in the program.

Data Analysis

Once the information provided by the learners was compiled, the data was run through a statistic analysis program, the SPSS 19, which allowed us to obtain results relative to the reliability of the questionnaire ($\alpha = .87$). This information was also compared and contrasted with existing bibliography related teacher education programs. The questionnaire consisted on close-ended type questions and one open-ended question. The closed-ended questions were classified as: satisfaction on how courses are carried on, satisfaction regarding their performance, satisfaction with the way teachers interact with learners in the classroom, satisfaction on assessment practices, satisfaction with the facilities and resources used, and satisfaction related to the methodology used in the courses.

Close-ended Questions (Likert)

The close-ended questions aimed at measuring learners' satisfaction with aspects such as methodology and teachers' performance. The answers provided by the surveyed students show that there is an overall positive assessment of the way foreign language courses are administered at the moment. The answers and the categories are summarized in the following graphics:

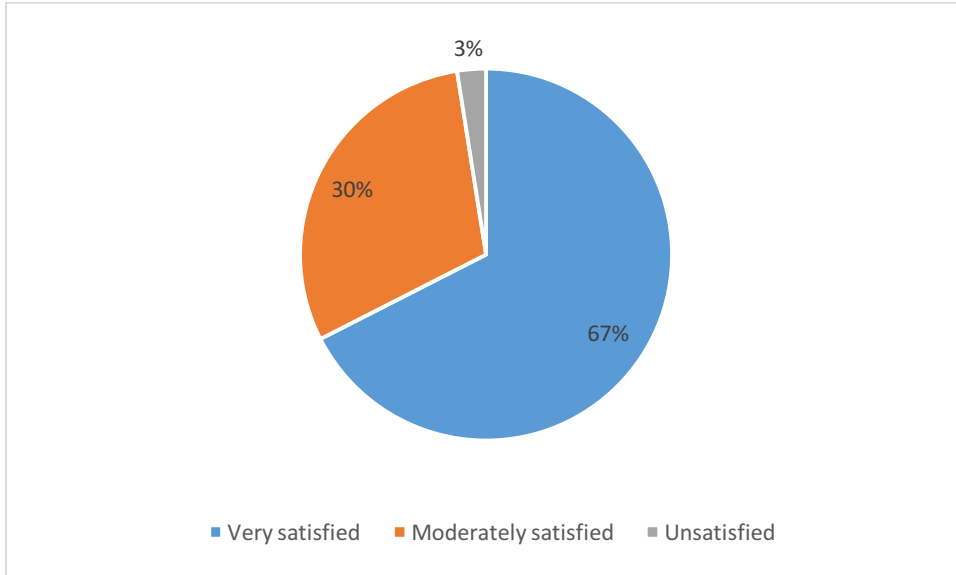


Figure 1. Satisfaction with how demanding courses are

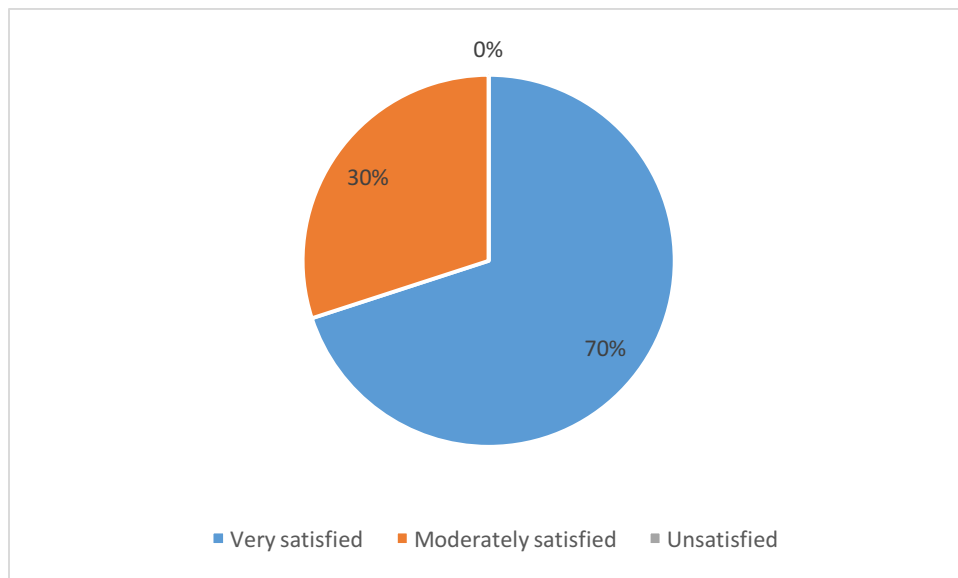


Figure 2. Satisfaction with their own performance

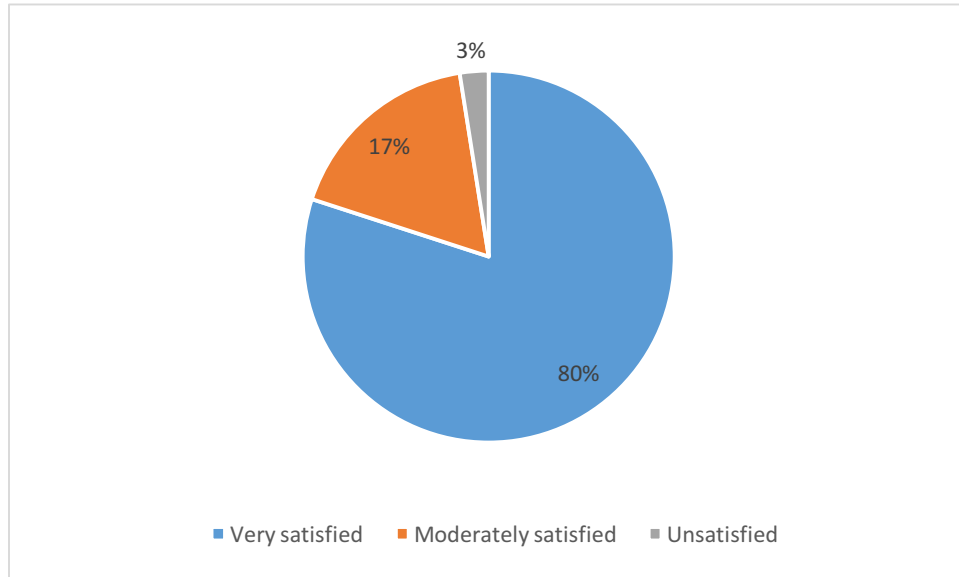


Figure 3. Satisfaction with teacher-student interaction

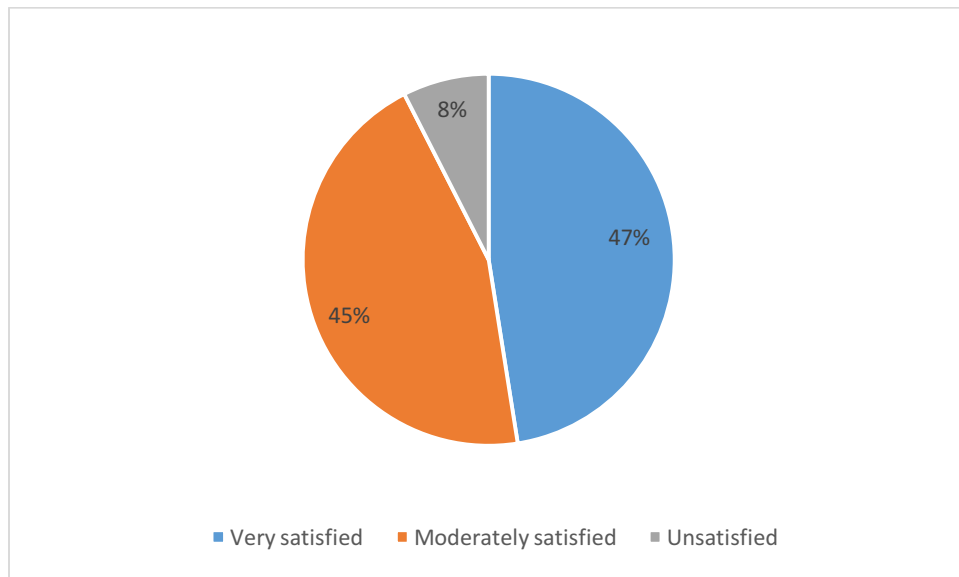


Figure 4. Satisfaction with assessment (frequency, type, validity)

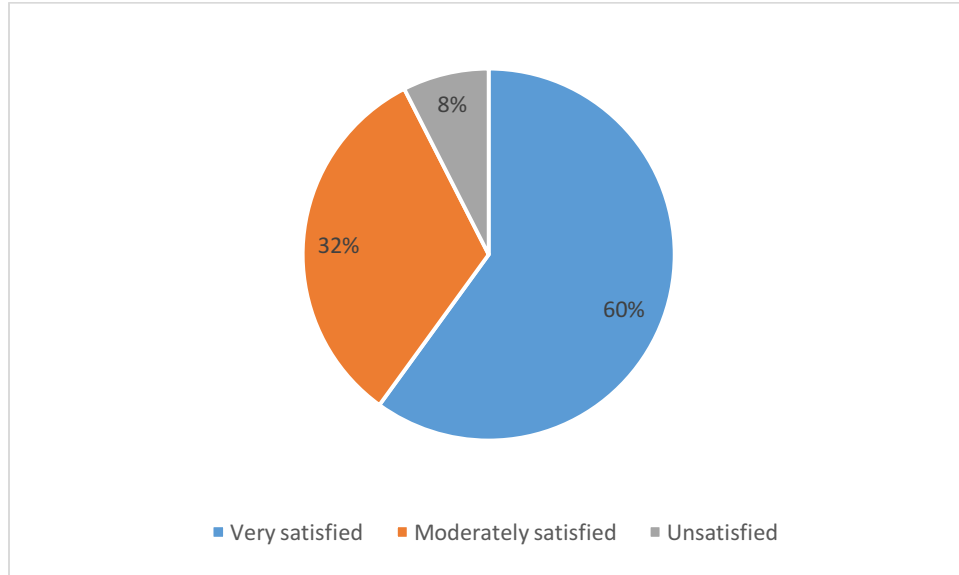


Figure 5. Satisfaction with the facilities and resources for teaching/learning

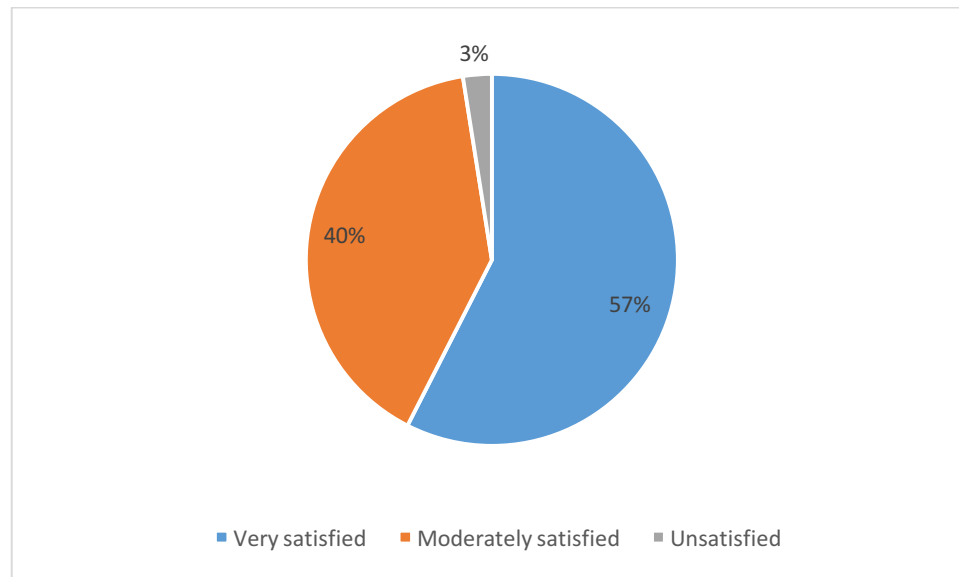


Figure 6. Satisfaction with methodology

The results derived from the closed-ended questions allowed us to observe that there is a generalized sense of satisfaction with the teacher education programs. These results replicate those obtained in the self-evaluation processes carried out in the Linguistics and Languages Department programs in 2013 and 2016. Learners feel very satisfied with the knowledge they have gained in the programs, whereas assessment is the area that shows a lesser degree of satisfaction. One interesting element observed in the surveys applied was that learners did not add any comments despite the fact that the instrument did not ask for names or personal information. When the participants were asked about it, they stated that there were some aspects that needed improvement, but they did not feel comfortable writing them down and they were willing to provide the information to the researcher orally.

Open-ended Question

The question was: Make 3 suggestions to make foreign language courses more effective (Haga 3 sugerencias para que los cursos de lengua extranjera sean más efectivos). The 20 suggestions elicited from the participants were classified in the following categories: Methodology, Assessment, Class contents and Other suggestions.

Methodology. The students manifested that this is an area that can always be improved. Some advanced learners were very specific about their observations regarding methodology because they have already taken courses related to teaching (e.g., Psychology and Language Teaching, TESOL) and they have a better understanding of the theoretical foundations and the best practices related to teaching. Learners were articulate in their ideas and even used terminology belonging to foreign language teaching. The answers are summarized next in sub categories: teacher's role, classroom management and classroom activities

Teacher's role: Regarding this important aspect on education, the students suggested that they observe some variations regarding the role teachers play in the classroom. They stated that while some teachers tend to have a commanding role and attitude and their teaching goals are clear, others tend to be passive and seem unprepared for the class they are teaching. The learners manifest that this may have an influence on learner motivation, and even though they understand that not all the teachers must have a uniform attitude, they suggest teachers at the department begin a dialogue to establish a common ground and a stable progression in the program. Additionally, some students suggested that sometimes the government decisions need to be discussed and revised, and they would like the teachers at the department to take a stance regarding these issues and interact more with the students regarding aspects like practicum or national language policies.

Classroom management. This area is related to the previous one, but here students discussed the inconvenience of having two different courses merge into one after fourth semester. They stated that the dynamics of the classroom is affected by this in different ways: first, the number of students in the classroom increases dramatically and advanced semesters can easily have 40 students. Given that the goals of the teaching programs are to prepare future foreign language teachers to be proficient in the L2 and to be skillful in how to teach, class size is an aspect that hinders the achievement of the former goal. When asked specific ways in which class size affected them. Some students stated that they could not explain it, but it did. This lack of precision is not unheard of when it comes to classroom management. It is an elusive concept that different authors have attempted to tackle. For instance, Brophy (1986) states that it can be defined as a teachers' efforts to establish and maintain the classroom as an effective environment for teaching and learning. For Johnson et al. (2005), it is "...a wide-array of proactive, well-

established, and consistent techniques and practices teachers employ to create an atmosphere conducive to learning” (p. 2). Juggling all these aspects inside the classroom is a challenge for any teacher, and, in fact, the students did say that teachers attempt to keep the pace of the class, to provide communicative activities and to keep everybody participating, but unfortunately, having a large class reduces the learners’ chances to engage in negotiation of meaning, and interaction. They also mentioned that when the two groups come together, they need to start interacting with an entirely new group of people and they might feel less confident to participate or produce output in the L2. They said they felt sometimes observed or judged by their classmates and this might contribute to a lower class participation.

Classroom activities. The next category of answers has to do with the procedures teachers bring into the classroom in order to enhance opportunities for the development of communicative competence among future foreign language teachers. Here the future teachers were concerned with the government demands. Some expressed that in order to reach a C1 level they need to work hard and be exposed to varied and authentic activities, but that they feel discouraged when the methodology used by teachers does not reflect these features. Some advanced learners suggested that they want to pursue graduate studies so, they will have to take standardized tests to be accepted into graduate programs and they feel not ready for that challenge. They suggested that classes need to be taught entirely in the foreign language so that they can get enough exposure and practice in the L2. They also want teachers to provide classroom exercises similar to those found in standardized tests like TOEFL or FCE to be better prepared to face these tests in the future. The final suggestion they made is to improve the use of the materials. Currently, learners are using the books Cutting Edge and Longman Academic Writing Series. The books are difficult to afford by some students and they expressed their

frustration at some teachers who do not follow the book at all or stray away from the book contents. They suggest better lesson planning so that all the teachers use the books as the main resource in the class in order to guarantee a tangible progression between semesters. Advanced learners also pointed out that courses offered by the School of Education could be more specific and oriented towards the topics they encounter when they take the Pruebas Saber Pro (e.g., policies, curriculum).

Assessment. The comments related to assessment in the teacher education programs have to do mostly with the type and amount of assessment tasks they carry out in the different courses. As mentioned before, students feel that class size affects assessment. Learners feel that in courses related to speaking, they could have more interactive tests, but teachers cannot do this because they have to assess 40 students and oral exams take a long time to be completed. The same happens with courses such as Writing Research Papers, where the teacher has to read 40 papers and provide feedback for each student. This limits the amount of activities teachers can do because they also need to move forward with class contents. On the other hand, students stated that they sometimes feel lost or frustrated with the assessment process. Again, they say that there is divergence in the way teachers organize tests and suggest that teachers establish a certain set of rules. For instance, they state that teachers should provide clear assessment parameters beforehand so learners know what is expected of their performance. They added that teachers could make use of technology to assess learners and make a better use of the available time instead of using up to four hours to apply a traditional oral exam. The surveyed learners want teachers to use resources such as YouTube, Facebook, Moodle or cell phones for oral activities because they said that sometimes it is better for them not to speak in front of the whole class. They want assessment to be varied, authentic, demanding and related to class contents. Finally,

learners reiterated that they would like to be exposed to exercises based on standardized tests from early semesters in the programs. Learners clarified, however, that they cannot take standardized tests at different times during their stay in the program because those tests are very expensive, but they would like to take mock exams also as a way to self-assess their progress.

Class contents. This category is directly related to the multidimensionality of teacher education programs. The learners are aware of the fact that being a teacher is a challenging activity and that these programs must offer courses that cater for learners' needs. That is, there must be courses focused on the development of communicative competence in English or French. Moreover, courses related to the structure of language such as phonetics and phonology or morphology are to be included. Finally, the curriculum needs to include courses about research, foreign language methodology, assessment, cultural aspects of language and second language acquisition. What students suggested here is that they see some theoretical courses as opportunities for gaining more exposure to the foreign language. Thus, they would like teachers to provide materials in the foreign language and use the foreign language extensively in the classroom. They state that when they leave the university they use Spanish at home and on the street, and they think it is fair that English or French are used compulsory in theoretical courses by the teachers assigned to those courses. Another related suggestion is that communicative courses (i.e., listening and speaking, reading and writing) can be used to provide not only the basic contents from the textbooks, but also materials featuring cultural content. Finally, one advanced learner commented that the communicative competence courses and the methodology courses need to be more connected so that learners are constantly reminded that they are studying to become teachers.

Other suggestions. This category encompasses some comments about various aspects of the programs that are not included in the above mentioned categories, but that are worth

discussing. One of the learners suggested that the same teacher be in charge of the research courses so that there is coherence, cohesiveness and a sense of progress between them. Another student added that they think the tasks carried out in research need to be done directly in the language in which they intend to write their project since writing them in Spanish is time-consuming and when they register the project officially, it has to be written in English or French.

Another student suggested increasing tutoring sessions because these activities prevent students from falling behind and failing courses. The participants would also like to see tutoring extended to theoretical courses in English, French and Spanish because they think that the complexity of the topic is what needs to be addressed, not the language proficiency of the students.

One remark that was prevalent has to do with teacher evaluation. Learners expressed their frustration with teacher evaluation because they believe that regardless of the answers they provide, nothing changes. They even said that sometimes they answer the teacher evaluation survey automatically because they do not think teachers are going to change their practices motivated by the results of their evaluation. They stated that they want to know that teachers who excel at teaching are rewarded, but those teachers who are not should have some kind of follow-up to make sure they improve their performance and make an effort to guide learners to their goals. Specific comments were made about punctuality, about some teachers giving them large amounts of work one day and having to hand it in the next day, and about the language proficiency of some of the teachers. Students commented that they are, in general, satisfied with their preparation for becoming teachers and they think the programs are academically strong. They think they can teach anywhere thanks to the courses they have taken and feel confident about their performance.

Findings

This project aimed at finding out how satisfied future foreign language teachers are with the teacher education programs they are enrolled in.

One important finding the close-ended questions provided was that a significant percentage of learners are satisfied with the programs. A generalized degree of satisfaction is perceived among beginner, intermediate and advanced learners, and the suggestions provided by them need to be considered.

Regarding teacher preparation, learners feel satisfied and perceive that they are equipped to successfully face their responsibilities as teachers in practicum and afterwards.

Concerning the development of communicative competence, it can be concluded that learners are satisfied, but they think they can be improved by means of the implementation of technology in the classroom and the inclusion of cultural content.

It was also found that learners are satisfied with the way courses are carried on, but there needs to be more cohesion among them so that the whole curriculum has the same organization, demand, and goals.

Learners are very satisfied regarding their performance, but they were honest enough to say that they sometimes do not do homework and they feel their overall performance would be better if they took homework more seriously.

The future foreign language teachers feel satisfied with the interaction they have with teachers in the two programs. They say that the communication in the Department is effective and that they can ask teachers if they have any concerns, remarking that this may not be the case

for students in other programs. They say that being in a different campus contributes to a positive learning environment and that teachers and student treat each other respectfully, for the most part.

Learners stated that in general the assessment fulfills the requirements of the Estatuto Estudiantil de Pregrado, but this area is a sensitive one. It had the lowest percentage of people highly satisfied and many comments in the follow-up session had to do with the clarity of the parameters, and the connection between the way classes are developed and the assessment tasks in all the courses. Assessment practices need to be revised so that assessment contributes to learning and

The facilities and resources used are perceived positively by the learners, but consider that it is important to have access to more computers and TV sets in the classrooms since they want to be exposed to different types of media and materials can help bring variety to the lessons. They think that the books found in the resource center are useful and updated.

Finally, the satisfaction related to the methodology used in the courses is adequate, but as students expressed, this area is the reason why they did not want to make any comments in writing. They are satisfied in general, but they believe that teacher development should be compulsory for all teachers. They notice that the teachers whose strategies are not effective are the same teachers who are never involved in activities such as seminars, research or advising graduation papers. Some manifested that the ineffective ways of teaching of some teachers might be repetitive, but there seems to be no consequences for them. The learners explained that they want teachers who are role models for them, who show in real life what they have read about teaching, and they are satisfied with the performance of many teachers, but they affirm that one

negative experience with just one teacher might affect their motivation and even their permanence in the program.

Conclusions

The most important conclusions that can be drawn from the analyzed documents, from the surveys and from the learners' comments are summarized next:

Learner satisfaction is an area that deserves further exploration and analysis given that it covers many areas and dimensions of education and they are all interconnected. If one dimension fails, it will affect the others. It is then, our responsibility as teachers, researchers and administrators, to listen to the students and try to incorporate those ideas and expectations. The best space to discuss these ideas and come up with tangible strategies is the self-evaluation process that programs undergo permanently.

Being satisfied with a program does not necessarily have to do with having the latest technological resources, fancy classrooms or native speakers. The surveyed students expressed that satisfaction also comes from elements such as respect, openness, warmth, and honesty in the interaction of the members of the academic community and this is an area that deserves attention. There is a need for activities that encourage the strengthening of interpersonal relationships and cooperation in the Department.

The teaching programs at the Linguistics and Languages Department are perceived as academically strong, organized and oriented towards providing a high quality preparation for future foreign language teachers. Learners are proud of belonging to their program and to Universidad de Nariño and they feel they need to learn more about all the opportunities they have for personal and professional growth to take advantage of them. The learners feel confident in their

proficiency and teaching skills and feel ready to successfully participate in openings for scholarships, to look for jobs outside the region and the country, to compete for a permanent job in public schools.

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Annex 1:

Study plans

Agreement 014 del 25 de febrero de 2014

I SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
8343	Français I: Communication (écoute, conversation, lecture, écriture)	2	6	4	4	
8301	English I: Listening and Speaking	2	4	4	3	
8302	English I: Reading and Writing	1	3	2	2	
166	Lingüística General	1	2	2	2	
7064	Epistemología Pedagogía y Lenguaje	1	2	2	2	
TOTAL		7	17	14	13	
SEMESTRE						

II SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
8344	Français II: Communication (écoute, conversation, lecture, écriture)	2	4	4	4	Français I: Communication (écoute, conversation, lecture, écriture)
8305	English II: Listening and Speaking	2	4	4	3	English I: Listening and Speaking
8306	English II: Reading and Writing	2	2	4	3	English I: Reading and Writing
8303	Introducción a la Fonética y Fonología.	2	1	4	2	

5632	Corrientes Lingüísticas	2	1	4	2	Lingüística General
TOTAL SEMESTRE		10	14	20	14	

III SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
7063	Français III: Communication	2	3	4	3	Français II: Communication (écoute, conversation, lecture, écriture)
8309	English III: Listening and Speaking	2	4	4	3	English II: Listening and Speaking
8310	English III: Reading and Writing	2	2	4	3	English II: Reading and Writing
8315	Educational Psychology	1	3	2	2	
8307	English Phonetics and Phonology	1	2	2	2	Introducción a la Fonética y Fonología.
4577	Phonétique du Français	1	1	2	1	Introducción a la Fonética y Fonología.
TOTAL SEMESTRE		9	15	18	14	

IV SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
8345	Français IV: Communication	2	3	4	3	Français III: Communication
8313	English IV: Listening and Speaking	2	4	4	3	English III: Listening and Speaking
8314	English IV: Reading and Writing	2	2	4	3	English III: Reading and Writing
8317	Cognitive Psychology and Language	1	3	2	2	Psychology and Language Teaching

8355	Fonética y Fonología Contrastiva	1	1	2	1	Phonétique du Français English Phonetics and Phonology
8316	Sociolinguistics	2	1	4	2	
TOTAL		10	13	20	14	
SEMESTRE						

V SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
8346	Français V: Communication	2	3	4	3	Français IV: Communication
8318	English V: Listening and Speaking	2	4	4	3	English IV: Listening and Speaking
8319	English V: Reading and Writing	2	2	3	2	English IV: Reading and Writing
8328	English Morphology and Syntax	2	3	4	3	Corrientes Lingüísticas
8330	Teorías sobre Adquisición del Lenguaje / SLA	1	3	2	2	Cognitive Psychology and Language
TOTAL SEMESTRE		09	15	17	13	

VI SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
8347	Français VI: Communication	2	3	4	3	Français V: Communication
8321	English VI: Listening and Speaking	2	4	4	3	English V: Listening and Speaking
8322	English VI: Reading and Writing	2	2	4	3	English V: Reading and Writing

7368	Français Morphosyntaxe	1	3	2	2	
7364	Medio Ambiente y Pedagogía	1	1	2	1	
6087	Introducción a la Investigación	2	1	4	2	
TOTAL SEMESTRE		10	14	20	14	

VII SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
8348	Français VII: Communication	2	3	4	3	Français VI: Communication
6036	Advanced Conversation I	2	3	4	3	English VI Listening and Speaking
8326	Academic Writing	1	2	2	2	English VI: Reading and Writing
480	Semántica	2	1	4	2	English Morphology and Syntax
8334	Investigación en Pedagogía de las Lenguas I	2	2	4	2	Introducción a la Investigación
8333	TESOL I (Methods and Skills)	1	3	2	2	Teorías sobre Adquisición del Lenguaje / SLA
TOTAL SEMESTRE		10	14	20	14	

VIII SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
8349	Français VIII: Composition Orale et Ecritte I	2	3	4	3	Français VII: Communication

6084	Advanced Conversation II	2	3	4	3	Advanced Conversation I
8337	TESOL II (Lesson Planning, Syllabus Design, Classroom Observation)	2	2	4	3	TESOL I (Methods and Skills)
7082	Análisis del Discurso y Postconflicto	1	2	2	2	
8339	Investigación en Pedagogía de las Lenguas II	2	2	4	3	Investigación en Pedagogía de las Lenguas I
8329	Writing Research Papers	1	2	2		
TOTAL SEMESTRE		10	14	20	16	

IX SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
8350	Français IX: Composition Orale et Ecrite II	2	3	4	3	Français VIII: Composition Orale et Ecrite I
8332	Advanced Conversation III	2	3	2	2	Advanced Conversation II
8351	Evaluation, Assessment and Testing	1	2	2	2	TESOL II (Lesson Planning, Syllabus Design, Classroom Observation)
7378	CALL	1	2	2	2	TESOL II (Lesson Planning, Syllabus Design, Classroom Observation)
723	Políticas Educativas en Colombia	1	2	2	2	
1313	Práctica Docente en Lengua Extranjera (El comité curricular y de		3	6	3	Paz y salvo hasta el 8° semestre

	investigaciones autorizará la simultaneidad de las prácticas docentes, siempre y cuando los estudiantes se encuentren a paz y salvo académico hasta el 8° semestre. De todos modos, los estudiantes que deseen realizar las prácticas en forma sucesiva podrán hacerlo)					
SEMESTRE	TOTAL	7	15	18	14	

X SEMESTRE

<i>COD.</i>	<i>ASIGNATURA</i>	<i>H.C.</i>	<i>H.P.</i>	<i>T.I.</i>	<i>CRÉDITOS</i>	<i>PRE-REQUISITOS</i>
6073	Angloamerican Literature and Culture	1	3	2	2	
8352	Littérature Francophone et Culture	2	2	4	3	
5662	Ética y Pedagogía	1	2	2	2	
1316	Práctica Docente en Lengua Extranjera (El comité curricular y de investigaciones autorizará la simultaneidad de las prácticas docentes, siempre y cuando los estudiantes se encuentren a paz y salvo académico hasta el 8° semestre. De todos modos, los estudiantes		3	6	3	Paz y salvo hasta el 8° semestre

	que deseen realizar las prácticas en forma sucesiva podrán hacerlo)					
TOTAL SEMESTRE		4	10	14	10	
TOTAL CREDITOS FORMACIÓN ESPECIFICA		86	142	181	137	

HC: Horas Clase HP: Horas Prácticas TI: Trabajo Independiente

Annex 2:

Universidad de Nariño Grupo Lenguaje y Pedagogía Departamento de Lingüística e Idiomas

Sex: Male ___ Female ___ **Age:** ___ **Semester:** ___ **Survey Number:** ___

This survey was designed to gather information related to your experience as a student of the Linguistics and Languages Department. This information will allow us to determine the degree of satisfaction regarding such courses. The information collected will remain anonymous and will only be used for research purposes. Thanks for your cooperation.

I. Below you will find a series of statements related to different aspects of your experience as a student in the two levels of foreign language courses. Mark with an X the option you consider best describes the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the them.

	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Lessons start and finish on time					
2	The contents presented at the beginning of the course were coherent with the ones you studied					
3	The teachers conducts their lessons using the target language (English/French)					
4	The teacher encourages students to use the target language in class					
5	The demands on student performance (speaking and writing) have evolved with each semester					
6	My knowledge and performance in the target language have improved since I started the courses					
7	I feel I am better able to understand spoken language in the target language thanks to what I have learned in the courses					
8	I feel I am better able to understand written texts in the target language thanks to what I have learned in the courses					
9	I have the necessary materials to support the learning process (books, dictionaries)					

10	I promptly do the homework assigned as part of the course					
11	The language used by the teachers when interacting inside the classroom is appropriate and polite					
12	The language used by the teachers when interacting outside the classroom is appropriate and polite					
13	The teachers answer questions related to the lesson					
14	The evaluation criteria are promptly presented by the teachers					
15	The rules of the course are promptly presented by the teachers					
16	Assessment tasks are evenly distributed throughout the semester					
17	Assessment tasks are coherent with the course objectives, contents and the activities carried out in class					
18	Assessment tasks demonstrate your real performance as a student					
19	Assessment tasks yield a final grade that reflects the processes that took place during the course					
20	Grades are turned in promptly					
21	Assessment tasks are displayed in the syllabus presented at the beginning of the course?					
22	Assessment tasks cover the four skills in a balanced way					
23	Classrooms are appropriate to teach a foreign language					
24	Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies other than the textbook					
25	Teachers make appropriate use of audio-visuals during the course					
26	Lessons include the use of technology (Internet, blogs)					
27	Teaching strategies focus on developing communicative skills					
28	Teaching strategies focus on developing grammatical knowledge					
29	Translation is a recurrent teaching strategy in the course					
30	Developing listening and speaking skills has an important place in the course					
31	Developing reading and writing skills has an important place in the course					
32	Course contents are supported by the use of additional materials					

II. If any, could you make three suggestions for foreign language courses to be more effective?