Perceptions of CAU Cúcuta’s students regarding their EFL learning process in the undergraduate program in distance education Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés at DUAD - Universidad Santo Tomás.

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First of all, thanks to my God for being my main motivation to continue.

To my parents, for encourage me during this process.

To teacher Manuel Medina, for supervising and offering me all possible assistance to develop this research project.
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Abstract

This paper reports the results obtained in a study that was addressed to describe the students’ perceptions about their EFL learning process. It is focused on students that belong to the undergraduate program in distance education: Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés (LLEI) at Centro de Atención Universitaria (CAU) Cúcuta, Decanatura de División de la Universidad Abierta y a Distancia (DUAD) - Universidad Santo Tomás. This research emerges from particular experiences lived by the researcher as a student of the program for five years, regarding the LLEI program in general, schedules, communication system, use of technology, and specially the English proficiency; the researcher wanted to know what the perceptions of her classmates were in comparison with the researcher ones. Then, a research question was posed, what are the perceptions of CAU Cúcuta’s students regarding their EFL learning process in the undergraduate program in distance education Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés at DUAD - Universidad Santo Tomás?

The research conducted was a descriptive study; a questionnaire, an observation, an interview to students and an interview to teachers were the instruments to gather data; a total of four students from sixth semester forward participated in this process. The analysis of data revealed that through the distance education method implemented at CAU Cúcuta, students indirectly develop different language learning strategies and abilities and, CAU Cúcuta’s students have to adapt themselves, comprehend what is their profile as students of a distance education method and surpass the particular situations lived in this program.

Keywords: Students’ perceptions, EFL learning process, Distance Education.
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Introduction

Based on Eysenck (2008), a perception can be defined as the result of the interaction between stimulus and internal hypotheses, expectations or the knowledge of the individual. Accordingly, students’ perceptions could be influenced by a wide range of individual factors like motivation and emotions (Eysenck, 2008, cited at Démuth, 2013. p.31) In this sense, this research study is determined by the interpretation that students give to some particular experiences lived at Centro de Atención Universitaria (CAU hereafter) Cúcuta from Decanatura de División de Educación Abierta y a Distancia (DUAD hereafter) - Santo Tomás University, within the undergraduate program in distance education, Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés (LLEI for short).

This study comes out of the researcher’s experience as student of the LLEI program at CAU Cúcuta. The researcher lived some particular situations during her learning process; for example, the difficulty in the improvement of speaking and listening skills, the need of a continuous or more direct communication with teachers or the organization of her available time facing the spent time at work, the low internet signal when the researcher lived in a rural zone, among other meaningful circumstances that carried the researcher to be interested in knowing the perceptions of her classmates regarding their EFL learning process during the program, in comparison with the circumstances that surrounded the researcher’s experience.

It is important to considered that there were similar conditions in the CAU Cúcuta’s students lived experience, for example, they learned at the same CAU management, the same modality of distance education, for the most part, the same teachers taught during all that semesters and students interacted under comparable communication system, then, it is important to think that every student has a particular way of thinking, way of speaking and perceive the different situations presented along their academic experience.
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This inquiry is divided into six chapters; in Chapter 1, it can be seen the problem statement where there is a clear explanation related to the problem, the research question and the objective. Chapter 2 refers to the justification. Chapter 3 explains the design, the descriptive research method and the data analysis triangulation as a way to give validity and reliability to data collection process and the analysis. It also mentions an explanation of the participants, the instruments used such as a questionnaire, an interview to students, an interview to teachers and some observations to the tutoring. Chapter 4 consists on the development of the theoretical framework which refers to the three concepts that involve this study, they are: Students’ perceptions, EFL Learning Process and Distance Education. Chapter 5 provides a detailed description of the data analysis and findings of the categories which are: The requirements of being a student at the LLEI program and, the challenges of becoming an ELF teacher. Finally, chapter 6 presents the conclusions of the project, the limitations of the study and the implications for further research.

The development of this research project is relevant to comprehend how students recognize their own learning experience within the LLEI program, what is going on inside this process and what significance do those situations have for the students, also, to appreciate their perceptions is a determining factor for students to achieve success in their profession, meaningful experiences during the LLEI program, and the improvement of the educative quality in the CAU Cúcuta.
Chapter 1

1. Problem Statement

The DUAD - Universidad Santo Tomás offers several undergraduate programs to students from different regions of Colombia and there are several CAU according to the coverage for each region. In this case, the researcher focuses her attention at CAU Cúcuta and the LLEI program. The Bachelor's degree in English as a Foreign Language is an academic program that meets the demands of the society and education by means of an open and distance learning modality as an innovative and demanding educational methodology that allows access to quality higher education (www.ustadistancia.edu.co, 2019). The objective of this program is to prepare professionals characterized by a solid humanistic background and highly skilled in the disciplinary and investigative field; a professional who knows the different pedagogical approaches to teaching English as a foreign language in the various cycles of the Colombian educational system, where he identifies educational problems in the teaching-learning process of English and, from these, designs, adapts and evaluates materials and didactic resources that allow him, through his teachings, to contribute to the transformation and improvement of the social and cultural reality nationwide (www.ustadistancia.edu.co, 2019).

According to what is established in the PEI (USTA, 2004), there are some spaces that DUAD offers to CAU Cúcuta’s students and that one way or another it favors the students’ welfare, for example, the development of integration programs with students, tutors, coordinators and administrators; student insurance; institutional values training; professional guidance and psychological counseling; some health days that include medical service and opportunities of scholarships and educational aids (p. 128).
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On the other hand, an important part of the students’ learning process at CAU Cúcuta is the use of the virtual platform in which the teachers publish assignments, evaluations and their corresponding rubric, the syllabus, several learning resources and the timetable that allows each student to know the deadline for each activity or test. Also, students and teachers communicate through the message system in the virtual platform, through the institutional mail or, by phone call; in addition, the communicative process with regional teachers is through face to face meetings on Saturdays at CAU Cúcuta, where the students have one or two hours per tutoring to solve questions about the assignments and topics worked in the virtual platform.

Thus, the dynamics of the program involve an autonomous learning process where students learn by reading on the internet, books, asking the teachers, and using the online resources provided in the virtual platform. The knowledge acquired by students during the semester is evaluated by the national teachers in Bogotá and, in some cases by the regional teachers. The evaluative processes include a self-evaluation, hetero-evaluation and co-evaluation, also, some tests are presented in face to face tutoring and, if a student fails an area, he can take a resit exam as an opportunity to approve a class.

Based on the above, the researcher mentions her experience at CAU Cúcuta as a student of the LLEI program for five years. During that time, the researcher noticed that there was a need to practice the English language, especially in speaking skills, felt the need to receive feedback when speaking in English with another person, the need to improve communicative competences, considering that her sociocultural context was lacking English speakers. Also, the researcher had the need of proximity with teachers, for example, sometimes there was slow connectivity when doing virtual tutoring or virtual evaluations.
Within this context, the researcher lived particular experiences regarding her learning process, like the experience of having poor connection with national classmates when doing collaborative works, it became complicated because every student had different work schedules, they didn’t all have access to a good internet signal all the time, and trying to reach agreements through messages or video calls became a little tedious. Another important aspect that the researcher experienced was the organization of time, because sometimes the deadlines were not checked intensively and the opportunity to send the assignments was missed and as a result, that frustrating situation affected the final grade.

A meaningful experience lived by the researcher was the conversational club that enriched her speaking and listening skills, but, its duration was very brief and, because of labor reasons the researcher could not continue in the CAU Cúcuta and continued her learning process in the CAU Ocaña for six months. Later, the sixth and seventh semesters were coursed when the researcher was living in Filo Gringo, a rural zone far away from the city. Here, the EFL learning process was complex; there was lack of electric power and internet signal, which are fundamental resources when studying in distance education. Despite these problems, the experience as an English teacher of secondary students in a rural zone was gratifying and rewarding because it was a very small town conformed by respectful students and a community committed with the EFL learning and teaching processes.

This led the researcher to adopt a critical attitude towards the program and get interested in her classmates’ perceptions regarding their experiences in the program, that is, how they have felt in the interaction with national and regional teachers, what perspectives they have about the tutoring, the virtual platform, the syllabus, the evaluation system, the research process, the pedagogical process, their academic performance, considering that every student has a particular
cultural context, therefore a particular and different way of perceive the academic situations, resources, tools, abilities, persons, and strategies that has been meaningful during their process in the program. As a result, the following research question is proposed:

1.1 Question

What are the perceptions of CAU Cucuta’s students regarding their EFL learning process in the undergraduate program in distance education Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés at DUAD – Universidad Santo Tomás?

1.2 Objective

To characterize CAU Cúcuta students’ perceptions regarding their EFL learning process in the undergraduate program in distance education Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés at DUAD – Universidad Santo Tomás?
Chapter 2

2. Justification

The present research proposal rises up from the researcher’s experience as a student of the LLEI program at DUAD – Universidad Santo Tomás for five years, in which the researcher assumed to commit with a distance education modality which demands responsibility in the learning process, for example, to deal with few opportunities to practice speaking skills, the need of more assistance or the communication with national and regional teachers and students or low internet signal. These situations encouraged the researcher to see if her classmates had having these problems too, or rather, to know and describe what her classmates thinks in relation to the aforementioned particular situations lived by the researcher.

Here, it is noteworthy to explain why students’ perceptions are important, as Brandell (2001) quoted in Furberg (2010) affirms,

‘Local investigations on the subject of student perspectives are important. It is for many reasons essential that teachers, faculties and university management know the students’ views and opinions’ (p.2).

Then, according to Shehzad Ainee (2015), studying students’ perceptions is important because:

‘Every single student in every classroom has a voice that should be engaged in schools. Student voice allows students to share who they are, what they believe in, and why they believe what they do, with their peers, parents, teachers and their entire school’ (p.2)

That’s why, characterizing students’ perceptions allows the CAU Cúcuta to see clearly what students think about the different aspects offered by the LLEI program and in this way
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strengthen it; this also helps the program to self-evaluate and rethink what has been the scope, viability, benefits of everything that is planned from the headquarters in Bogota.

In addition it helps the students to express themselves and consider what they believe about their learning process, like a review about how they have evolved during the program, and this is a reason that makes this research project worth doing. Similarly, this research project is worth doing because it allows enriching the EFL learning process of students from different programs and academic spaces where English is taught and not only in the LLEI program. Démuth (2013) justifies this scope when affirms that, ‘Only by studying the way we perceive, we can recognize our own mistakes and imperfections and eventually eliminate them from our cognition’. In this sense, the characterization of students’ perceptions will allow to other students from CAU Cúcuta or other CAU, in fact, other universities, to be critical persons toward the reality of their experiences during their learning process.

On the other hand, the relevance of this research project is situated in contributing to the research field, enriching the subproject ‘Understanding English Teaching and Learning Contexts and their importance in EFL Education’ which belongs to the research field ‘the study of the English language and its context’. Accordingly, this study looks into the relationship between English language and the socio-cultural context of CAU Cúcuta’s students; this study searches for the characterization of how the context has an impact in language learning practices and how this component is directly co-dependent with the teaching process. Also this study looks into the description of students’ experiences and the understanding of a particular educational setting: the LLEI program at CAU Cúcuta; in a long term, this proposal will encourage the development of more researches.
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Also, it is expected that this study helps teachers and other university coordinators to understand students’ perceptions and see what aspects of the program may need to be changed. It is expected that students can start to understand the value of their own contribution and investment into their education, value themselves and their experience. In short, the perception that students have about their learning process is the key to improve the efficiency of the LLEI program at CAU Cúcuta, expecting that the CAU Cúcuta improvement plan reflects the theory concluded in this project and, at the same time, generate changes in the learning environment. In effect, if the university focuses on investigating the causes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the students, a process of continuous improvement will be developed to guarantee the continuity of the academic program and its accreditation in high quality.
Chapter 3

3. Design

This research project followed a qualitative approach and it focused on characterizing a particular situation: The perceptions of CAU Cucuta’s students regarding their EFL learning process in the LLEI program at DUAD – Universidad Santo Tomás. Gray (2004) affirms that ‘the main focus of qualitative research is to understand the ways in which people act and the accounts that people give for these actions. Concepts such as credibility, authenticity, honesty and openness are also important in qualitative research’. Similarly, Dornyei (2007) establishes that ‘qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analyzed by non-statistical methods, for example, interview research, with the transcribed recordings analyzed by qualitative content analysis’. This is coherent with this proposal, because the researcher implemented instruments like interviews with open questions, questionnaires with open and closed questions and observations, to collect the respective data; then, it facilitates a qualitative analysis, in which the undergraduate students are able to share their perspectives regarding their learning experiences during the LLEI program. Also, the descriptive study method was implemented in this research study. In the following section it will be provided a detailed description of Descriptive Research.

3.1 Descriptive Study Method

According to Dulock, H. (1993) one of the main purposes of descriptive research is ‘to provide an accurate portrayal or account of characteristics of a particular individual, situation or group; these studies are a means of discovering new meaning, describing what exist, determining the frequency with which something occurs and/or categorizing information’ (p.154). This
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The proposal fits the objective of the present research study, because it is needed to not only examine how learning takes place in general at CAU Cúcuta or what factors affect it, but also provide more in-depth examination and description of individual learners and their experiences.

To Gall, Gall, & Borg, (2017, cited at Nassaji, H. 2015, p.129), the goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics; this research method is more concerned with ‘what’ rather than ‘how’ or ‘why’ something has happened, it means, what caused the prevailing conditions is not emphasized; therefore, observation and survey tools are often used to gather data, in this case, an observation to the tutoring, interviews and a questionnaire were the tools used. Another important characteristic of this research method is that the variables or conditions studied are not usually controlled (Mark, J. n.d), it means in descriptive research, none of the variables are influenced in any way, the nature of the variables or their behavior is not in the hands of the researcher. According to the Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, an advantage of this research method is that it can provide a rich data set that often brings to light new knowledge or awareness that may have otherwise gone unnoticed or encountered. The focus of this inquiry allows the researchers to discover the diverse perceptions regarding the EFL learning process, thoughts constructed from CAU Cúcuta’s students. The section below gives a description of the target population.

3.2 Participants

To select the participants of this research project there was a particular standard, students had to be from fifth semester forward, therefore, initially, the population consisted of a group of 5 undergraduate students enrolled in the LLEI program but, for CAU move reasons just 4 undergraduate participants remained in the process as the actual participants whose data were
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analyzed; the group was made up of 3 women and 1 man, with age range from 20 to 24 years old. According to the courses they are in and the answers given in the questionnaire, the participants’ English level is from pre-intermediate to advanced level. Most of them work as teachers in public or private schools approximately 20 hours per week in Cúcuta city; this is why it can be said that they live not so far from the CAU. Based on the questionnaire data, it is showed that the context where participants live is provided of enough technological resources to study like laptop or computer, Wi-Fi, smartphone or printer, and, the frequency with which they communicate in English with other people is sometimes.

The context where students meet to study the Bachelor in English as a foreign language is the CAU Cúcuta, a small building with around four classrooms, one of them with cubicles, one small library, about seven computers, WIFI, the coordination office and a cafeteria in good conditions. Frequently, there are activities organized by Bienestar Universitario and some special social or academic events organized by each program. Every Saturday it is developed the Semillero de Investigación during one hour at noon. Tutoring for the LLEI program is developed on Saturdays, each tutoring lasts one or two hours and students have around four tutoring per semester for each area. As it is mentioned from the beginning, the context where students learn is in a distance education modality, then, sometimes students have virtual tutoring with national teachers.

Also, it is important to say that, three teachers of the LLEI program, two from CAU Cúcuta and one from CAU Bogotá were participants too of this research project, with the only purpose of give reliability and authenticate this research study; they were selected because they were the closer teachers to the selected students. In this sense, next are the instruments used for the data collection process.
3.3 Instruments

In order to start making use of the instruments, the researcher asked permission to the CAU Cúcuta’s Coordinator to carry out this research. After this, the researcher asked permission to her classmates through a consent letter to authorize their participation and the use of their information in this research (See Appendix A: Consent to students). The instruments used in this study were observations, questionnaire and interviews to students and teachers. Such instruments were originally written in English and then, the interviews forms were translated into Spanish because it was considered that the Spanish language, their mother tongue would facilitate them to express their perceptions and thoughts regarding the EFL learning process with more confidence.

A pilot interview to students and a pilot questionnaire were applied to a newly graduated student of the LLEI program, similarly, a pilot observation was applied in a tutoring of Advanced I, also, there was a pilot interview to teachers but this one didn’t need changes. These pilot instruments were given in order to provide the researcher with information of the feasibility and suitability of the questions that were formulated in order to go ahead and apply it to the target population. After this process, several changes were made in the structure of the questionnaire, the interview to students and the observation sheet. For example, in the interview to students, the question 4 was moved to the questionnaire and the question 5 changed its structure.

![Figure 1. Old version of the question 4 and 5 from pilot interview to students.](image-url)
4. How has the university contributed to your English learning process academically, professionally and personally? / ¿Cómo la Universidad ha contribuido académicamente, profesionalmente y personalmente a su proceso de aprendizaje de inglés?

5. How has the organization and interaction of different academic spaces in the virtual platform been? / ¿Cómo ha sido la organización y la interacción de los diferentes espacios académicos en la plataforma virtual?

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Why?

*Figure 2.* New version of the question 4 and 5 from the interview to students.

The observation sheet changed in some points making it more specific:

*Figure 3:* Old version of the observation sheet.

*Figure 4:* New version of the observation sheet.
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After these changes and corrections, the instruments were ready to be applied (See Appendix B: Questionnaire, Appendix C: Interview to students, Appendix D: Interview to teachers and Appendix E: Observation sheet).

Observations were helpful for researcher to take notes and describe behaviors, communicative styles, learning strategies that students expressed in one or another way. The observation form indicates to describe the introductory moment of the tutoring, date, hour, number of students, topic and there is other space to fill the English proficiency during the tutoring, students’ knowledge comprehension of the topic, students’ participation, virtual room and technological resources proficiency and teacher-student interaction. It was developed five observation sessions during the semester; some students were observed twice and other just once, each observation session lasted about one hour. The use of this instrument is important because as Dornyei (2007) said, ‘The main merit of observational data is that it allows researchers to see directly what people do without having to rely on what they say they do’ (p.185). This observation was a structured, nonparticipant observation because the researcher was not involving in the tutoring and had specific focus and concrete observation categories.

On the other hand, the interview to students and the questionnaire worked together because both instruments were applied at the same time with each student in different dates according to their availability. In this sense, the interview to students was a semi-structured interview designed to allow the students express easily and in a comfortable way, it has thirteen open-questions about different aspects involved in the students’ learning process, the tutoring, and strategies to learn English, the virtual platform, the communication between teacher-student, the research process and the pedagogical process, for instance. In addition, there is a questionnaire
with eleven closed questions about topics like the university schedule, students’ work, the English level and strategies to learn English language.

These contents helped the researcher to organize the instruments; those topics which needed a widespread answer were in the interview to allow the students express in confidence their perceptions, for example, questions regarding the EFL learning process. Other questions were written in the questionnaire because the researcher needed specific data, for example the number of hours per week established to study.

The researcher choose the interview as a tool for data collection because of its coherence with the design of this research, to argue this, it is mentioned what Dornyei (2007) affirms.

‘Interviewing is a known communication routine that the method works so well as a versatile research instrument – in fact, although there is a range of qualitative research techniques available for researches, the interview is the most often used method in qualitative inquiries’ (p.134).

Considering the teachers’ opinion important, an interview was designed for them, as a way to know and support the students’ perceptions. This interview has twelve questions in Spanish and it didn’t need changes. The questions in this instrument aimed to give the researcher answers coherent with some of the students’ statements, for example, the English proficiency, the tutoring, the communication system, it means, the same topics that the students’ interview.
Chapter 4

4. Theoretical Framework

In this section, some key concepts will be discussed which aim at having a wider idea of what each of these constructs means for this study. Three main concepts will be defined: Students’ perceptions, EFL learning process and distance education.

4.1 Students’ perceptions

To characterize CAU Cúcuta students’ perceptions it is necessary to understand what perceptions means within this study. Based on different theories, it can be said that the study of human perceptions is highly interdisciplinary, in this case it will be analyzed perceptions regarding the EFL learning process of CAU Cúcuta’s students. For this, Goy (2013) defines perceptions as a cognitive procedure that allows the student to apprehend the information of the environment that surrounds him. Also, she defines perception as a consequence of a conditioning directly linked with the subconscious memory that retains the psychological content of the learning process. On his behalf, Démuth (2013) based on Gregory’s theories suggests that perception is a process of receptors as well as of brain, perception depends on both the sensory system and brain, because as Castro (2014) argues, how is a stimulus strong enough to be detected by the senses?

Another contribution to this study is the one made by Furberg (2010), who in her Master’s thesis developed in Umeå, Sweden, presents students with situations where they face a number of educational related aspects that they form perceptions about; also, she concludes that perceptions of learning, responsibility and engagement change over time while perceptions of satisfaction remain constant. Then, to know that student’s perceptions change while they go
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through an educational experience allows to this study to look in a critical way the CAU Cúcuta students’ perceptions and how they assume their learning process since they started the degree.

In a like manner Sibel Ariogul, in a study of Turkish University (2009), researched about the role of individual learning beliefs and how these beliefs affect language learners’ learning experiences using the data collected from the English, German, and French language groups of that university; one finding of his study is that preconceived notions the students hold could negatively affect the way they viewed the language learning experience. Ariogul’s study contributes with the present research since it carries out to think the existing relation between CAU Cúcuta student’s perceptions and their performance in EFL learning process, it led us to think if the student’s perceptions might have a negative or positive influence regarding their learning process and in a future, how this perceptions might be a solution for possible disadvantages of the program.

Next, in a research study developed by Patricia Jiménez (2017) at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, it was conducted an exploratory, descriptive case study aimed at exploring the English as a foreign language students’ perceptions regarding their English learning and the commitment level through the process. From this, Jiménez (2017) concluded that some of them stated they had not given English the importance and devotion this deserved and when learners are asked to reflect, they are quite capable of becoming aware of their deficiencies, which led to this research study to think that exploring student’s perceptions is an effective way of help the students to reflect about their learning process ad how to improve the problems that they involve, it means, this research study is a support for some humanistic problems that the students commonly have and keep because there is not a person interested in listen such personal perspectives.
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From that point, the term perception can be defined as a process of organization and interpretation of sensory data which affects the development of our conscience about the world and ourselves (Goy, 2013) (Lewis, n.d), creating an interaction between stimulus and our internal hypotheses, expectations and knowledge (Démuth, 2013). Also, we take as a point of reference the expression of the National Research Center (NRC):

‘The way we look at situations, places, and things reflects the way we view the world and influences the conclusions and decisions we make. Our perception of an event is a personal interpretation of information from our own perspective’

And this research project adopt such concept because it’s aimed to know the way CAU Cúcuta students’ look at situations, places and thinks involved around them and how it influences their interpretations toward their learning process during the program.

Another important point of reference is that our perceptions affect our emotions and behaviors (NRC), for this reason it's considered that the students’ perceptions is the result of an automatic processing, unconscious patterns as well as conscious experiences and our emotional and behavioral reactions also help shape our environments, then, emotions and motivation play an important role in this process (Démuth, 2013) (Brown, 2009).

4.2 EFL Learning Process

Taking into account that one of the most important categories for this research is constituted by the learning process, it is appropriate start defining the term ‘learning’. Based on Pérez, (1998) (cited at Guerrero & Faro, 2012. p.36), this research study defines ‘learning’ as a subjective process of retention, incorporation and use of information received in our continuous exchange with the context, considering that retention implies storage systems, memory, and
cognitive organization. Learning is acquisition and getting of knowledge or skills through study (King Abdul Aziz University, 2008, p. 3) (American Heritage Dictionary, 1989. p. 720).

In this sense, we define EFL learning process since the perspective of Lindsay & Knight (2006), who propose that language learning can be an informal process: picking up words from the TV, magazines, books, or friends; or it can be a formal process: attending lessons. In any case, EFL learning can be defined as a process of organization, interpretation, analysis and integration of stimulus perceived from the closest environment, it means, the EFL Learning process is directly related to the individual perceptions that each student creates on his brain, based on the characteristics of his cultural context (Fieldman, 1999, cited in Pinto, 2015) (Beltrán, 2015, p. 342).

Considering the aforementioned definitions of learning and EFL learning, this research study focuses on knowing what are the perceptions of CAU Cúcuta students regarding their EFL learning process and how have they felt since they started to study English in the LLEI program, which gives significance to this study as, through it, the university self-evaluate and prepare for future challenges.

Then, based on Lindsay & Knight (2006) we expect to know the CAU Cúcuta students’ perceptions not only respect the program, but, regarding several factors which affect language learning, like their aptitude, their motivation, the relationship with the teacher, their attitude when they face up to error in front of others, their learning style, learning strategies, maturity and past language learning experiences. In this light, Spratt, M. Pulverness, A. Williams, M. (2011) and Beltrán (2015) hold the position that Motivation is the thoughts and feelings which make us want to and continue to want to do, then, motivation is very important in language learning because it is one of the key factors that helps make language learning successful. We emphasize
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in the factors of motivation, considering that studying English in a blended method is not easy, it requires effort, dedication and aptitude to learn autonomously.

On the other hand, Spratt, M. Pulverness, A. Williams, M’s (2011) findings confirm that to learn English language the students need to use it in interaction with other people, so, they need to use language to express themselves and make their meanings clear to others, and to understand them. In this sense, one of the aspects that CAU Cúcuta students live constantly is the need of interaction, due to the learning context is mainly virtually and there are not many face to face meetings.

Similarly, the CAU Cúcuta students’ learning style influences how they like to learn and how they learn best. The project's scope includes a population that have to learn without the presence of an English teacher every day, a particular case worthy of consideration due to as Spratt, M. Pulverness, A. Williams, M's (2011) indicate, using the right strategy at the right time can help us learn the language better, and help to make us more able to learn without depending on the teacher, i.e. to become more independent or autonomous learners.

Now, English language learning is a challenge for every educative institution in Colombia, and therefore, for Santo Tomás University, since the Ministry of National Education (MEN) demands us to favor the quality improvement of education and transform the EFL learning in Colombia (Colombia Very Well program, 2014). According to the Colombia Very Well program (2014), for the year 2025 all English teachers must be in the level C1 and then, improve the English proficiency in schools.

Then, the MEN (2016), has determined that it is very important to be bilingual in order to have better opportunities in life. The MEN chose the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a guideline which was designed by the European Council in
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order to learn, teach and assess languages. Based on the European Framework, there is a table which describes the different performance levels used in Colombia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Niveles según el Marco Común Europeo</th>
<th>Nombre común del nivel en Colombia</th>
<th>Nivel educativo en el que se espera desarrollar cada nivel de lengua</th>
<th>Metas para el sector educativo a 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Principiante</td>
<td>Grados 1 a 3</td>
<td>• Nivel mínimo para el 100% de los egresados de Educación Media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Básico</td>
<td>Grados 4 a 7</td>
<td>• Nivel mínimo para los jóvenes de inglés.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Pre intermedio</td>
<td>Grados 8 a 11</td>
<td>• Nivel mínimo para profesionales de otras carreras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Intermedio</td>
<td>Educación Superior</td>
<td>• Nivel mínimo para los nuevos egresados de licenciaturas en idiomas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Pre avanzado</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Avanzado</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés, 2016, p. 6)

Here it is important to explain what learning a foreign language means; Chomsky (1959, cited at Kramer & Catalano, 2015),

‘the creative aspect of language behavior implies that the human mind is involved in deep processing of meaning rather than in memorized responses to environmental stimuli’, in this sense, Chomsky’s view of language and cognitive psychology, dubbed generative transformational grammar, regarded language acquisition as an internal thinking–learning process (Kramer & Catalano, 2015, p.328). An interesting construct about learning, is the connection between learning and teaching, according to Kapunan (1975), teaching necessarily implies learning, a teacher can’t think that they had a good day’s teaching irrespective what students have learned.

Another important construct in this research project is what learning at distance education means, and based on Midgley (n.d), ‘distance learning is a way of learning remotely without
being in regular face-to-face contact with a teacher in the classroom; At undergraduate level distance learning usually means students engaging with learning materials at home or work’.

### 4.3 Distance Education

We can say that there are three types of modalities to access to higher education in Colombia: Face to face education, distance education and virtual modality. The first one is that in which the student go to a physical space and the teacher has direct contact with the students (Arismendi, Colorado, Grajales, 2011). According to Galindo (2002), the main characteristics of face-to-face education are the presence of the teacher in front of the students in a room ensuring greater interaction, the time and location are defined, the content of the course consists of notes prepared by the teacher to present and discuss in class.

Then, Distance education is common in places where there are not universities and students account with tutors and a virtual platform. Padilla (2011) comments that this modality mainly establishes training processes in different spaces and asynchronously. Also, Galindo (2002) indicates that the student must know how to use modern technology, the teacher transmits the knowledge in a place called “Sede Global”, and therefore, the communication is carried out through technology. The teacher is a guiding, an advisory, and possible an assessor and, the student must have a high predisposition toward self-learning and self-evaluation.

Afterward, the latest, the virtual modality, affords the possibility to study totally online (Ravelo, 2018, article from El Tiempo) (MEN (2009) (De Arco Paternina, Barrio & Parra (2017). Based on Galindo (2002) it can be said that there is little or no interaction between the teacher and the student, the knowledge is transmitted by internet; even the assessment process is developed through internet. In this sense, the appearance of the content must be excellent due to
the interaction teacher-student is much lower than the face to face and distance modalities, therefore the difference should be cover by a great wealth of presentation of content.

Now, the teaching and learning process in the higher education in Colombia have evolved in recent years, especially with the inclusion of ICT. As stated in De Arco Paternina, L.; Barrio Barcelo, H.; Parra Ortega, G. (2017), the E-Learning and Distance Learning methodology are within the educational modalities included by ICTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-Learning</th>
<th>Distance Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What E-Learning means?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What Distance Learning means?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“E-Learning is Internet-enabled learning. To provide a comprehensive understanding, E-Learning is defined as a new education concept by using the Internet technology. It is defined as interactive learning in which students learn through the usage of computers as an educational medium” (Titthasiri, W. 2013, p.68)</td>
<td>‘Distance learning is a way of learning remotely without being in regular face-to-face contact with a teacher in the classroom. At undergraduate level distance learning usually means students engaging with learning materials at home or work’ (Midgley,2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Components</strong></td>
<td><strong>Components</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The components of E-Learning include content delivery in multiple formats, management of the learning experience, a networked community of learners, and content developers and experts. E-Learning</td>
<td>“The technological one is the main consideration when teachers plan both the offline and online activities. Teachers need to have a wide range of technological resources in order to attract their students’ attention: If the Face-to-Face classes and the virtual ones are not challenging, students might feel bored or frustrated. It is necessary to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students' perceptions regarding their EFL learning process is personalized, focusing on the individual learner. Its environment includes self-paced training, many virtual events, mentoring, simulation, collaboration, assessment, competency road map, authoring tools, e-store, and learning management system” (Titthasiri, W. 2013, p.69).

Advantages

“E-Learning provides faster learning at reduced cost, increased access to learning, and clear accountability for all participants in the learning process” (Papanis, n.d, cited at Titthasiri, W. 2013, p.69).

Disadvantages

According to Del, Low and Wilker, 2010 (cited at Titthasiri, W. 2013), the faster learning at reduced cost, increased access to learning, and clear accountability for all participants in the learning process “do not guarantee positive gains in instructional objectives due to minimal social interaction display topics and exercises which are appealing to them” (Ochoa & Roberto, 2011 p. 157)

“EFL teachers must promote autonomy by guiding students’ learning process, bringing technology into the classroom and creating an authentic complement between the face-to-face environment and the virtual one” (Ochoa & Roberto, 2011 p. 158)

Advantages

According to Midgle (2019), the main advantage of distance learning is that it allows you to fit your learning around your work and home life. Also, You can usually also set your own place of study. It is your decision as to when and where you study. It doesn't matter where you live – you can gain a degree from anywhere in the world. As with a full-time degree, students may find that they gain useful, transferable skills, such as planning and research. A distance learning course often costs less than a full-time degree.
and minimal student and teacher expertise with the technology” (p.69).

| Disadvantages | “Some EFL teachers are given useful technological devices, but they are not given enough training to use these tools and that is why the devices are often misused” (Ochoa & Roberto, 2011, p. 157). |

While several studies have focused on the perceptions of faculty and administrators, there has been a lack of research conducted on students’ perceptions toward the online and distance education. Therefore, we want to research about the case of Santo Tomás University in CAU Cúcuta, where students experiment the blended learning method, taking in to account the value of this methodology, as Roberto & Ochoa (2011) affirms, ‘Blended Learning has become one of the most common ways to teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language) due to its double component, which integrates Face-to-Face classes with virtual learning in order to offer students a wide range of materials and resources organized in a methodological way’(p.154)

The LLEI program at CAU Cúcuta is organized by the DUAD – Universidad Santo Tomás which defines the distance education methodology as an educative modality whose center and focus is the student. It demands a new pedagogical paradigm, centered in the idea of learning and knowing with an emphasis on the autonomous learning and the dynamic management of the time, the space, the ability to learn from the student and the new media.

From that perspective and according to the DUAD – Universidad Santo Tomás (2013), in the educational methodology Distance Education, the student is responsible for his own learning process, based on the new knowledge and his own experiences and practices. That’s why this
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Educational modality allows the student to learn and course an academic program through different media and mediation that make possible the access to the knowledge without the daily need or very frequently in-person-class with the teacher in the physical space of the University. The idea of that methodology is to take in to account the students’ previous experiences, job conditions as the motivation and opportunities. Furthermore, this method encourages the dialogue, promotes the group work, involves the social context and it is associate with the needs and interests of the regional community, in this case, the region of Cúcuta city and surroundings.

An important characteristic of distance education methodology is that the student learning process is voluntary; it is born from personal need and the willingness to learn comes from the student interest. Here, the student constantly applies the knowledge in his real context and the distance education takes importance when the student structures and implements his own plan of individual and social development. With this in mind, according to the DUAD, it does not exist for the student a distance between education, learning and life, because the idea is to stimulate the construction of the knowledge and his transformation; in words of the VUAD (2013), “Su realidad cotidiana se convierte en su aula de clase” (p.2).

A great challenge that students face, is the one mentioned by Wahed (2013), ‘the inability of students to cope with the abrupt pedagogical transition from traditional teacher-led teaching to technologically enhanced learning. It indicates that students are accustomed to the physical presence of their instructors in the classroom and feel more comfortable learning pronunciation and speaking in a face-to-face setting.
5. Data Analysis

The data analysis process implied a thorough interpretation of the data collected, in order to answer the research question: what are the perceptions of CAU Cucuta’s students regarding their learning process in the undergraduate program in distance education Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés at Santo Tomás University? As a way to give validity and reliability to this data collection and analysis process it was implemented the triangulation proposed by Denzin (1978) which uses multiple techniques within a given method to collect and interpret data. This kind of triangulation is effective because as Denzin said (2017) “The greater the triangulation, the greater the confidence in the observed findings” (p.12). Each sentence retrieved from the instruments was carefully transcribed and read in order to compare and analyze and get validity and reliability in the evidence. In this sense, through key words the common ideas were grouped by topics, topics mentioned in the research question, then, taking in to account the orientation of the research project’s advisor, the data grouped was reorganized in the three categories aforementioned; each category was corroborated by the data collected with the evidences transcribed in the excel chart. Finally it can be said that the three categories helped to achieve the main objective proposed in this research question.

5.1 Findings

Two categories needed to answer the posed question were established; the first one is: The requirements of being a student at the LLEI program; this category contributes with the posed question describing important aspects that concern the students while being part of the LLEI program, like the LLEI certification, the impact of teachers’ role, students’ responsibility and
different roles at communication. The second category is: The challenges of becoming an EFL teacher; which helps to answer the posed question talking about the influential factors in the training as English teachers in the LLEI program at CAU Cúcuta, like, the difficult EFL learning processes, speaking and listening skills, tutoring sessions, strategies to learn EFL in a distance education program, the research process, el semillero de investigación, pedagogical practices and the virtual room.

5.1.1. Category 1: The requirements of being a student at the LLEI program

CAU Cúcuta’s students think that the high requirements of the LLEI program have helped them to improve their academic performance, for this reason, they express gratitude towards the university, because of all the dedication and contribution during the program, for example:

"yo digo que si la universidad no me hubiera presionado todo el tiempo y acá los profesores no me hubieran presionado todo el tiempo a ser un mejor “English speaker”...pues entonces yo muy seguramente estuviera en las aulas de clase hoy en día enseñando un inglés... mediocre". Interview student 4, question 4.

In the data collected from the interviews it was found two different perceptions regarding the LLEI program. On one hand, some students feel mostly satisfied with the program; on the other hand, some students focused on the program’s flaws. One of the highlighted aspects regarding program is the accreditation process; for this reason, the LLEI certification is considered a sub-category that looks in to comprehend the perceptions of CAU Cúcuta students regarding the accreditation process.

5.1.1.1. Subcategory: LLEI Certification

According to students, the LLEI program has improved due to some important changes in the last years, as a consequence of an accreditation process followed in 2015. Since that time,
students notice more academic demand in the program, and they have adapted to new processes that have led improvements in their performance.

“desde la acreditación se ha venido reforzando los programas y los procesos y se ha visto un cambio, una mejora en los procesos académicos, yo creo que de todos los estudiantes porque la exigencia ha subido y de hecho nosotros hemos ido a ese paso y también la acreditación fue un proceso, sí, no se dio de un momento para otro… simplemente fue un proceso de adaptación” Interview student 3, question 13.

Teachers as signs of this accreditation process confirm that the LLEI program has provided the necessary resources and tools and they qualify as a great effort the work that students have developed lately.

"Entonces el hecho que hayan llegado hasta acá, pues es un avance grande y yo creo que el programa también les ha brindado como esas condiciones" Interview teacher 1, question 12.

The accreditation process is a highlighted aspect, fruit of achieving the high requirements of the program. In this context, there is an aspect that students consider important in the success of their EFL learning process, and it is the teachers’ role and attitudes. This is analyzed as other subcategory.

5.1.1.2. Subcategory: The impact of teachers’ role

Students from different semesters express positive and negative experiences that involve as the principal influential factor the teachers’ role or attitude, for example the experience with assessment; here, students affirm that each teacher has a particular way of assessing and organize the criteria for each area, whereby it is important for them, to know how each teacher carries out the assessment process.

"es importante tener eso en cuenta porque, no todos los docentes evalúan de la misma forma porque cada uno tiene la autonomía para evaluar como quiera la clase, pero si es importante conocer de qué forma lo hace". Interview student 3, question 8.
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Despite teachers make use of different ways of assessing, CAU Cúcuta’ students have known the respective procedure that each teacher develops and, students have a positive perspective regarding the evaluation provided. Generally, students describe the assessment process in the LLEI program in this way:

"Pues la evaluación de los profes es clara y oportuna". Interview student 3, question 8.

"pero de acuerdo a como califican, califican bien y adecuadamente a lo que ellos dicen que van a calificar". Interview student 2, question 8.

Another important characteristic highlighted in the teachers’ role is with respect to the attitude when correcting or making comments respect a mistake or a difficulty in any activity or test. Students consider that the evaluation process has been fair and teachers have been impartial persons when performing the assessment.

"si en debido caso han tenido que hacer alguna corrección o han debido hacer una sugerencia lo han hecho de la mejor manera, de una manera diligente, de una manera...eh sí, no que yo me fuera a sentir mal, sino que de verdad estuviera sintiendo que es algo constructivo para mi propio conocimiento. Entonces en general yo siento que ellos no han sido arbitrarios en ningún momento con mi proceso". Interview student 4, question 8.

In the same way, in the observations carried out, it is shown that regional teachers do an assertive correction and assess the students’ process when they need it. Also, students prepare their papers and activities for the tutoring in order to get the respective feedback, as can be evidence in the following entries:

/Se inicia la clase con la corrección del trabajo o tarea del área Research in Action. El estudiante entrega sus avances, las búsquedas que ha realizado, el fundamento teórico que tiene para apoyar la idea que plantea para el trabajo de investigación y el docente va leyendo en voz baja y va haciendo las respectivas correcciones de forma oral/. 

- Observation student 3, September 8, 2018.
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/La tutoría finaliza temprano, quedando en el acuerdo de enviar por correo el trabajo al docente... antes de subirlo al aula virtual con el fin de realizar las últimas correcciones/


Then, it can be said that the teachers’ role influence in the well development of students’ assignments, also with an assertive attitude when correcting and helping the students and with a partial and fair attitude in the evaluative process. Next, there is another requirement that students achieve while being part of this program and it is the students’ responsibility.

5.1.1.3. Subcategory: Students’ responsibility

For CAU Cúcuta’s students, the distance education method leads to several moments when students have to be responsible, punctual, organized with their learning process, as it is noticed in the next expression.

"el modelo me enseño a mí a que tenía que organizarme obligatoriamente si o si, a que tenía que tener una agenda, a que tenía que aprender a llevar fechas, trabajos, y toda la rigurosidad, a que mis trabajos tenían que ser de calidad, de que tenía que ser producción mía por aquello de derechos de autor, Turnitin, APA, ósea la universidad me enseñó que yo tenía que ser muy responsable, muy consciente y muy dedicado en mi trabajo". Interview student 4, question 4.

In this sense, regarding the students’ organization of a study schedule; it is mentioned that CAU Cucuta’s students are characterized by being people who work during the week in public or private schools about 20 or more hours per week, this is one of the factors related to the development of responsibility in students; because students affirm that they have low time to develop the activities in the virtual platform or to connect in a virtual tutoring, therefore, the
distance education method demands responsibility, an ability to organize time, punctuality, among other humanistic values, for example.

"considero importante que, las tutorías virtuales a veces con los docentes que son de 6:00 pm posiblemente sean 6:30 pm porque hay personas que trabajamos, en mi caso pues yo lo hago, entonces esa situación no es que uno no la quiera aprovechar sino que simplemente está limitada por el tiempo y por todas las cosas que hay que hacer". Interview student 3, question 1.

And teachers confirm that students have improved thanks to their responsibility with their learning process.

"Con relación a ... pues considero que ha hecho un trabajo bastante arduo, ha compenetrado mucho con la universidad, con sus actividades y creo que tiene muy bien estructurado parte de su trabajo autónomo y eso le ha permitido pues avanzar de una u otra manera". Interview teacher 2, question 1.

In another way, CAU Cúcuta students talk about another important high requirement while being part of this program and it is the communication process, that is why, next it is described the different roles at communication in the LLEI program at CAU Cúcuta.

5.1.1.4. Subcategory: Different roles at communication

According to students, with low frequency, the communication between students and national teachers is affected by some teachers’ punctuality with the publication of activities and final grades; for example, the case with a teacher who delayed with the final grade and the publication of assignment during several days. This situation affected the student’s performance because he had not enough time to do the activities published at the last weeks of the course.

"dos semestres seguidos, creo que fue sexto y séptimo, con el profesor (...) mucho a destiempo, falta de organización, entonces iba medio semestre y no habíamos hecho nada honestamente...entonces no podía como que
ir trabajando cinco materias a la vez y esa única materia solita porque ya después cuando iba trabajando las otras al mismo tiempo, ya llegaba la otra con todo el trabajo encima, entonces me tenía que presionar mucho”. Interview student 4, question 8.

In another way, regarding the communication through the virtual room, some students didn’t comprehend the objectives of some activities assigned in the virtual platform and they express that they didn’t understand in depth what the national teacher wanted. In view of that, students suggest to the program to be more clear and precise with the instructions and criteria to evaluate any activity, for example:

"(Una de sus mayores dificultades) Precisamente, no entender a profundidad que es lo que quiere el profesor nacional, si, los objetivos de la clase ósea, es importante que sean un poco más específicos con cada cosa que se quiere lograr para la actividad, por lo menos, si hay una actividad de speaking que realmente digan paso a paso que es lo que se requiere para la actividad o si hay un ensayo persuasivo incluyan específicamente como tiene que ser la estructura del ensayo”. Interview student 3, question 2.

“ahorita tengo es una como que de English Didactics y es sobre planeación y pues si me ha ayudado pues, hasta ahorita no porque dice la… pues me está yendo mal porque como que no entendí que tocaba que hacer”.

Interview student 2, question 9.

In this context, it is evidenced in the interviews that the students would like to have more guidance, more communication with teachers, before and after the submission of the activity or test. A similar difficulty was presented with student-3 after getting the feedback of an activity. This student express that he needs and wants to receive a complete feedback, with all the mistakes highlighted and critical observations that helped him to comprehend in a better way the objective of the activity, such situation is evident in the next cite:

“pienso que hay algunos docentes que tienen que ser claros con los objetivos de evaluación y también con, especificar, no tanto en la rúbrica porque la rúbrica da el puntaje, sino en las observaciones que deberían detallar por qué sacó uno esa nota en específico, porque hay cosas que uno considera que posiblemente le iba a ir bien en la
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From the voice of the student-1, students want that teachers go in depth in the qualitative evaluation and no really in the quantitative results:

“O sea lo impórtate no es dar una buena nota, no en la parte cuantitativa sino en la parte cualitativa que nos evalúen”. Interview student 1, question 8.

Also, some students suggest a kind of communication with national teachers, this is, the opportunity to know the national teachers face to face and, in this way, have proximity and closeness with those who assess the students’ learning process. As cited by the student-4:

“he tenido la oportunidad de viajar a Bogotá en donde ha sido más cercano el contacto con esos profesores ya que uno no ve solo la pantalla sino ya en persona, ya uno los distingue. Eso también ayudó a que la relación ya por internet sea más cercana porque ya usted los distingue, ya conoce su calidad humana, entonces favorece bastante; igual con los estudiantes nacionales que he tenido la oportunidad de conocerlos entonces ya se vuelve uno más cercano”. Interview student 4, question 3.

In general, it can be said that the high requirements of the LLEI program has generated in the students a positive perception, there are important steps during the development of this program, for example the accreditation process of the program, because despite there are some goals difficult to achieve in this new standing, students evolve and feel grateful towards the university because of this improvement. Then, this demand is applied in the evaluation process, and it can be understood that the demand in an evaluation process is very important to get better academic results and, the influence of teachers, their attitude, their continuous communication with students and their punctuality with the timeline are fundamental factors that can create a positive perception and motivate the students to advance in the program.

That is why, based on the Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés (2016), it can be said that it is important to research about the student’s perceptions and
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improve the LLEI program through this study, with the objective of contribute with the development of Colombia from the English language learning. In this sense, in order to answer the posed question it is necessary to talk about CAU Cúcuta’ students’ perceptions regarding their learning process and the impact of this learning process in their academic performance; it will be analyzed through the next category.

5.1.2. Category 2: The challenges of becoming an EFL teacher

The learning process within the LLEI program is constituted by three main fields, the pedagogical field, the research field and the specific field, and it is necessary to learn from each one of them to become an ELF teacher. The field most mentioned in the data collected was the specific field, that is, all the aspects related to the EFL learning process. That is why, it is necessary to talk about one of the challenges mentioned by students, the difficult EFL learning process.

5.1.2.1. Sub-Category: Difficult EFL learning processes

To describe the students’ perceptions towards the EFL learning process it is necessary to consider what teachers say about the influence of the semester in which students are. The teacher-1 affirms in the applied interview that at the beginning of the program the students spend enough time getting confidence with the use of the English language.

"Pues los estudiantes anteriormente mencionados han mostrado un avance bastante significativo, hay un momento de pronto al inicio que se demoran un poco en despegar pero cuando ya logran consolidar ciertas bases pues pueden demostrarlo y empiezan como a arriesgarse un poco más, y empiezan a hacer mayor producción escrita, mayor producción oral, a comprender mucho mejor". Interview teacher 2, question 12
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Now, CAU Cucuta’s students affirm that their learning process was difficult at the beginning of the program and over the semesters they acquired security and ability in the use of the English language.

"pero entonces cuando empecé aquí en la universidad yo llegaba simplemente con reglas y la universidad quería que yo tuviera todas las habilidades”. Interview student 4, question 1

"De hecho el inglés ha sido muy limitado para mí no, pues yo soy normalista y el proceso fue complicado, pero poco a poco se ha adquirido gran capacidad en fluidez en el inglés”. Interview student 3, question 1

Other student, who is in the fifth semester affirms that for him the EFL learning process is still difficult:

“el proceso de speaking o de estructuras como tal se me dificulta entonces creo que en un término medio, porque siento que no he avanzado en la parte de poder establecer diálogos en inglés con las demás personas”. Interview student 1, question 1

In this way, the next subcategory is related to students’ perceptions specifically towards the listening and speaking skills development, as the abilities where students have more difficulty.

5.1.2.2. Subcategory: Speaking and listening skills

All the students express that their main difficulty respect the EFL learning process is the use of the English language regarding listening and speaking abilities. Some of them presented difficulties with the speaking and listening skills at the beginning of the program and currently they have improved a bit; and others are still presenting great difficulties with such abilities, for example:

"ósea digamos que las cuestiones de reglas en cuanto a gramática, los tiempos, ya las tenía muy claras, pero en listening, en speaking, en las otras habilidades yo no era tan bueno”. Interview student 4. Question 1.
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Besides this, in the data collected it was found another reason why students spend a long time during the program to achieve a considerable English level and it is about the fear or insecurity in speaking. From the voice of the students this difficulty is described in the next way:

"ahí fue donde yo fui empezando a romper esa barrera porque todo había iniciado con que yo no tenía confianza al hablar, entonces ya fui adquiriendo esa confianza". Interview student 4, question 1.

And this fear to speak in English is confirmed in the data collected in the observations, where most of the students demonstrate insecurity and were afraid of making mistakes, for example:

"Se usa el idioma inglés y español durante la tutoría, pero la estudiante prefiere comunicarse más en español. Se demuestra confianza entre docente – estudiante, aunque en el manejo del idioma la estudiante se limite mucho a usar el inglés, por ende la docente recurre al español en algunas ocasiones".

- Observation student 3, September 8, 2018.

Also, it was found in the data collected that thanks to the teachers influence and support, this fear of being wrong when speaking in English language has been overcome little by little.

"con el paso del tiempo yo fui adquiriendo como la confianza, aquí cuando yo recién inicie el profesor Javier era como el que me hacía presión “vea usted tiene que hablar no le dé pena equivocarse" Interview student 4, question 1.

This idea is supported by another student who affirms that:

“Lo bueno fue que los docentes pues me ayudaban, como que entendieron que uno no sabía y lo bueno es que para eso eran los espacios, me gustó mucho que me quitaron ese miedo, le dieron a uno mucha confianza y pues ahora viste que ya yo en las clases como que normal”. Interview student 2, question 1

The students’ challenges with the English proficiency are related to the tutoring and the spaced provided to practice English language, in this sense, the next category is explained.

5.1.2.3. Subcategory: Tutoring sessions

It was found in the data collected that there is a widespread feeling about the lack of spaces to practice speaking and listening skills, which is reflected when students affirm that:
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"Las dificultades eran más que todo el tener la oportunidad de comunicarme completamente en inglés, tener como ese, esa inmersión todo el tiempo porque en el idioma si usted no lo está hablando todo el tiempo se le va perdiendo,... bien decía Javier, será una frase que voy a usar toda la vida ‘the more you practice, the more you learn’ entonces entre más practiques pues lógicamente más vas a aprender”. Interview student 4, question 2.

"pero en la parte del speaking no he podido encontrar ese recurso, ese medio que me facilite pues avanzar porque siento que no he avanzado en esa parte”. Interview student 2, question 3.

In the same way, to teachers the spaces provided for the EFL learning in the program are not enough, and they consider that the speaking and listening skills can’t be learned just with the resources of the virtual room:

“claro que ellos tienen el Aula, pero pues, es necesario esa interacción con las otras personas para ellos recibir esa retroalimentación, que vean que el uso del idioma no es solamente para responder preguntas en una plataforma sino también para comunicarse”. Interview teacher 1, question 9.

"en cuanto a ésta materia sobre todo que es el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, ese es un punto bastante clave, que los encuentros son bastante reducidos y pues eso nos limita en cierta manera a poder lograr digamos avanzar mejor, en otras palabras, porque a pesar de que los estudiantes hacen un trabajo arduo de manera independiente, si se requiere también la presencia del docente, como la exigencia constante en ese sentido para que ellos se sientan más, un poquito más seguros, más acompañados obviamente y si se requiere de pronto más tiempo para ellos”. Interview teacher 2, question 8.

Precisely, students place an emphasis on the need of more hours in the tutoring established for the specific field, they express and suggest that CAU Cucuta’s students must have more hours to practice the knowledge proposed in the areas of the specific field, to be corrected when speaking in English, and not only in the first semester but in the late semesters when the student should have an advanced English level.

"Me hubiera gustado sí, que la universidad nos hubiera dado más tutorías y en cuanto al campo específico, mas tutorías”. Interview student 4, question 10.

" y ahora resulta y pasa que tenemos 3, 4 (horas) al semestre, al semestre, entonces no es una intensidad que sea coherente con lo que necesitamos nosotros los de inglés, que lo de nosotros es la práctica, es la práctica, si usted no
In view of these situations, CAU Cúcuta’s students talks about their strategies to improve the English proficiency. In the next subcategory it is explained the principal characteristics of these perceptions.

5.1.2.4. Subcategory: Strategies to learn EFL in a distance education program

In addition to what has been outlined above, in the interviews the CAU Cúcuta students talk about different strategies that have helped them to improve their English proficiency. Some students use commonly strategies like watching TV, listening music, read books, chatting in English, etc. And others use particular strategies that have impacted in a positive way their fluency with the English language. Next is one of the singular strategies that students used to learn English:

"por eso la mayoría de las veces yo utilicé…lo que yo hacía era hablar conmigo mismo, yo ya pensé que me iba a volver loco, yo hablaba en el espejo ya como cuando uno está en español y piensa en español, entonces yo ya pensaba…o sea mis pensamientos trataba de que fueran en inglés sin saber si lo que yo estaba diciéndome a mí mismo estaba bien o estaba mal". Interview student 4, question 2.

Other students turned to take English classes in certain educative institution, because they thought they had difficulties with the fluency in speaking and listening skills, hence, they decided to enroll and participate in an extra course:

"Me inscribí en el tecnológico de Cúcuta y allá me solté más porque estaba como quien dice en un ambiente en que nadie sabía, entonces me sentí más cómoda, eso me ayudó. No lo terminé, lamentablemente porque empecé un semestre duro, entonces lo abandoné". Interview student 2, question 3.
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Others use similar strategies like attend to extracurricular conversational clubs:

"A veces voy a la biblioteca pública los miércoles que son de 4:00 pm a 6:00 pm o de 6:00 pm a 8:00 pm".  
*Interview student 2, question 3.*

An important strategy used by all the students was the conversational club carried out several months ago. Unfortunately this strategy stopped working and all the students were affected by this decision. For CAU Cúcuta students this meetings had great importance, as it is evidenced in the next cite:

"otra cosa que se perdió y que era autentico de nuestro CAU era el Conversational Club, de los viernes y eso para mí era magnifico, fueron cuatro semestres seguidos en donde yo, gracias a ese Conversational Club yo tengo la fluidez que tengo ahora, ósea tengo ser sincero, ese espacio es muy efectivo y que bueno que en el CAU nosotros lo tentamos, tristemente o desafortunadamente dejó de funcionar".  
*Interview student 4, question 13.*

Another significant strategy that students are using during the late year is the new strategy created by national teachers, the online interactions. In these spaces, students from different CAU and national teachers meet in an online platform to talk about a determined topic, here the role of the teacher is to correct and give a feedback about what the students say. For CAU Cucuta’s students this strategy has been meaningful and it has facilitated the improvement of speaking and listening skills. Also, these meetings are taken in to account as a tutoring in the areas of the specific field. For CAU Cucuta’s students this experience is described like this:

"ahora estamos viendo online interaction que ha servido no solamente para comunicarnos con el tutor nacional, sino para que los estudiantes de los otros CAU nos podamos comunicar gracias a esos online interaction ya sabemos los estudiantes que están en Medellín, en Bogotá, mejor dicho en todos los CAU".  
*Interview student 4, question 11.*

"y ahora me ha ayudado que la profesora Sandra nos hace todos los miércoles cada ocho días sesiones online entonces es muy bueno, porque ella de una le hace el feedback a uno, le dice, tienes que mejorar esto, entonces eso es muy bueno para uno, y lo entiende a uno".  
*Interview student 2, question 3.*
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"El acompañamiento en inglés es muy permanente dada la estrategia de práctica en línea, de interacción que se implementó en el programa el semestre pasado y ese acompañamiento fue muy efectivo, por ejemplo en el caso de... y para otros estudiantes porque tenían la oportunidad de interactuar de forma continua, semanal conmigo en inglés". Interview teacher 2, question 10.

The EFL learning process is fundamental to achieve a considerable performance in all the areas established in this program, one of those areas is the research. In this sense, it is important to describe in the next sub-category the challenges of CAU Cucuta’s students regarding the research field.

5.1.2.5. Sub-Category: The research process

The research process in the LLEI program is bound to the EFL learning process; students learn to conduct research as they advance in the English level. For some students, the English proficiency is a barrier when doing research within this program. Although their learning process in this field goes well, the English proficiency limits the comprehension of the process.

"En cuanto a redacción, no he mejorado como quien dice me pega duro lo de la redacción en investigación, y más si es en inglés, por mí que no me tocara hacer eso". Interview student 2, question 7.

"Pues, de hecho el proceso de investigación es un trabajo muy fuerte, arduo, pero yo siento que tengo pues como cierta ventaja porque en el proceso de la Normal se realizaron investigaciones, sin embargo al investigar en inglés es muy diferente a lo que se ha realizado con anterioridad". Interview student 3, question 7.

Similar to the EFL learning process students express that the research process is difficult at the beginning and more if the students have not had before the experience of doing a research project, it can be seen in the next evidence:

"desde el primer semestre venían materias de investigación: Fundamentos, Procesos y ya desde Procesos usted llevaba un anteproyecto, una propuesta de investigación, yo no tenía ni idea como se hacía un marco teórico y eso... llegue crudísimo. Y me costó, al principio me costó bastante, incluso ya en tercer semestre cuando yo vi Enfoques yo ya me sentía “in the middle of nowhere”, en medio de la nada". Interview student 4, question 7.
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That is why, some students who are in the first steps of the research process find this field difficult, consequently these students are disoriented in the sense and intention of the research within the LLEI program, as it can be seen in the next sample:

"a mí no me gusta la investigación, entonces me ha dado duro también, no me gusta. No sé me parece como una pérdida de tiempo para mi percepción, entonces sí, yo lo hago porque tengo que hacerlo para la universidad, pero por mí que no me obligaran a hacer algo que no me gusta, me parece muy bueno porque uno investiga sobre un tema y todo eso, pero dedicar tanto tiempo para algo que, pues no se sabe si va a servir o no, entonces esa es mi concepción ¿no?". Interview student 2, question 7.

"desde la problemática de los mismo estudiante podemos hacer investigación pero entonces no se logra, cada uno, cada quien pues mira sus problemáticas y trata de resolverla, cómo yo, cómo desde un salón de clase en un grupo de estudiantes si hay una problemática podemos hacer una investigación, y podemos dar unas posibles soluciones, entonces no, no como tal no hay una investigación en sí". Interview student 1, question 7.

On the other hand, the students who are in high semesters express the usefulness of research in their learning process, which encourages students to improve their pedagogical practice and contribute in the context where they work.

"ya uno ve la investigación como una puerta más para abrirse a nuevas experiencias y en mi caso, mi proyecto de investigación es de Acción Participación, entonces tengo vinculación a mi ámbito escolar y pues lo importante es que las practicas mejoren el nivel de inglés de los estudiantes y de forma directa el contexto donde uno trabaja". Interview student 3, question 7.

An important strategy highlighted by students to surpass the challenges in the research field, is EL Semillero de Investigación, as it is explained below.

5.1.2.6. Subcategory: El semillero de investigación

An important aspect to consider in this subcategory is the influence of the English proficiency when developing a research project in English. The research process is long and demanding, it is a process that requires psychoanalytic abilities and fluency in the English language, therefore, it
is essential that students have an English level according to the research process that they are coursing.

Some students have a positive perception towards the research process; for example one student tells several experiences influenced by a program implemented by the university and it is El Semillero de Investigación. From such experience the student discovered the sense and importance of the research:

"luego yo me involucré en el semillero de investigación, entonces ahí fue donde le empecé a encontrar como el sentido, el gusto y la importancia a la investigación; ahí empecé con una ponencia de un proyecto que no era mío, no lo había tenido pero había tenido la experiencia de ir a exponerlo, a hacer una ponencia en el segundo encuentro de la RedColsi Norte de Santander y la experiencia me gustó bastante". Interview student 4, question 7.

The characterization of students’ perceptions towards the research field, is associated with students’ perceptions towards the pedagogical field due to both are focused in the same goal, the improvement of the education in our context and the training of competent English teachers. That is why in the next sub-category it will be discussed the students challenges towards the pedagogical field.

5.1.2.7. Sub-Category: Pedagogical practices

Based on the data collected from the interviews, the pedagogical process start with observing practices, spaces like Curriculum, Pedagogy and Language Teaching, English Didactics, which allow students to strength the pedagogical knowledge and the English proficiency to be better teachers in the classrooms. According to students, since the first semester the university facilitates the needed tools to be a competent English teacher and they think that the university is coherent because theory and practice are closely related.
"Igual la universidad desde semestres muy bajos, o sea de primeros semestres, nos dio la oportunidad de realizar observaciones, simplemente observar, ver cómo es una clase, ver cómo está constituido un colegio desde su PEI, revisar si efectivamente ese PEI se lleva a cabo en la letra y en la práctica. Entonces yo creo que la universidad da todas esas herramientas para que desde el principio usted sea, tenga toda la teoría necesaria, pero también pueda comparar y pueda llevar a cabo una práctica que sea idónea con esa teoría, ósea yo creo que la universidad en ese sentido sí es muy coherente". Interview student 4, question 9.

Here it is important to mention that, at the beginning of the program most of the students have experience in the pedagogical field, as it is evidenced in the data collected from the questionnaires. 75% of CAU Cúcuta students in the LLEI program work from 10 to 20 hours weekly as teachers in public or private schools. CAU Cucuta’s teachers describe this situation in the next way:

"Otra herramienta es que algunos de ellos, una estudiante ya es docente nombrada, ella trabaja en básica primaria; otra, estudio en el SENA una técnica de pedagogía infantil, de educación infantil y de hecho ya ejerce como docente de inglés en primaria, en preescolar en un colegio bilingüe o ejercía, no sé si, ella me dijo que ya cancelo contrato y, pero está ahora con un hogar infantil haciendo un remplazo y una última estudiante es maestra de preescolar. El único que no tiene experiencia laboral digámoslo así, que no tiene contrato laboral es un estudiante pero pues el sí ha hecho como horas de clase en algunas instituciones entonces, y pues sus papas son docentes, entonces tiene allí eso a favor". Interview teacher 1, question 5.

Despite most of the students work as teachers, they express that being an English teacher is a different process which has particular strategies and a particular way of planning. Some students express that the knowledge acquired in the pedagogical field has enriched their experiences in the classroom, for example:

"Bueno yo laboro como docente de inglés en un colegio donde, bueno tengo experiencia de cinco años en básica primaria, sin embargo no sabía la estructura formal de la planeación en inglés, ósea las habilidades comunicativas del lenguaje que uno debe fomentar en los estudiantes dependiendo del nivel, y los DBA, los estándares básicos de
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"nosotros en inglés tenemos nuestros propios métodos, nuestras propias estrategias para poder enseñar el idioma, entonces yo creo que ya por allá en sexto semestre cuando uno vio Pedagogy and Language Teaching, luego vio English Didactics, vio todas esas materias que lo van formando a uno lo van ayudando a uno como planear una clase, como ser más didáctico, que recursos, que materiales, me han servido hoy en día para poder llevar la práctica, entonces ya sé cómo es que debo yo llegar al salón de clase, como debe ser el manejo del idioma, como debo llevar a los estudiantes para explicarle, que métodos me pueden servir a mí para poder realizarlo ahorita en mi práctica". Interview student 4, question 9.

Another characteristic of students’ perceptions towards their pedagogical process is that the university has contributed in the improvement of their English proficiency when they are teaching at work; it has generated a good status in the educative institutions were they work.

"La universidad si me ha ayudado porque pude dictar clases y mi jefe se ha dado cuenta que si las dicto bien. Entonces como quien dice, voy por el buen camino. Me ha ayudado en cuanto a mi nivel de inglés". Interview student 2, question 9.

"Pues imagínese que, en el colegio, yo, eh... este año me asignaron la carga académica de inglés, entonces con lo poco o con lo que yo he aprendido en la carrera, se me ha facilitado, entonces la parte de la teoría lo he podido hacer hecho en la práctica, entonces en la parte cuando voy a explicar a los estudiantes, bueno ya tengo noción de lo que ya he aprendido, incluso con ellos he aprendido cosas nuevas entonces, entonces ahí me retroalimento solita". Interview student 1, question 9.

Then, it can be said that the pedagogical field is bound to the specific field and the research field which is also mentioned in the data collected, considering that CAU Cúcuta students should analyze and describe the scholar context where they work. Consequently, there is an interrelation of these fields.
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In the next subcategory it will be described the students’ perceptions towards their experience with the virtual platform, the available time of CAU Cucuta’s students who work as teachers during the week and the autonomous work developed by students as a consequence of studying in a distance program. Thus, the next sub-category explains the students’ perceptions towards the virtual room.

5.1.2.8. Sub-Category: The virtual room

First, it is important to underline the positive perceptions that students have regarding the organization and administration of the virtual room. Some students think that the virtual room is complete and clear, and its design is nice.

“Creo que la organización es muy práctica o sea, uno encuentra en la plataforma todo lo que se necesita y los tiempos en que uno debe realizar las actividades y el cronograma, todo está explicado bien paso a paso, entonces me parece súper buena”. Interview student 3, question 5.

“todos los semestres habían cambiado el diseño pero usted tenía que volver a aprender cómo era el manejo y todo eso, pero no yo creo que, en sí está bien organizada. Sí, o sea tiene toda la información del docente, de contacto, los recursos, el curso en general como el syllabus, todo venía bien descrito, yo creo que en general estaba bien”. Interview student 4, question 5.

According to the previous evidence, students express that sometimes they needed to review the activities in the virtual room due to the design changed every semester and this situation required them to use their abilities with the ICTs. According to students this was not a problem for them, because since they started the program they were able to use different resources and tools like web 2.0, the virtual platform, and other resources that required knowledge in the use of the ICTs. In fact, one student had a technique in the area of technology, so, for CAU Cúcuta students the technology was not a problem in their learning process, rather, it was an advantage, because they felt comfortable and motivated with the activities proposed in the virtual room.
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"yo cuando me gradué del colegio, yo me gradué de técnico en Diseño e Integración Multimedia, entonces
digamos que los espacios virtuales para mí nunca fueron, no fueron ajenos a mí, yo sabía el manejo de las
plataformas y todo eso". Interview student 4, question 5.

"Si, bien no he tenido algún problema con los trabajos que son por ejemplo subir videos, hacer mapas mentales,
eh... comunicación con otros estudiantes, cosas así que requieren el manejo de tecnología". Interview student 1,
question 12.

And, according to students, if some student has a problem with the use of some virtual spaces, the university always provided the solution or support to solve such issues, as it is evident in the next evidence:

"Lo que es la hechura de mapas, blogs, si he necesitado ayuda, y pues obviamente se hace el contacto con un
ingeniero, una persona que tenga experiencia con ese tipo de situaciones, pero los profesores a veces dan los links a
partir del cual uno puede hacer y entonces dan varias posibilidades y uno cacharrea las diferentes páginas, pero
entonces es importante reconocer eso que ellos dan sugerencias de las páginas, y son fáciles de manejar y para
hacer las cosas". Interview student 3, question 12.

A student highlights the efficiency of national teachers with the use of the virtual room and online spaces through the next experience.

"(los docentes nacionales) buscan las posibilidades de conexión porque, precisamente éste viernes me pasó que
no nos podíamos conectar, entonces la profesora buscó otros ambientes, vía online, hasta por Skype, pero fue súper
eficiente, pero nos conectamos, realizamos la actividad y quedó súper bien". Interview student 3, question 11.

For CAU Cucuta’s students, despite there are resources to communicate with national teachers, sometimes the messages are not very well interpreted because of simple details like the tone of voice or a facial expression.

"En cuanto a los docentes nacionales, digamos que las distancias, a pesar de que tenemos la tecnología, a veces
la información no llega de la manera que uno quisiera, a veces la tecnología se vuelve un agente que puede ser
beneficioso o perjudicial, pues a veces lo que usted quería decirle lo escribía, puede que usted no estaba siendo
consciente de que realmente esa fuera la intención de lo que usted quería decir entonces, el docente puede que lo
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*malinterpreto porque no estaba escuchando su tono de voz, la intención con la que usted lo estaba diciendo, entonces a veces podía verse malos entendidos*. Interview student 4, question 6.

On the other hand, according to CAU Cucuta’s students, the use of ICTs in their learning process is a positive aspect, all of them use very well several technological spaces like the virtual room and they learn easily how to use new web pages. Nevertheless, there is a humanistic sense when learning through virtual media; students need to feel closeness with the person that guides them, in this case, with national teachers, because as expressed by one of the participants, the communication by text messages may not to be correctly interpreted by national teachers or students:

“En cuanto a los docentes nacionales, digamos que las distancias, a pesar de que tenemos la tecnología, a veces la información no llega de la manera que uno quisiera, a veces la tecnología se vuelve un agente que puede ser beneficioso o perjudicial, pues a veces lo que usted quería decirle lo escribía, puede que usted no estaba siendo consciente de que realmente esa fuera la intención de lo que usted quería decir entonces, el docente puede que lo malinterpreto porque no estaba escuchando su tono de voz, la intención con la que usted lo estaba diciendo, entonces a veces podía verse malos entendidos” Interview student 4, Question 6.
Chapter 6

6. Conclusions

The distance education method implemented at CAU Cúcuta provides an environment where students indirectly develop different language learning strategies and abilities, cognitive strategies like arranging and planning their learning process, leading with the lack of opportunities to practice speaking and listening skills, for instance; affective and social strategies like the increasing of confidence; on one hand, teachers instill confidence in CAU Cúcuta’s students, there is a heterodox communication between teachers and students because teachers understand that there is a particular need in CAU Cúcuta’s students, like the students who live far away from the CAU; the situation is the same with classmates, there are some particular situations that motivate CAU Cúcuta’s students to cooperate and integrate with other students who maybe are in advanced or first semesters, or maybe they are from another CAU or programs, but they establish a heterodox communication, because there are not many students in the LLEI program at CAU Cúcuta, there are few people with whom to talk in English, or sometimes it is easier or quicker to communicate with classmates without regard the semester or CAU. On the other hand, CAU Cúcuta’s students go beyond to receive contents and do assignments, they develop a personality that surpass the personal challenges, it is a scheme of skills that a distance education student requires to develop, for example, the characteristic of seeking realistic solutions concerning issues that do not have to do with contents, take precautions with low connectivity problems, deal with available time to study and the labor schedule and lack of materials; because of this, CAU Cúcuta’s surpass themselves socially and personally.
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The LLEI program from the pedagogical field, provides an environment where CAU Cúcuta’s students can strengthen their teaching skills through meaningful experiences in different educative context, the school where they work, schools close to the place where they live, pedagogical practices that require the help of their classmates and, in the virtual context where CAU Cúcuta’s students have to teach or design English lessons to students from another CAUs or contexts. This characteristic can be advantageous or disadvantageous to students and the program, because, to students who work several hours during the week as teachers, it is a bit complicated to do pedagogical practices out of their school because it requires more labor hours and more time, and it is an advantage, because these students have more experience in pedagogy and can easily integrate the new knowledge in their scholar context. On the other hand, students who do not work during the week, have low hours of pedagogical practice during the program and would need a scholar context where to apply the new knowledge, so the bottom line is, CAU Cúcuta’s students in this program of distance education have to adapt themselves to the conditions that the program provides and make the most of the strategies created by teachers, like conversational meetings, together with their own metacognitive strategies created during the development of the program, to achieve a better academic level and accomplish the proposed goals.

A similar situation is presented when CAU Cúcuta’s students express their need to have more tutoring hours in the specific field; students request more hours but it is not in keeping with the characteristics of a distance education method, it is supposed that this methodology is designed for students who do not have enough time or flexibility to attend several hours during the semester, therefore, it is not viable to increase the number of tutoring hours because it would be controversial. In any case, some CAU Cúcuta’s students do not attend all the tutoring or
meetings; despite it is ideal to increase the number of tutoring hours, the reality is that some students because of their labor schedule do not attend the tutoring or meetings. In this sense, CAU Cúcuta’s students have to adapt themselves, comprehend what is their profile as students of a distance education method and surpass the particular situations lived in this program, like the lack of a continuous guidance or the digital challenges, among others.

Also, it is important to mention some important suggestions proposed by CAU Cucuta’s students based on their experience during the LLEI program. One of the proposals expressed by students is to have the opportunity of national academic meetings with national teachers and students from the LLEI program, it means, to encourage academic meetings where students can express and provide new knowledge that would benefit everybody. Another suggestion based on previous experiences is the one related to the Conversational Club. In this case, students consider that it would be good to make the Conversational Club official, despite there are online conversational clubs, sometimes technology fails, sometimes there is low internet connection among other reasons that demonstrate that technology is not perfect, students propose to open again or the conversational club official at different CAU.

**Limitations of the study**

Even though the students were very kind and cooperative with their participation in this research project, most of the time they were busy with their tutoring or with their responsibilities at work and this situation delayed the data collection process. In the same way, the number of participants was enough but not ample because the LLEI program at CAU Cúcuta have few students. Fortunately, the quality of data collected was satisfactory, as the participants were selected having in mind the ones who provided more diverse and complete information.
Implications for future research

The continuation of this research project drives the other CAU in Colombia to develop a similar proposal taking into account their particular characteristics, situations and their differences; this will allow them to know the perceptions that students have, do relevant changes in the LLEI program on the national level, generating new strategies and strengthening some activities according to the students’ needs. On the other hand, this topic could be researched from other programs, in other bachelor's degree of Santo Tomás University, because it talks about students’ perceptions, so, it will be useful to continue with this topic and improve the educative quality through its findings. Finally, it will be good to involve more people from CAU Cúcuta in this research study, to get a more accurate characterization of students’ perceptions. Every student has a different perception regarding their learning process and it would enrich the research with more ideas and would provide more accurate results.
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References


Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

CONSENTIMIENTO

TITULO DEL ESTUDIO: Perceptions of CAU Cucuta’s students regarding their learning process in the undergraduate program in distance education Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés at Santo Tomás University

INVESTIGADOR: LAURA YANEIRA QUINTERO RAMIREZ

PROPOSITO: Mediante éste documento se solicita su participación en un estudio investigativo, que se está realizando como parte fundamental de la Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés (LLEI) de la Universidad Santo Tomás. El propósito de este estudio es el de obtener mayor información acerca de las percepciones de los estudiantes del CAU Cúcuta en relación a su proceso de aprendizaje en las diferentes áreas y aspectos involucrados en el programa LLEI.

PROCEDIMIENTOS: Para este estudio se llevará a cabo diferentes momentos de observación de las tutorías y algunos encuentros con los/as participantes de dicho proceso para poder aplicar ciertos instrumentos investigativos como entrevistas y cuestionarios.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD: Los nombres de los participantes serán confidenciales y no serán publicados a menos que ellos mismos así lo requiriesen. Por ende, la identidad de los participantes no se verá en riesgo ni se hará mal uso de sus nombres. Por favor, recuerde que usted no está obligado a contestar ninguna pregunta que considere incomoda.

DIMISION DE PARTICIPACION: Usted puede comunicar en cualquier momento su decisión de no continuar como participante del estudio y esta decisión será aceptada sin ningún prejuicio o consecuencia.

COSTOS Y BENEFICIOS PARA EL PARTICIPANTE: La participación en este estudio no tiene ningún costo, lo único que se requiere es el tiempo de parte de los participantes para obtener la información necesaria en la construcción de éste proyecto.

FIRMA: Confirme que el propósito del estudio, sus procedimientos, confidencialidad, riesgos y costos así mismo como sus beneficios, han sido claramente explicados por el investigador. Todas sus preguntas han sido respondidas y acepta participar en el estudio.

Confirmo que el (la) investigador(a) ha explicado los contenidos de este consentimiento y reconozco que mi participación es voluntaria y hasta el punto donde yo considere suficiente. Así mismo, conozco los costos, beneficios y confidencialidad del estudio al igual que sus procedimientos y propósito.

Nombre del participante _________________________ Fecha: __________________

Firma del participante _________________________
Objective: To collect data about who the participants are and some contextual characteristics regarding their learning process.

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. The information will be confidential. Please answer all the questions.

- Name: _________________________________________________
- Age: _____
- Do you work: Yes  No
  If yes, is it as a teacher? Yes  No
- What is your weekly dedication to your work?
  - 10 hours or fewer
  - 20 hours
  - 40 hours
  - More than 40 hours
- How many hours per day do you spend studying?
  - 1 hour
  - 2 hours
  - 3 hours
  - 4 – 5 hours
  - More than 5 hours
  Why? ________________________
- How often do you communicate in English with other people?
  - Seldom
  - sometimes
  - usually
  - always
- Which of the following resources do you have at home?
  - Laptop or computer
  - Printer
  - WI-FI
  - Smartphone
- In which semester are you in? ________________
- What is your English level:
  - Beginner
  - Pre-intermediate
  - Intermediate
  - Advanced
- What academic spaces do you use to learn English besides university:
  - English course
  - Work as an English teacher
  - none
  - Websites to talk with native speakers
  - Conversational clubs
  - Other: ____________________________________________________________
- Have you developed research projects regarding to English teaching or learning?
  - Yes
  - No
Appendix C: Interview to students

The interviewer should give a brief description of the research idea and the objective of this interview.

**Objective:** To collect data about CAU Cúcuta students’ perceptions regarding their learning process in the LLEI program.

1. **How do you describe your EFL learning process since you started the LLEI?** / ¿Cómo describe su proceso de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera desde que comenzó la licenciatura?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Explain your answer.

2. **What have your biggest difficulties been during the EFL learning process?** / ¿Cuáles han sido sus mayores dificultades durante el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera?

3. **What strategies have you used to learn English language?** / ¿Cuáles estrategias ha usado para aprender el idioma inglés?

- Watch movies, series, listen to music and read books.
- Talk with foreign people.
- Memorize grammar and vocabulary every day.
- Talk with English speakers around you (friends, classmates, teachers, etc.).
- Chat in English.
- Think in English.
- Group words by common characteristic.
- Use a grammatical pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watch movies, series, listen to music and read books.</th>
<th>Talk with foreign people.</th>
<th>Memorize grammar and vocabulary every day.</th>
<th>Talk with English speakers around you (friends, classmates, teachers, etc.).</th>
<th>Chat in English.</th>
<th>Think in English.</th>
<th>Group words by common characteristic.</th>
<th>Use a grammatical pattern.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other: __________________________________________________________________________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **How has the university contributed to your English learning process academically, professionally and personally?** / ¿Cómo la Universidad ha contribuido académicamente, profesionalmente y personalmente a su proceso de aprendizaje del inglés?

5. **How has the organization and interaction of different academic spaces in the virtual platform been?** / ¿Cómo ha sido la organización y la interacción de los diferentes espacios académicos en la plataforma virtual?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

6. **How has the interaction with regional and national teachers and students been in the LLEI program?** / ¿Cómo ha sido la interacción con los docentes y estudiantes regionales y nacionales en el programa de LLEI?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distant</th>
<th>Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Explain and give examples of your answer
7. **Describe how has the research process been in the LLEI? / Describa ¿cómo ha sido el proceso de investigación en la LLEI?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Explain your answer

8. **Describe the feedback and evaluation process of the LLEI’s regional and national tutors regarding:** / Describa el proceso de retroalimentación y evaluación de los tutores nacionales y regionales de la LLEI en relación a:

- Time: _________________________________________________________________________
- Rubric: _________________________________________________________________________
- Clarity: _________________________________________________________________________
- Opportune: _______________________________________________________________________

9. **In theoretical-practical terms, how has your pedagogical training process as an English teacher been, during your experience in the LLEI? / En términos teórico-prácticos, ¿Cómo ha sido su proceso de formación pedagógica como docente de inglés durante la LLIE?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complete</th>
<th>Incomplete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Explain your answer?

10. **In the LLEI program, students have regional and national tutors, how has your experience been in regional tutorings at CAU Cúcuta? / En el programa LLEI, los estudiantes tienen tutorías regionales y nacionales, ¿Cómo ha sido su experiencia en las tutorías regionales en el CAU Cúcuta?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Based on the previous choice, select what factors influence your answer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Physical space</th>
<th>Virtual platform</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Explain your answer.

11. **In the LLEI program, students have regional and national tutors. How has your experience been in national tutorings at CAU Cúcuta? / En el programa LLEI, los estudiantes tienen tutorías regionales y nacionales, ¿Cómo ha sido su experiencia en las tutorías nacionales en el CAU Cúcuta?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Based on the previous choice, select what factors influence your answer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Physical space</th>
<th>Virtual platform</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Explain your answer.
12. How has your learning experience been regarding the use of technological resources? / ¿Cómo ha sido su experiencia en relación al uso de recursos tecnológicos?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

According to the above, select what aspects influence your answer:

- Upload videos and audios.
- make mind maps, slides, blogs, etc.
- Virtual communication with students and teachers from other CAU.
- Search and download books, articles, journals, etc.
- Other

13. What other information regarding your learning process during the LLEI program would you like to express? / ¿Qué otra información en relación a su proceso de aprendizaje durante el programa de LLEI le gustaría manifestar?

Thank you for your valuable time.
Las siguientes preguntas se enfocan únicamente en los estudiantes (Daniel, Keyla, Dayllan y Lina) dentro del programa LLEI.

1. ¿Cómo describe usted el rendimiento de los estudiantes en el programa?
2. ¿Cuál es su apreciación sobre el nivel de inglés de los estudiantes?
3. ¿Cómo ha sido la puntualidad y la responsabilidad en los estudiantes mencionados?
4. ¿Cómo ha sido el manejo del aula virtual por parte de los estudiantes del programa?
   Justifique su respuesta.
   ( ) Correcto      ( ) incorrecto
5. ¿De qué manera los estudiantes del programa se preparan como docentes de inglés? ¿Cuál es su aporte a dicha preparación?
6. ¿Qué estrategias o actividades ha implementado usted para fortalecer el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes durante el programa?
7. Describa su experiencia con el uso del aula virtual.
8. ¿Cómo ha sido la comunicación entre usted y los estudiantes durante el programa?
9. Describa cómo es el acompañamiento que realiza a los estudiantes.
10. ¿Qué tiempo dedica usted para fortalecer el idioma inglés en los estudiantes?
11. ¿Qué tiempo dedica usted a los estudiantes aparte de las tutorías?
12. ¿Tiene algún otro comentario que le gustaría hacer respecto al programa y los estudiantes mencionados?
# Observation Sheet

## Observations

### Classroom Observation

**Class Objective**

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

**Student**

Preparation for the tutoring:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Student participation:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

English language proficiency:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Student knowledge comprehension:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Virtual room and technological resources proficiency:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

## Teacher-Student Interaction

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THEIR EFL LEARNING PROCESS

COMMENTS

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________