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**Conceptions around the Learning Process of English as a Foreign Language in a
Group of Students from the Transversal English Course at the Faculty of Education at
Santo Tomás University- CAU Bucaramanga**

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NOTA DE ACEPTACIÓN

Firma del presidente del jurado

Firma del jurado

Firma del presidente del jurado

Bogotá, noviembre 22 de 2019

Für meinen Sohn Richard- Du bist die Welt für mich,

Und mein Gebet es spricht:

Ich liebe dich.

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Contextualization

Santo Tomás University and its Faculty of Education offers different distance programs in 23 Colombian cities, namely: teaching degrees in arts, biology, religion, theology, childhood education, philosophy, mathematics, Spanish language and EFL. The first eight programs request its students to take an English course called Inglés Transversal or Transversal English course (own translation) as a degree requirement. Since the remaining teaching program is about teaching English and their English curriculum is different, it will not be included in this paper. These essential EFL courses are currently structured in 6 levels that have to be enrolled one at a time per semester requiring a minimum of 6 semesters to complete the Transversal English course. By the time this research interest emerged there were only 4 levels, though. That is why this study focused only on students enrolled in English 3 and 4 as they had been considered to have a complete process started with English 1.

In addition to this, the general purpose of the transversal English course is to foster reading and writing in English as a foreign language in students of the Decanatura de División de Educación Abierta y a Distancia (DUAD) through the incorporation of pedagogical applications and the continuous support of the teacher in the distance mode, for a comprehensive training of students, through of autonomous processes that strengthen their professional performance in the future and that meet the needs of their region (Syllabus academic space, 2018). This program is bimodal in nature. It is managed by national teachers creating resources and content in the virtual platform, and regional tutors at the different CAU (this study is focused on CAU Bucaramanga, only) (Centro Atención Universitaria) supporting particular activities such as the tutoring sessions and face-to-face midterm and final exams.

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As a student at the Faculty myself, I met different students from those programs at CAU Bucaramanga. During various meetings with them, I heard positive and negative conceptions regarding the learning process that takes place around the Transversal English course. Their comments triggered in me an early interest in the topic. This is why I decided to focus my research project on the students' conceptions around the learning process of English as a foreign language in a group of students of the transversal English course in the faculty of education at University Santo Tomas-CAU Bucaramanga.

Thus, this project falls within the second institutional research field known as: the study of the English language and its contexts. This study contributes to the research macro project: Understanding and characterizing EFL in the LLEI: experiences and phenomena in the pre-service teacher's educational context and the research subproject: Understanding English learning and teaching contexts and their importance. Other subprojects aim at pedagogical interventions, which are not necessarily the main interest in this paper, or focus exclusively on life stories and experiences, which do not resemble the purpose of this study. This research project provides rich information to strengthen the research fields and pedagogical practices at the faculty of education at USTA.

But the benefits from this institutional research project go beyond. There are two gaps this study addresses: a theoretical gap and a practical gap. Firstly, in regards to the theoretical gap, there is no published theory about the conceptions students hold about the Transversal English course at CAU Bucaramanga. Most of the Academic data are related to EFL teacher's conceptions and their pedagogical interventions. In this context, this project may enrich the Macro-project since it includes the viewpoint of the students into the equation.

Secondly, in regards to the practical gap, the data produced can serve to improve processes towards students in a specific time, in fact the conceptions from the participants, the insights in this case are a state of study that has not been yet investigated at CAU Bucaramanga; the research would be an enriching contribution as it would improve the

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databases and help the administrative roles of the University by providing a preliminary knowledge on the conceptions and practices around the students' learning process in the transversal English course. Undoubtedly this could have a relevant result which would serve as a background for other CAU in Colombia. In any event in the long term, the University can use this research as support to carry out a pedagogical intervention if it considers this project necessary in its curricular updating for the programs that it offers.

This inquiry allows the exploration of the conceptions in a group of students and leads to a specific situation in which a group of students are involved. Its relevance will definitely enhance the data the CAU needs. Additionally, this research greatly contributes to me as a professional since it has made me reflect, from the standpoint of a researcher, upon language teaching, the students' diverse conceptions regarding their learning process, the advantages of being in a training research program, and the interest that research inspires.

Finally, what follows in this document is a research statement where both the objectives and the research questions are introduced. Then, the theories that enlighten this project will be displayed as well as the description of the setting in which this research was carried out, the methodology and instruments to collect data, the presentation of the data analysis and the findings of this research. Finally, some conclusions and implications are presented.

Research Statement

As it was mentioned before, there are 9 teaching undergraduate programmes at the faculty of education. Students from the 8 different programs mentioned earlier take a course called “Transversal English Course” (own translation); the only program that does not take the transversal course is the teaching English program because the curriculum is in English. Students of the transversal English course complete their online learning activities assigned by a national tutor and they are also required to attend some face-to-face classes with a local tutor.

Through my acquaintance with these students, I was under the impression that they had some difficulties regarding their learning process. First, students seemed to display a certain degree of frustration at the Transversal English course. Given their comments, English is a complicated subject matter since it requires a great amount of investment that includes time, effort and money. Second, some students were apparently not interested in learning a foreign language. According to them, English courses do not add any significant value to their life and personal goals. Finally, other students mentioned that the English course should contribute more to their professional development. The way EFL courses are structured aims at the development of general English communicative competences but students seem to think that the English syllabus should be directed towards their own particular fields of study. To sum up, these students’ comments reflect their concern when learning English at the University.

Additionally to their concerns, students were aware of some personal previous aspects that influenced their current learning process. Firstly, they had previous negative learning experiences. Some students mentioned being mocked at their high schools particularly when trying to speak a foreign language. Secondly, students report not learning English at all. Some students lived in small towns and had no English class whatsoever. Thirdly, they were not

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motivated to learn English back home. Possibly because of that, students are under the impression that they do not need to learn English. To conclude, these previous experiences seem to influence their thoughts in regards to the Transversal English course.

As I mentioned before, I learned about these comments in my role as a student. The more I heard them, the more I became interested in exploring students' conceptions regarding their learning process. Thus, I consider that this study may end up providing the CAU with rich data about students' conceptions of the English course which may allow them, in turn, to make informed decisions to improve the programme.

Research question

Taking into account the importance of the voices and the insights from the students and the relevance of the Transversal English Course, the research question that will serve as inquiry and will guide this research is: what are the students' conceptions around the learning process of English as a foreign language in the transversal English course in the faculty of education at Universidad Santo Tomas CAU – Bucaramanga?

In accordance with the research question, the following are the general objectives and the specific objectives.

Objective

General objective

Describe the conceptions around the learning process of English as a foreign language in a group of students of the Transversal English course in the Faculty of Education at University Santo Tomas-CAU Bucaramanga.

Theoretical Framework

This research is about conceptions and the component of Bimodal Education. Its unit of analysis is students' conceptions regarding their EFL course. For this reason, the definition of a Conception will be discussed first. Then a definition of a bimodal education is introduced with concepts like Distance Education and E-learning, which are defined in the context. Finally, I briefly discuss distance education in Colombia.

The Concept of Conception

The study of learning is increasingly important from the perspective of the student, who gives meaning and sense to the information that processes and decides what information has to learn, as well the way on how to do it. In fact the interest of this study is not focused on knowing how much knowledge students have acquired in the transversal English course at CAU Bucaramanga, but, above all, in knowing their learning experience and the components in which their conceptions take relevance for the study.

To describe the students' conceptions of the transversal English course, it is necessary to understand what the term conceptions mean within this research. Based on different theories, it can be said that the study of conceptions encompasses many aspects of learning. Here, based on the evidence that learning is a socially mediated process, it is also necessary to specify that it require an active involvement of the student, since is the only way to produce a real change in meaningful comprehension (Beltrán, 1993).

Therefore, conceptions are seen, as a set of beliefs, ideas, concepts, preconceptions and perceptions; is what a person or a collective use to interpret their realities, behaviors, value of judgment, and approach situations and actions. In addition it is experiential

knowledge, represented in images or constructs, more or less schematic and intersubjective, in a person in a specific or certain situations.

In the present research, the term “Conception” is viewed as a mental structure that includes the student’s beliefs and basic presuppositions, some of which are tacit. Essentially the conceptions are dynamic entities that can undergo changes based on practice and/or exposure to other sources of knowledge.

In this study about the learning conceptions, students' learning experience is a central feature of the conceptualization carried out by Harvey and Green (1993) on the quality of teaching and learning as purpose-adjusted (for example, that students obtain an effective apprenticeship of EFL) and as transformation (students’ change their way of seeing the transversal English course and everyone involved in the process, as well their academic conceptions of learning as a meaningful process).

This research project embraces the term conception because it aims to learn more about what students who belong to the transversal English course at CAU Bucaramanga think, it seeks to know their thoughts involved in the learning process of English as a foreign language and how these conceptions whether or not influence their motivation during the student stage.

To sum up, Gonzales (2013), regarding the evolution of the learning stage and the academic performance shows the students' conceptions and the cognitive maturity transformed during their passage through the University as they progress. It goes from the most elementary and simple to the most complex and highest level. Therefore, it allows us to know what are the conceptions of learning in the course of the transversal English course and what they serve for both theoretical and practical levels. Highlighting the role played by the "here and now" as academic work. Moreover, with how we conceive learning provides us with information to improve teaching-learning processes. And in the future predict how we conceive and adapt our learning to the learning performance of the EFL

Bimodal Education

The presence of traditional education and the virtuality that enables distance education are not incompatible or exclusive, but can be considered as two extremes of the same continuum that allows different degrees of possible combination. “Bimodality understands face-to-face education and distance education not as irreconcilable extremes, but as points of a continuum. Between the extremes of face-to-face and virtuality there are countless possible pedagogical devices that capitalize on the educational advantages of the new technologies, integrating them into the face-to-face teaching task.” (Villegas, 2002).

A bimodal education model is a flexible model, which harmoniously combines the possibilities for teaching offered by Information Society Technologies (IST) such as interactive classrooms, videoconference, and the virtual campus, with traditional educational activities such as lectures and certain types of practical training. It is a model that allows the attendance/non-attendance pairing to be adapted to specific educational needs. It thus overcomes certain limitations, such as the space-time coordinates through the implementation of IST. The bimodal model also promotes high quality teaching. It permits the selection of any area inside the classic schemes of space (attendance and distance learning) and time (synchronous and asynchronous) in which attendance/ interactive classroom, teletraining and the virtual campus are combined (Yábar, Barbarà y Añaños, 2001).

Bimodal education adopts the advantages offered by ICTs by overcoming the barriers of space and time to complement the limitations of face-to-face meetings. In this way, it allows access to training processes from any point of the territory at any time, enhancing a quality educational proposal. It also requires, however, a minimum of preparation in the use of ICTs and the availability of the necessary equipment, in this case the Transversal English course requires a computer with internet access for developing the course in the virtual platform.

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Therefore, the incorporation of ICTs at University Santo Tomas CAU Bucaramanga is manifested in the creation and development of virtual spaces or “Virtual campus” as an alternative to traditional processes offering new opportunities to people with family, work or other obligations and with interest in training throughout life. In this sense, students can be incorporated into the university by accessing the virtual campus and by contacting the professors at the time they require. Moreover, the use of the “Virtual campus” allows the development of virtual activities for the Transversal English course, here the students can interact with their national tutor by building shared knowledge through cooperative learning here the "Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be used to support learning in a variety of ways. One of them involves the use of computers and networks as communication tools between people who collaborate to achieve a common goal, not requiring physical presence and providing a forum for continuous communication without limitations of time or space. In this context, the leap to virtuality allows enriching the traditional teaching model also by facilitating the equitable distribution of the characteristic activities in the process, here one of the most interesting effects of the Transversal English course incorporates the new technologies of teaching in the virtual campus and the face-to-face tutorials, that is, the time learning must be shared equally between the performance of tasks with machines and between participation in social groups to plan, discuss, analyze and evaluate the tasks performed.

Distance Education

Distance education at university level has existed since the early half of the nineteenth century (Bell and Tight 1993). Distance education is a force that clearly contributes to social and economic development at the University Santo Tomas. Thus, its distance learning programs have become an indispensable part of education for the students that belong to the Transversal English course, since the contents and virtual educational resources are arranged

in the LMS platform (Learning Management System) of the University and those are established by the programs and the Faculty of Education. Compared to most face-to-face learning environments, distance learning requires students to be more focused and better time managers and to be able to work both independently and as group members (Hardy and Boaz 1997).

Simonson (1997) suggests that providers of distance learning are currently faced with two conflicting pressures: students do not really want to learn at a distance, but they are increasingly demanding to be allowed to engage in distance learning. This dilemma is reflected in the comments of the following distance learner:

“[I liked] the flexibility of the course. This is essential to someone of my age, in my point in my life, in my career. Although I would likely have signed up for the traditional face-to-face version, at this point in my life I’d have had to withdraw and perhaps never to take it again” (Edelson, 1998). Because learners are motivated by more than just their personal preferences, they want to be able to supplement and/or replace conventional learning experiences and will engage in distance learning opportunities (Simonson 1997). In this context Santo Tomás University (Undergraduate Student Regulations of VUAD, 2010) defines distance methodology as a permanent educational modality, whose center and protagonist is the student who demands a new pedagogical paradigm, centered on a teaching-learning-knowing concept with emphasis on autonomous learning and the dynamic management of the time, space, the ability to learn from the student and new media and pedagogical mediations. From this perspective, the teacher is a true adviser and mediator and the student, manager of their own learning from new knowledge and their own practices and experiences.

This educational modality allows the student to follow a specific academic program using different means and mediations that allow direct access to knowledge, without the need

for daily or very frequent face-to-face interaction with the teacher in the physical institutional space.

The methodology of open and distance higher education implies new approaches around flexible and problematic curricular models, to the theories of meaningful learning, to integral and formative evaluation and to a structural change in teaching methods. The principles of democratization, equal opportunities and educational social justice are its foundation. It aims to build a specific curriculum, taking into account previous experiences, working conditions, as well as the motivations and possibilities of the student.

Distance education stimulates dialogue, encourages group study, involves the social context, is associated with the needs and interests of the regional community and to that extent is effective. On the other hand, Facundo (2013) comments that until a few years ago the concept of Distance Education was limited to the criterion of the non-requirement of the physical presence, in the same time and space, of the different educational agents.

At present this border between the two modalities is increasingly blurred. On the one hand, thanks to broadband and interactive technologies, there is a virtual presence that allows the interaction of all actors, at the same time, in cyberspace, a process that was previously attributed exclusively to face-to-face education.

On the other hand, the so-called face-to-face education uses more and more the various technological means, previously considered typical of Distance Education. At this point, virtual education (both in distance programs, in person or the mix of both) is a constantly growing modality. The work carried out by this author emphasizes the Colombian higher education system in the field of Distance Education, its evolution, tensions, achievements, and challenges, providing some criteria to better characterize and differentiate virtual programs that could serve as a reference for further research.

E-Learning and Web-Based Learning

E-learning, on the other hand, is a relatively new phenomenon and relates to the use of electronic media for a variety of learning purposes that range from add-on functions in conventional classrooms to full substitution for the face-to-face meetings by online encounters, e-learning is used by all types of students on all educational levels, from kindergarten to doctoral studies.

E-learning offers attractive uses for learners of all ages and of various interests and needs. In this case older students use its endless information resources for preparing homework, assignments and examinations; and millions of people use email, chat groups and other formats of telecommunication as learners, and in their social and working lives (Guri 2005).

In this context, the University Santo Tomás in the Faculty of Education, over time has reflected a lot on how to optimize their virtual spaces with the platform of the transversal English course, so students' improve their learning processes of EFL through E-learning and web-based spaces.

Moreover, in a broader perspective Mayora (2006) tells the advantages of multimedia technology in EFL programs and adds that using multimedia increases students' interest in the classroom, also teachers can use online magazines, newspapers as authentic materials. As illustrated by Ellis (2004) who mentions that E-learning not only bases instruction on Internet, intranet, web-sites and CD-ROM, but also on audio, video, and TV.

In this sense, students that belong to the Transversal English course at CAU Bucaramanga can use all the electronically supported instruction well known as E-learning spaces in order to learn and improved their abilities in the EFL, in addition to mention that involves a transformation of the individual's experience due to the process the individuals

follow constructing knowledge (Tavangarian, Leybold, Nölting, Röser, and Voigt 2004). Moreover Wang (2004), specifies when language learners have desirable and real communication factors, they can develop their language skills using computers and every kinds of technological equipment, this give students the sense of freedom and encouragement.

In other words, with the technologies help, students can be active, motivated and have a meaningful involvement in the language learning process. It is also important to mention that high quality of authentic materials and low price can be other advantages of technology and increase the popularity of E-learning. Additionally Harmer (2007) points out that students can become active and dynamic learners by means of E-learning and also mentions the importance of computer-based technological classrooms because they provide learners with unreachable and fascinating activities, which attract and motivate them

EFL at Distance Education in Colombia

Beyond the background, the Ministry of Education (MEN) introduced the program (Colombia Bilingual) in 2004 to increase the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) at the level of primary, secondary and tertiary education; This bilingual program intended that from 2004-2019 students reach an intermediate level of L2. At the end of this goal, the Colombian scenario in EFL places the country in the "low" or "very low" domain category, which suggests that the ability to use English effectively is limited (EF EPI 2018).

According to (Correa 2017), this program has not achieved its established language objectives and has been the object of strong criticism. Scholars suggest that Colombia Bilingual has not only not been successful in improving English skills, but has resulted in unequal practices in favoring language instrumentation, marketing of language services and stratification of people.

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In this context, and taking into account that there is still a long way to go, the multiple possibilities that people have to learn English should not be ruled out. In our country there is the possibility of accessing to learning contents through virtual platforms or distance education. As proof of this, the virtual platform of SENA offers 10 levels of English, which are available to anyone interested in participating, the only requirements are: be a Colombian citizen and have basic knowledge on the management of communication and computer tools. The nature of the course is virtual; it will be enough to know how to surf the web. If both requirements are met, citizens can access to beginner levels and aspire to develop up to a B1 or B2 level of English (SENA, 2019).

In this connection, this is something positive for the country because learning English in this way emerges as a means for a solution to the coverage and quality problems that affected a large number of people, who wanted to learn and benefit from pedagogical, and scientific advances that certain institutions had achieved in person, but were inaccessible due to the geographical location or due to the high costs involved in frequent or definitive trips to these places. According to Blake (2009) Distance learning for L2 invites much debate in educational circles, but this brief statistical profile should make it clear that DL will continue to figure into the L2 curriculum in some significant fashion in the coming years.

Furthermore, in the context of the University Santo Tomas, and its faculty of Education, offers to all its students six levels of transversal English, which is transversal and it offers the possibility of learning the EFL designed in a virtual and face to face context, in which its contents are available in a virtual platform; at the same time it offers the accompaniment with the national and virtual teachers that allow the students to have a guide to carry out a satisfactory learning process. To sum up, although the EFL in Colombia is just positioning itself among people, there is still much to do and much to learn. Students of the transversal English course at CAU Bucaramanga have their own virtual and human resources provided by

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the university and alternate resources that they can use to improve their English learning skills.

Design

In this research, a qualitative multiple case study was used to follow and analyze data on the conceptions around the Learning Process of English as a Foreign language in a group of students from the Transversal English course at the Faculty of Education at Santo Tomas University-CAU Bucaramanga. The following figure summarizes the design used in this project, which is explained in more detail in this section of the paper.

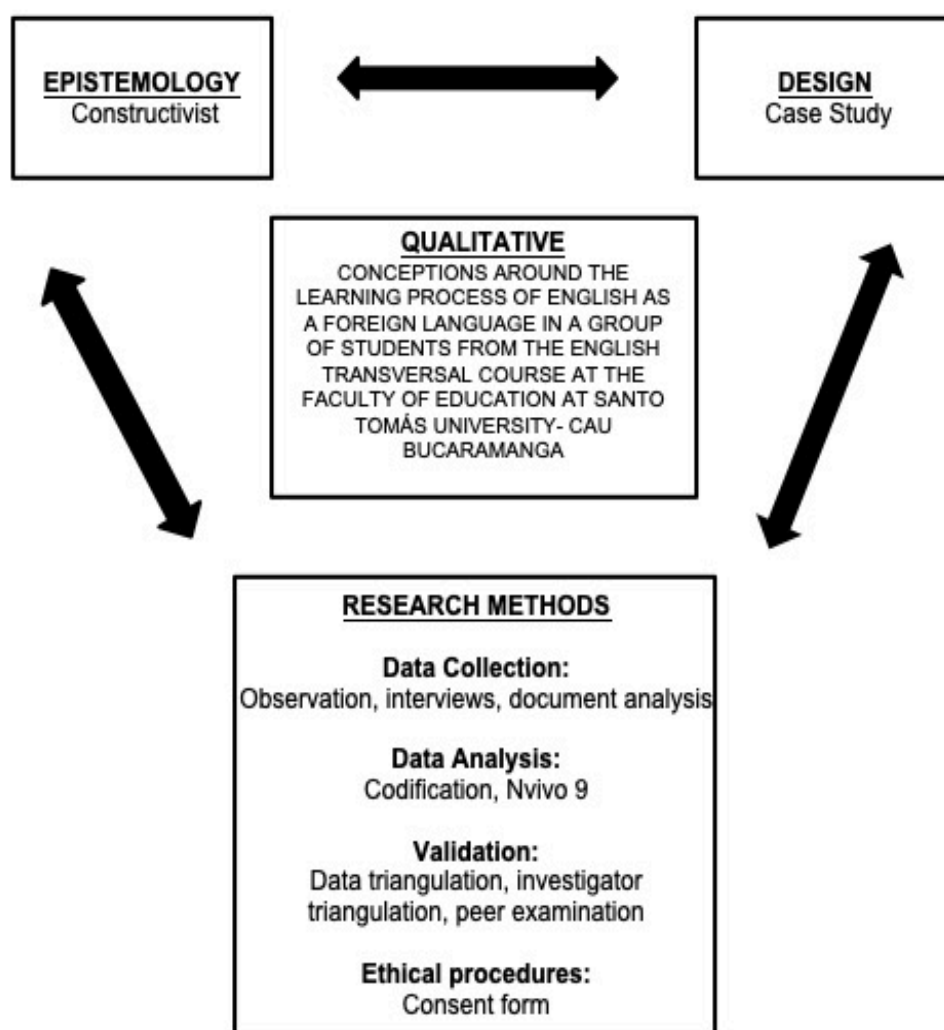


Figure 1. Research design framework. Adapted from Creswell, (2014).

The approach taken for the present research project is qualitative. According to Creswell (2004) qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the approach certainly involves data collection procedures. In this situation, the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants. The result is open-ended, with non-numerical data, which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods. Moreover, qualitative research takes place in the natural setting, without any attempt to manipulate the situation under study. This approach was selected since it allows an understanding of the conceptions from the students who belong to the transversal English course, as a learning phenomenon that surrounds them, deepening into their experiences, opinions and meanings which is the way the participants perceive the reality subjectively.

Methodological Design

The design used in this research is “Case study”, it is indeed an excellent method for obtaining a thick description of a complex social issue embedded within a cultural context. According to Stake (1995), a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case. Cases combine a variety of data collection methods such as interviews, observation and document archives, typically discussed under the label of qualitative research. In his early work on case study methodology, Stake (1978) maintained “case studies are useful in the study of human affairs because they are down-to-earth and attention-holding” (P. 19).

This approach to research makes sense to readers because it resembles our understanding of the naturalistic world through our personal experiences. The method is highly

recommended for exploring uncharted territories or making sense of a particularly problematic research area. Yin (2005) mentions that case studies can provide both descriptive richness and analytic insight into people, events, and passions as played out in real-life environments. At CAU Bucaramanga there is a phenomenon with the students of the transversal English course that needs to be explored and understood because little research has been done on it. This method offers rich and in-depth insights; help to understand target phenomena about the conceptions in the learning process of EFL.

Epistemology

Constructivism is the philosophical worldview proposed in this study. The individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. The individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences, meanings directed toward certain objects or things; i.e., the participants can construct the meaning of a situation. Guba and Stake (1998) the goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. Thus, this epistemology will help to address the processes of interaction among individuals since it focuses on the specific context in which the people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the participants.

Research Methods

In this section of the paper, the methods of data collection are introduced. Data collection methods, data analysis procedures, validation techniques as well as ethic procedures are introduced.

Data collection Instruments

In this research there are three methods of data collection: observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

The first method of data collection is observation. Observation is a way of collecting data through observing. The research observation is not limited to the sense of sight it implies all the senses. That is, it implies going deep into social situations and maintaining an active role, as well as a permanent reflection. According to Jorgensen (1989), observation is understanding processes, links between people and their situations or circumstances, the events that happen over time, the patterns that develop, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which human experiences occur. The objective of this technique was to know the kind of interactions, conversations and students' engagement in the English course. I was a non participant observant. Prior to the observation, a format was developed (see annex 1). It was peer-examined and revolves around the following indicators: students' attendance, language use, verbal and non-verbal interactions, attitudes and participation. During the observation made on the day of the last tutoring session the observant arrived earlier to the tutorial meeting, as soon as the students started to arrive the observant took notes in English in the format.

The second method of data collection is the semi-structured interview (see annex 2). It can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data. Semi-structured interviewing, according to Bernard (1988), is best used when you won't get more than one chance to interview someone also allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. The objective of this method of data collection is to allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms regarding the conceptions they have about their transversal English course. One interview was conducted at the beginning of the investigation with a total of

eight individual interviews. The interview allowed me to collect specific information in 17 questions that addressed aspects such as access to technological resources, learning modality including virtual modality, and face to face modality; it also explores the participants' motivation, the regional and national teachers, the learning strategies and the syllabus of the course.

This interview was conducted in L1 (Spanish), since it is the participants native language and that allowed them to have better and more complete answers. The interview was made face to face with six participants, the remaining two participants were not able to attend the interview in person because they work in remote towns outside Bucaramanga; in that particular case, Skype as a communication tool was used to contact them and made the interview. The information collected for each one of the questions was audio recorded in order to follow up a transcription that served for later data analysis.

Data validation

As a researcher, the notion of Guba (79-80) was taken; here it is presented in terms of credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability. To ensure the credibility of this research report, triangulation as a source would allow us to have a better and valid understanding of the conceptions of the students. In regards to the extent to which the findings are replicable and transferable to other situations, it is assumed that enough information was provided about the context, participants and design of this research to meet transferability and dependability expectations. Finally, to enhance the confirmability of this research, peer examination was used to avoid biases in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data.

Ethical procedures

To meet ethical procedures, all participants signed a consent form (see annex 3). The participants accepted the request in which the interview was recorded in audio format for later transcription and analysis, they agreed on the percept in which the teaching team of the Bachelor's degree in English Foreign Language of the Santo Tomas University will have access to the information collected. The participants were informed and ensured that the information delivered will be protected by anonymity and confidentiality. Also, it was assured that they will not be identified by their name at any time in the study, the names were changed in order to maintain the confidentiality agreement and the data related to privacy will be handled confidentially, in case the product of this research needs to be presented (publications, congresses and other presentations), the consent is expressed by the participants in order to be published to the external public.

The participants accepted to participate freely and voluntarily, and the results of this research will be the report to be presented as a thesis for the researcher's degree.

Participants

This research is developed with 8 students enrolled in the general transversal English course in levels 3 and 4. These students became the participants for this research; they belong to the following bachelor programs:

Table 1

Description of participants

Students' name	Sex	Age	Bachelor program at CAU- Bucaramanga	Transversal English course level
<i>Adam</i>	Masculine	25 years	Licenciatura en Filosofía y Educacion Religiosa	III
<i>Carl</i>	Masculine	27 years	Licenciatura en Filosofía y Educacion Religiosa	IV
<i>Gabby</i>	Feminine	45 years	Licenciatura en Matemática	IV
<i>Jack</i>	Masculine	28 years	Licenciatura en Filosofía y Pensamiento Político	III
<i>Vincent</i>	Masculine	26 years	Licenciatura en Filosofía, Ética y valores humanos	III
<i>Emma</i>	Feminine	28 years	Licenciatura en Educacion preescolar	IV
<i>Jessy</i>	Feminine	29 years	Licenciatura en Educación Infantil	IV
<i>Diane</i>	Feminine	32 years	Licenciatura en Lengua Castellana y Literatura	III

Note: Specific description of the participants sample.

Context

The research was carried out at Santo Tomás University CAU-Bucaramanga, a private institution of higher education, of catholic nature, directed by the Order of Dominican preachers. The institution is located in the address Carrera 18 N ° 9-27 at Neighborhood Comuneros, Comuna 3 San Francisco in the city of Bucaramanga, Santander.



Image 1. University Santo Tomás Bucaramanga. Adapted from Google images 2019

The mission of the University Santo Tomás University is inspired by Christian humanists taking the concept of St. Thomas Aquinas to promote the integral formation of people in the field of higher education through actions and processes of teaching and learning, to develop under the fields of research and Social projection; to respond ethically, creatively and critically to the demands of human life and be able to provide solutions to the problems and needs of the country and its society. The University Santo Tomás, as a formal institution, has as a purpose the formation of the person in all its dimensions. Likewise, it is committed to promote general and specific competences of any disciplinary order that will allow the student to perform in a productive context.

Additionally, students that take the Transversal English courses at the Faculty of Education at DUAD are provided with access to Moodle, defined as “a learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a single robust, secure and integrated system to create personalised learning environments” that supplies students with the necessary guides, resources, activities, evaluations and virtual encounters with the national tutors.

Data Analysis

In this chapter the data of each instrument was analyzed through an emergent analysis. According to Glasser and Strauss, (1967), this is a research method in which the theory emerges from the data. It is a methodology that aims to identify basic social processes (BSPs) as a central point of theory. Through this methodology, we can discover those aspects that are relevant to a specific area of study, Strauss and Corbin (1990), in this case, the students' conceptions of the transversal English course.

Considering the grounded theory that uses a series of procedures through induction, it generates an explanatory theory of a particular phenomenon studied. Strauss and Corbin (1990) ensure that if the methodology is used properly will meet all the criteria to be considered as rigorous as scientific research. In this sense, the concepts and relationships between the data were produced and examined continuously until the end of the study. Therefore, an organization of the most relevant topics compiled in the instruments was made; the information collected in the instruments was organized separately in a document, it was organized according to topics that were relevant and persistent in each one of the instruments.

The analysis resulted in two categories. The first category displays what participants found available for their learning process in the Transversal English course. It includes the conceptions about the resources, the platform, the tutorial meetings, and the national and regional teachers. The second category exposes what participants considered they needed to support their learning process as well as some recommendations or suggestions they give to the course and their learning process itself. Within this second category, participants gave account of the need they have of looking for some external aids like additional digital resources such as apps, videos, additional teachers, and extra English courses or tutorials. Therefore, participants mentioned suggestions regarding the need of accompaniment from the

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regional and national teachers, also suggestions for CAU Bucaramanga in which participants emphasize the implementation of other spaces for the practice of speaking skills in L2.

A review, discussion, and analysis were made and it was found that all these aspects were related to these two categories that have been generated.

Table 2

Analysis categories

Categories
Category 1 <i>What is available to students in their learning process</i>
Category 2 <i>Suggestions and needs</i>

Note: Emergent categories from the data analysis

From now on, a discussion begins about what each of these categories implies.

Category 1: What is available to students in their learning process

In this category participants' mentioned what is available for their learning process in the transversal English course, students refer to all available resources in the virtual platform, regional and virtual tutorials meetings, and the role of national and regional teachers.

The Virtual Platform and its resources

After analyzing the data, it is important to mention that the transversal English course offers learning content developed for each level. Therefore, participants shared different insights regarding the virtual platform and the materials or resources that it offers. In that sense, they considered the virtual platform as good, direct and explicit as well as very didactic.

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To the question ¿Que opina acerca de los materiales de estudio propuestos en la plataforma virtual?, participants' mentioned aspects such the next ones:

“La plataforma es muy directa en sus aprendizajes, lo que le van a enseñar a uno esta ahí explicito y explicado” Vincent

“La plataforma virtual es muy didáctica” Carl

As evidenced in the previous excerpts, it could be observed that participants understand the virtual platform as a useful resource, where virtuality offers them direct and consistent content according to the respective levels of learning for the transversal English course. According to Brown (2007), the use of technology supports the pedagogical goals of the class and curriculum, allowing students to be provided with optimal input and self-pacing learning.

Regarding the materials offered on the virtual platform, the participants mentioned that these are pedagogical and didactic. These quotes are the example of what the participants mentioned:

“Los materiales y recursos que nos dan de Inglés en la universidad son muy buenos, muy pedagógicos, para uno que... al menos personalmente yo no hablo Inglés, yo soy estudiante que me toca esforzarme mucho y estudiar, estudiar, estudiar, entonces son recursos muy... incluso podría decir hasta para niños porque tienen dibujitos, son de colores entonces son llamativos, a mi me llama mucho la atención, pero también a la vez es complejo el Inglés virtual” Vincent

“yo opino que los materiales de la plataforma virtual es muy didáctica” Carl

“Los materiales son muy completos, útiles hay que sacarles jugo y son muy complementarios para el proceso mío que llevo con el idioma Inglés” Jack

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Thus, the materials being pedagogical and didactic serve as mediators for the development and enrichment of the student, favoring the teaching and learning process and facilitating the interpretation of the content that in this case is on the platform to be taught. Within the enormous potential that the network offers in the area of language learning, the universal availability of authentic materials, the communicative and real-time interaction possibilities and the advantages offered by the union of multimedia formats and the structure do not stand out linear information (Chun and Plass, 2000).

Within the materials, students can have access to the workbook, which participants perceived as a good learning tool that offers its respective feedback after each activity carried out, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

“El workbook me parece una buena herramienta; hay actividades de apareamiento... por ejemplo el video de introducción que hacen es muy bueno” Gaby

“Pues en la parte eso de tener el workbook, el libro virtual, pues es una gran garantía, los ejercicios pues usted realiza los ejercicios ahí mismo, y saber si están correctos o no están correctos que aparecen en la plataforma, pues tiene un factor bastante importante para el aprendizaje de uno” Adam

Participants mentioned the workbook as a learning tool for the transversal English course. The activities after been carried out, offer the students' respective feedback. Therefore, feedback serves as the communication cycle between students in the web-based educational as a process that is been considered in the design of distance education programs (Guajardo, 2009).

Syllabus and its contents and topics

The purpose of the syllabus of the course is to promote literacy competence in English foreign language in the students of the Decanatura Universidad Abierta y a Distancia (DUAD) through the incorporation of pedagogical applications and the continuous support of the teacher in the distance modality, for an integral formation of students, through autonomous processes that strengthen their professional performance in the future and that meet the needs of their region. (Syllabus de espacio academico, Inglés transversal DUAD)

In this sense, it was observable that the topics and contents offered in the syllabus of the transversal English course are fundamental and have served as a source of information within students' learning process. It is exemplified when participants gave answers to the question ¿Cual es su opinión con respecto a los contenidos brindados en el curso de Inglés transversal?:

“Hay temas muy buenos fundamentales que uno puede decir si! Son buenos, hasta cierto punto los contenidos que presenta el Inglés son muy buenos, respectivo a cada nivel claro esta” Emma

“El syllabus me ha servido mucho la información de los links, eso me ha servido mucho para relacionar el contenido que hay en la plataforma en cada uno de los momentos, porque en esos links hay información de donde ellos sacan el contenido, y uno lo revisa que son como páginas en internet de información y muy bueno porque se relaciona con todo lo que nos enseñan ahí, y eso lo encuentro en el syllabus, siempre estudio así, me gusta porque tengo más claridad para estudiar” Vincent

“Yo pienso que los contenidos son como acordes a lo que el estudiante necesita aprender, digamos que puede existir o haber buenos contenidos” Diane

The previous examples give account of students' conceptions regarding the topics contained in the syllabus. Participants consider they are good and appropriated according to

each level and allow the student to establish a clarity between what is exposed and what they can learn through the links they relate and have an effect on the topics and contents; it can be said that these respond appropriately to the specific needs and objectives of the course.

Tutorial meetings

It is worthy to remember that each level of Transversal English courses offers 5 regional meetings during the semester (3 learning meetings and 2 evaluation encounters for the mid-term and final evaluation) at CAU Bucaramanga guided by the regional tutor and 4 virtual meetings with the national teacher. The following are some of the conceptions shared by the participants in this regard:

Regional tutorial meetings

Tutoring is one of the teachers' functions characterized by guiding and supporting the English learning process. When participants were asked about ¿Cual es su opinión sobre las tutorías de Inglés transversal recibidas el sábado en el CAU? It could be noticeable that they have general good perceptions towards them:

“Son muy buenas” Vincent

“Me parecieron muy buenas las tutorías; o sea el profesor que nos enseñó, fue muy bueno en esas tutorías y pues me gustaron” Jessy

“Las tutorías ayudan muchísimo en cuanto a esclarecer ciertos temas, yo he estado en la mayoría de tutorías de los sábados, por lo general las tutorías ayudan muchísimo!” Carl

However, despite the fact that participants find in the regional tutoring a learning space that clarifies doubts and that are positively evaluated, they still have some conceptions regarding things that could be improved or taken into account for the course, as it is the

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number of tutorials during the semester. Students mentioned that the number of regional tutorial meetings should be increased since they consider a lack of them; tutorials are very scarce and students cannot reinforce learning. These quotes are exemplified on what participants' mentioned:

“Me gustaría que las tutorías fueran como más, fueran más presenciales, tuvieran más clases para las tutorías” Emma

“Sería bueno que ojalá se hicieran tutorías extras” Vincent

“Que fueran más tutorías en el semestre; el estudiante debería tener por lo menos cada 8 días una tutoría” Diane

It is stipulated that attendance to tutorial meetings is the students' responsibility; therefore, these are not mandatory (Paragraph, art. 32) DUAD. It means, that although the participants know the tutorials are spaces where doubts can be clarified, and more knowledge can be obtained by having the regional teacher, the students are not taking advantage of these meetings. This situation was corroborated with the information collected in the observation that was made in a tutoring session; there the participants of this research did not attend the scheduled tutoring meetings at CAU Bucaramanga.

In this sense, the participants recognized the fact that they did not attend the tutorials and in turn also recommended more commitment from the students; some participants mentioned this:

“Pues hasta el momento pues he faltado, pues de parte de los estudiantes falta un poco de interés de asistir a las tutorías de Inglés porque es un garantía ir” Adam

“Que el estudiante tenga más compromiso frente a eso” Carl

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Students accept that they do not go to regional tutorials, but there is a parallel between what is not done and what is recommended for other classmates. During the observation, the number of students that attended the tutorials decreased in each meeting. Students, perhaps for personal reasons are not attending the meeting with the regional teacher, there is no real engagement with the learning spaces provided by the University.

Another relevant aspect found in the regional tutorials conceptions was the need to include the promotion of speaking skills at CAU Bucaramanga. With regard to this particular situation in which students want to implement the communicative skills, it is worthy to remember that the transversal English, as established in its syllabus, only promotes reading and writing skills. Given the difficulties in the Spanish and English literacy skills of DUAD students; the need arises to strengthen the skills of reading comprehension and written production in the academic exercise of the professional future to complement their comprehensive training. Additionally, due to the number of students enrolled in each level, the implementation of speaking activities results difficult. Nevertheless, participants still considered speaking to be included in a more complete way within the classes at the regional CAU, as evidenced in the following examples:

“lo que yo estoy sugiriendo, a la práctica de que el estudiante hable porque el Inglés más que una materia es un idioma, es una lengua que tiene que hablarse” Jack

“Pero hace falta como el diálogo de que uno aprendiera a pronunciar, de que uno pudiera como aprender a expresarse o pronunciar palabras porque uno muchas veces las lee y las pronuncia pero como que tal no están bien dichas” Emma

Although speaking is not offered within the transversal English course, students permanently manifested the need to develop communicative skills, and the possibility to open new spaces to implement productive skills such as the situation observed during one of the

tutorial meetings developed in level III of English at CAU Bucaramanga. It was evident that the teacher promoted the interaction of the students through peer activities in which students had to shoot a video talking about the tourism of the region. The concept was clear and well-intended to perform the skill, but the students recorded de video in L1.

Virtual-National tutorial meetings

As it was previously said, the transversal English course offers 4 virtual meetings with the national teacher. These meetings are established in the platform of the course activities, schedule in a space called tutorials and videoconferences. To participate students must register in advance, the meeting is recorded and it is uploaded to the platform later on so students can watch it when they can. Concerning virtual tutorials, participants mentioned the need for more virtual tutorials at different times. To the question *¿Qué recomendaría para la modalidad virtual?* This quote exemplifies what the participants mentioned:

“Tutorías de 6 a 8 de la noche, y que el docente como que establezca un chat o una tutoría virtual para que se establezcan preguntas, explicaciones del tema para que uno nos quede totalmente como... cerrado, en ese tema” Emma

“Sería muy bueno que hubiesen más tutorías virtuales para que le den al estudiante la oportunidad de asistir a las tutorías como tal pero con un poquito más de tiempo” Jessy

In this part, the participants insist on the importance of increasing the amount of tutorial sessions so that they can clarify specific doubts or topics that might require more comprehension, as well as additional spaces to the offered schedule.

Teachers

This section of the paper refers to the analysis of the participants' conceptions regarding the national and regional teachers who support the Transversal English course.

Regional teachers

In regards to regional teachers, participants mentioned positive aspects regarding methodology and didactic strategies implemented in the classroom. In response to the question: ¿Qué opinión tiene sobre los docentes regionales con respecto al curso de Inglés transversal? These quotes are examples of what participants mentioned:

“En mi concepto son buenos, como se habla hoy en día son buenos tutores, para la parte del Inglés; tratan en cada tutoría de dar lo que ellos pueden dar lo mejor, ayudan a aclarar las ideas, aportan o incentivan el Inglés, tratan en algunos que ven que la lengua es más difícil buscan la manera algunas metodologías, formas para que el estudiante tenga una cierta motivación en responder a través del aprendizaje” Adam

“Son excelentes maestros, son personas que conocen, saben e implementan diversas estrategias didácticas para la adquisición de este conocimiento y esta segunda lengua” Carl

“Los docentes que me dictaron me parecieron muy buenos, son personas muy especializadas y como le digo me trajeron muchas estrategias y muchas dinámicas para poder inclusive siendo de matemática porque el profesor era de Inglés y trajo herramientas que yo podía utilizar en mi área entonces me pareció como muy bueno!” Jessy

Participants positively value the work of the regional teacher. Students have the commitment to learn how to learn. For this, the regional teacher helps them develop their intellectual and creative potential, through the use of innovative strategies, in accordance with the needs and interests of students to promote meaningful learning, that is to say, a

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comprehensive learning and applied to academic situations or of the labor reality of each one of them. During the observation made it was possible to verify that the regional teachers had good class management, they manage didactic strategies to perform the tutoring, apart from that they use technological resources such as the use of WhatsApp to send relevant and related information to the topics students see in the virtual classroom; perspectives that support the positive conceptions in relation to regional teachers.

Regarding the teachers' limitations, participants mentioned that despite having very professional regional teachers in the area of English, they have certain autonomy limitations since they consider that everything is subject to the guidelines and evaluation that is directed from Bogota. To mention some examples, participants mentioned:

“Pues la verdad los docentes regionales son muy agradables, me parece que tienen criterio para enseñar, o sea lo vi desde el punto profesional, pero están muy limitados; porque ellos están limitados, a como decir... como decirlo... como a Bogotá” Gaby

“Ellos como que no pueden hacer más allá de la parte de planeación porque como es algo que califica Bogotá el curso, pues los prejuicios y los juicios lo tiene el docente de Bogotá, en cambio el docente de Bucaramanga en la parte de Inglés no tiene juicios ni prejuicios porque ellos se encargan de darte la tutoría” Adam

Based on the above, it can be said that participants are unsatisfied with the absence of autonomy by teachers in the CAU Bucaramanga. They believe that teachers should be more active participants in the process since knowing the student could give a more judgmental assessment according to each student. In this aspect, participants mentioned that they could obtain a closer feedback besides the one they get at the end of the course from the national teacher.

National teachers

With regards to national teachers, participants highlight the professionalism of national teachers but consider they should know a little more about the regional context in order to give value judgments about the students performance. To the question ¿Cual es su opinión sobre los docentes nacionales con respecto al curso de Inglés transversal? Participants mentioned:

“Aunque pueden ser profesionales con respecto al curso de Inglés transversal creo que desconocen totalmente el contexto en el cual cada estudiante esta inmerso, ellos digamos al estar en Bogotá que es el centro de la modalidad abierta y a distancia, ellos pretenden que el conocimiento que también se da en Bogotá de la misma manera que se da y con su cultura también se de en otras partes” Carl

“Pues mi contacto con ellos fue aceptar y mostrar la cierta preocupación del curso de Inglés pues es algo que les queda a ellos como que no pueden hacer más allá de la parte de planeación porque como es algo que califica Bogotá el curso, pues los prejuicios y los juicios lo tiene el docente de Bogotá” Adam

The previous excerpts give account of participants conceptions about the need of national teachers to know a little more about their regional context so they can be evaluated in this way or give certain value judgments about student learning. However, it should be noted that in each semester, each of the transversal English courses has about 500 students enrolled in the virtual platform. No matter that the national teacher offers 4 virtual meetings, it is still too few to assist students in a more personalized way and actually getting to know each of the students' needs, which is not the aim of the course.

Regarding the follow-up by national teachers, the participants mentioned the need to implement some support strategies for those students who have repeated the level of English

on several occasions. According to what is established by the national teachers at the end of the course, strategies such as assigning additional work to recover or make up their grades are not conceived.

“Yo pienso que a ellos les falta más seguimiento hacia los estudiantes que tienen dentro del aula virtual como tal, más abertura a los estudiantes, buscar formas o metodologías que los mismos estudiantes que están en una nota o promedio bajo o estén teniendo unas ciertas notas que no son concordes con lo que se quiere alcanzar del curso, pues tratarlos de reforzar!” Adam

“Yo tuve una experiencia en el nivel que perdí, me quedo en 2.9, yo le escribí a la profe, le busque como la manera que me dieran otra estrategia, un trabajo adicional o lo que fuera un examen virtual, que me ayudaran porque ya era la tercera vez que yo estaba presentando el nivel de Inglés, imagínese!” Emma

Each person has different skills and aptitudes; some people tend to have more ease to understand topics and can turn out to be very good in English. In this case, most of the participants have had certain difficulties during their learning process, they need to have a slightly closer follow-up that allows them to access other ways to compensate and improve the grades they have on the platform. According to Oliveira (2008), monitoring is a learning space for the student, favoring its personal, academic and professional growth. It tends to refine its abilities as a teacher and motivate students to follow this path or help them realize the hardships faced by the professionals in this area, for its development.

On the other hand, a participant believes that due to a large number of students who handle the transversal English course, follow-up processes cannot be carried out more closely and emphasizes that doing this is too much work for teachers.

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“Pues yo lo que pienso es que ellos tienen mucho trabajo (risas), que son muchos estudiantes como yo que ven el Inglés, agradezco la retroalimentación que cada vez que presentaba la evaluación siempre recibí mi retroalimentación eso me pareció excelente porque para mí como alumna es importante, pero considero que la carga que ellos tienen es muy grande y pues por eso a veces no pueden contestar mis mensajes, yo asumo que es por eso!” Gaby

It is important to emphasize that despite what the participants stated earlier, some of them also know what the context and reality of national teachers are and what it means to manage large groups. Garcia (2008) mentioned that the main difficulties encountered in carrying out new approaches to tutoring, providing it with content, are the lack of time, the excess of students that teachers have to attend to and the prevailing mentality in the university culture, which leads to the minimal use of teacher-student interaction outside classroom hours.

According to the aforementioned, participants considered the importance of the human quality that national teachers have towards students in different situations. These quotes exemplify what the participants mentioned:

“En el nivel 2 tuve un problema que se me cayó una evaluación en línea, sola, sin yo espichar, ni que se fuera la luz; al hablar con la profesora ella me colaboró, fue muy humana con los humanos y es eficaz en cuanto a las solicitudes que le he podido hacer” Vincent

“Una docente muy querida me atendió un par de veces en videollamada, fue muy agradable, muy entretenido” Jack

Participants mention that national teachers are human beings who have a great human quality. For students, the relationship is given through the understanding of situations related to the educational context of the transversal English course and this human side is highly valuable. Bain's study (2004) about the excellence of university professors highlights the

importance of teachers' humanity in their daily work practice. Personal values of the educator such as humility, confidence in their students, listening, meeting, estimating individual personal worth, the vocation for the work they perform are the basis of educational quality.

Category 2: External learning aids and suggestions and needs

In this category, participants' mentioned their conceptions regarding the complementary and autonomous resources they had to use to improve their skills in the transversal English course since they gave account that the available aspects given by the university were not enough for their learning process. With that in mind, participants' mentioned the use of extra aids, in which they discussed the use of apps, YouTube videos, and the use of Google translator as well as some additional teachers and extra courses.

Furthermore, within the same category, participants permanently proposed some suggestions they consider should be taken into account for the improvement of the English course itself as well as some general recommendations at CAU Bucaramanga.

Extra aids

The use of extra aids such technology favors the flexibility of the contents and the study time of the students; in this way, the prominence and the tools are granted to be more autonomous. Participants mentioned de use of apps, YouTube videos, and Google translator. In this order of ideas, they used apps on their cell phones to reinforce vocabulary and reinforce the topics in the transversal English course. To the question *¿Qué tipo de recursos complementarios y autónomos ha tenido que usar para mejorar sus competencias en el curso de inglés transversal?* Participants mentioned:

“Me gusta descargar aplicaciones del celular y busco las temáticas relacionadas que me dieron, y busco aplicaciones, entonces ahí las busco, las descargo y estudio desde las

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aplicaciones...cuando voy a estudiar vocabulario, que me pedían estudiar vocabulario, descargaba diccionarios en Inglés, cuando me tocó estudiar comparativos y superlativos, descargué una aplicación ahí de comparativos y superlativos” Vincent

“También se puede con un juego que lo tengo en el celular que me ayuda también un poco a los niveles y te esfuerzas con palabras y eso” Adam

Participants mentioned that the use of applications on their cell phones allows them to improve their knowledge of L2. Applications are a complementary medium that supports them to obtain information instantly and this leads to reinforcing knowledge and clear doubts about a specific topic. Thornton and Houser (2005) and Meurant (2006) drew attention to the role of cell phones and their great advantages in Internet connectivity for access to multimedia and learning related websites, and its hundreds of applications focused on education. Thornton and Houser (2005) and Meurant (2006) drew attention to the role of cell phones and their great advantages in Internet connectivity for access to multimedia and learning related websites, and its hundreds of applications focused on education.

Moreover to the use of apps, the participants mentioned the use of videos on YouTube because they consider that from the practical contents shown, the significant learning of English is reinforced. These are examples of what participants mentioned:

“He intensificado las horas en los tutoriales de YouTube...en mi caso como mi estilo de aprendizaje es más práctico, como que no me ayuda mucho, entonces me toca más horas de tutoriales en Inglés desde YouTube para poder obviamente adquirir esos conocimientos necesarios para el Inglés transversal” Carl

“Pues una de las estrategias que tengo es buscar los temas dentro de los videos de YouTube para que me puedan explicar un poco mejor las reglas de ese tema, esa estrategia

como tal, primero busco eso para poder yo tener un aprendizaje más significativo como tal”

Adam

For Stroud (2008), the best way to learn English without being in an English-speaking country is through the use of digital tools and virtual learning environments. In this sense, the Internet offers students a world of possibilities to learn.

Besides, to the previously discussed, participants mentioned the use of the translator. Through this tool students can verify if their written production is correct, or they get translated input that what written in L2. As an example of this, the participants mentioned:

“Las herramientas tecnológicas que he usado o que estoy utilizando para llevar a cabo el curso transversal de Inglés es más que todo el traductor Google” Adam

“Por ejemplo yo tengo una tendencia, si... cuando yo quiero confirmar algo confieso que utilizo el traductor de Google, pero entonces lo que hago es no escribir del español para traducir al Inglés, sino escribir en mi Inglés para traducir al español y mirar de esa manera que mi frase como yo la estoy pensando en Inglés sea correcta. Esa es una forma que me ha servido mucho y me ha ayudado a reforzar y a confirmar algunos pre-saberes y algunas dudas que tengo sobre mi Inglés” Jack

Some of the applications or websites described go in this same guideline; promote the flexibility and autonomy of students, in this way we can rescue that the use of technology is compatible and to some extent functional for virtual and distance environments. Colli and Becerra (2014) said that Blended Learning is a possibility of use for students who are studying English, because it is feasible to link the contents of the subjects in both environments, both in person and in the online environment; In this way, learning is released from the classroom giving students the opportunity to experiment and learn in a less linear environment.

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On the other hand, taking into account that participants not only used as extra aids what the technology offers but also made use of tutorials with other teachers and enrolled in alternate English courses because these aids allowed them to improve and strengthen the knowledge they were receiving in the transversal English course. These are examples of what participants mentioned about the use of tutorials with other teachers:

“Pagar un tutor individual para que me ayudara con las explicaciones del Inglés” Emma

“He tenido que recurrir a acompañamiento constante y asesorías por docentes de Inglés para despejar ciertas dudas que he tenido durante el proceso. He tenido que pagar un tutor para poder despejar muchas dudas” Diane

“Buscar tutorías porque hay cosas que los videos no me aclaran así es que siempre busco un profe que me explique. Cuando hago referencia a un profe pues ya es pagar una clase particular... Más o menos en la semana pagaba una o dos clases y cuando se acerca el previo cuando entro en crisis...pues por ahí tres veces porque en realidad no me siento con la capacidad de presentarlos o sea ante el previo de Inglés es tutor inminente!” Gaby

It is important to emphasize that all students have different ways of learning and it makes sense to seek help from a tutor when it comes to solving specific learning problems or there are personal situations since individual tutoring allows a more direct relationship with the student and deepening the problem that is about solving. For Garcia (2008) tutoring has been considered as a basic component of the new student-centered methodology, a need to guide and effectively monitor the autonomous work, either individually or in groups of students.

On the other hand, two participants mentioned that they resorted to enrolling in alternate English courses as these allowed them to strengthen the knowledge of the transversal English course. These quotes are the example of what participants mentioned:

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“Para poder mejorar el nivel en que estaba porque yo el Inglés lo repetí varias veces, me toco realizar un curso adicional del SENA que era para principiantes, entonces iba realizando el curso del SENA e iba realizando el de Inglés que fue el último porque el 4 me tocó repetirlo como 3 veces, entonces para poderlo pasar me tocó hacer un curso adicional”
Jessy

“He estado haciendo dos cursos por fuera en la universidad como tal, en la Universidad UIS, haciendo 2 meses ahí, en la UIS, y uno por fuera particular como tal para poderme ayudar en el proceso del Inglés transversal” Adam

Participants have mentioned that they resort to external tutors and extra english courses, to receive support in the topics that require reinforcement. It should be noted that students use this extra help to seek input and assimilate it into the contents of the transversal English course. For Monereo y Pozo (2003), students are developing leadership skills about their learning, problem-solving, critical attitude, and autonomous work.

Suggestions

In regards to the suggestions made by the participants, they mentioned the necessity of more accompaniments from the national and regional teachers, and suggestions for the CAU Bucaramanga.

Taking into account the suggestions made by the participants, they consider that although regional and virtual tutorials are offered, accompaniment is remarkably important to support their learning process in the transversal English course. Given the aforementioned, these quotes are an example of what was said above:

“Seria bueno algo más de acompañamiento porque simplemente hay 2 tutorías prácticamente que dan previo 2 o 3 a los exámenes, entonces es muy poco, a veces uno tiene

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dudas y toca consultarlas a nivel virtual por internet; seria bueno tener un maestro más cercano para resolver las dudas ya que muy pocos profesores se dan para comunicarse con ellos por medio virtual, muy pocos lo hacen” Vincent

“Más acompañamiento, la verdad prácticamente que el estudiante está solo y tiene que aprender solo y lo que pueda aprender... pero el tutor o el acompañamiento es muy ausente y eso lamentablemente perjudica al estudiante” Diane

“Siendo yo un estudiante de Bucaramanga porque falta ese acompañamiento en el proceso formativo del curso de Inglés como tal” Adam

“La virtualidad es importante; pero muy poco sentido tiene si no hay un acompañamiento presencial que lo verifique, que haya una conexión personal en la cual no haya problemas de interferencia de señal de sonido, de que no conecta la llamada, todo esto es importante; la virtualidad es buena mientras haya un acompañamiento semi-presencial lo más constante posible” Jack

Given the above, participants see the need for follow-up to support their learning process, it is important to help those who, for different reasons, feel apathetic, disinterested, and dissatisfied, creating common interaction spaces, and providing spaces for dialogue and support. Taking into account that the provisions of the transversal English course depend on national teachers, a little more involvement is needed, helping to develop and strengthen communication skills, and teamwork. For Mastache (2010), tutors must be people involved with student problems and with a particular sensitivity that leads them to take responsibility for ensuring that their tutors can acquire the skills and abilities that will allow them to face their studies. Besides, they must have the ability to interact with students from a place of closeness without losing the distance that their role means.

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In addition to the suggestions on accompaniment, participants mentioned suggestions for the CAU Bucaramanga. These suggestions emphasize the implementation of other spaces for the practice of speaking skills in L2, referring to an English club or conversation spaces. These quotes are an example of what participants mentioned:

“Me gustaría como que la universidad se planteara como diferentes estrategias de aprendizaje más motivacional, digamos un conversatorio, digamos... los viernes... no es que tendría, los viernes en la noche hacer un conversatorio de Inglés donde uno se integre con los diferentes estudiantes” Emma

“Que hubiese la posibilidad de que se ampliaran, de que hubiese más espacio, de que existan más oportunidades para que los estudiantes vayamos y hablemos con el profesor” Jack

“Queremos más pronunciación, queremos como un club de Inglés y no lo tenemos porque simplemente uno el espacio, que solamente son dos horas y las tutorías son tres veces y el profe debe limitarse a lo que está plasmado allí” Gaby

Therefore the idea of implementing alternative spaces in which students can perform the language putting into context the contents that are taught in the syllabus of the platform is something positive. Participants are interested in the meaning that is transmitted through the transversal English course. Although as mentioned earlier, the course specifies that the skills implemented are reading and writing, but it is worth it giving space to an indirect intervention that consists of practicing the language in the classroom communicatively. According to Martín Peris (1996) in indirect intervention, activities aimed at production can be carried out, but focused on meaning, so that the learner has the opportunity to relate form and meaning in meaningful contexts.

Conclusions

The research carried out concludes that the students' expressed positive conceptions about the materials offered on the virtual platform for the good development of the transversal English course.

Concerning teachers, students highlight the quality of these and what is offered in tutorials and attention; however, for students, there is still a need for other support features, what they call accompaniment in their processes, which should be taken into account.

However, many of the opinions of the students realize that the modality is not appropriate for their learning styles since they always have to resort to other forms of face-to-face learning.

Within all the students' conceptions, attitudes of autonomy are evidenced for the development of their L2 learning process, since they manifest access to other alternative resources such as tutorials and courses as well.

It is evident that although the course on their platform emphasizes writing and reading skills, students express the need to include more spaces for the practice of oral ability, so they recommend the implementation of alternative spaces to tutorials that let them develop this skill.

Limitations

Concerning the viability of the sources, the topic being addressed does not have sufficient documentary support or specific theoretical support, therefore much of the information has been based on the theory that is part of the concepts and the context discussed.

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Concerning human resources, there was no support from a sufficiently large student staff to determine broader conceptions of the transversal English course at CAU Bucaramanga.

It can be said that the topic being addressed is a bit complex since it encompasses what students think about the course as such and for this reason, no majority participation support was received. On the other hand, to corroborate certain data in the triangulation of the information, the CAU Bucaramanga did not grant access to specific documents.

Implications for further research

For future research, I recommend including the conceptions that teachers and administrators have in the process of the transversal English course at the CAU Bucaramanga. The continuation of this research project will allow us to understand all the voices involved in the English course, also, will allow developing learning proposals taking into account the particular characteristics that enable genuine learning of the foreign language. By knowing the conceptions that teachers and administrators have added to those already collected with students, new strategies could be generated or some activities could be strengthened according to the needs that arise among all course participants.

Additionally, this topic could be investigated from other CAUs at the national level, since the conceptions allow us to know how learning is conceived and provides information to improve the teaching-learning processes. In this context, each student, each teacher, and each administrator involved in the transversal English course has a different conception regarding the process, which would enrich the research with more ideas and provide more precise results.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Observation form

TUTORIAL DATE	
STARTING TIME	
FINISHING TIME	
CONTENTS	
TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE	

INDICATORS	OBSERVATION
<i>Students assistance</i>	
<i>Use of L2 in the tutorial session</i>	
<i>Technological resources</i>	
<i>Syllabus</i>	
<i>Motivation</i>	
<i>Regional teacher</i>	
Reflection	

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Appendix B. Interview form

Objective

Establish the profiles and characterizations from the students that belong to the levels 3 and 4 from the Transversal English course.

CATEGORÍA	SUBCATEGORÍA	PREGUNTA
<i>Disponibilidad de recursos y tecnología</i>	Recursos en la Universidad	¿Qué tipo de TICs utiliza para desarrollar el curso de Inglés transversal?
	Recursos autónomos	¿Que tipo de recursos complementarios y autónomos ha tenido que usar para mejorar sus competencias en el curso de inglés transversal?
<i>Modalidad de aprendizaje</i>	Modalidad virtual	¿Qué opina acerca de los materiales de estudio propuestos en la plataforma virtual? ¿Qué recomendaría para la modalidad virtual?
	Modalidad presencial	¿Cuál es su opinión sobre las tutorías de inglés transversal recibidas el sábado en el CAU? ¿Qué recomendaría para las tutorías?

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	EFL Modalidad virtual-distancia	¿Qué opina acerca de aprender Inglés en la modalidad a virtual-distancia?
<i>Motivación</i>	Motivación intrínseca	¿Qué lo motiva a usted a aprender inglés? ¿Que le agrada de aprender inglés?
	Motivación Extrínseca	¿Qué le aporta el curso de inglés transversal a su vida laboral? ¿Qué le gusta aprender del curso de inglés transversal como tal?
<i>Docentes</i>	Docentes regionales	¿Qué opinión tiene sobre los docentes regionales con respecto al curso de Inglés Transversal?
	Docentes nacionales	¿Cuál es su opinión sobre los docentes nacionales con respecto al curso de inglés transversal?
<i>Administrativos</i>	Administrativos CAU Bucaramanga	¿Qué opinión tiene para los administrativos del CAU Bucaramanga con respecto al curso de inglés transversal?

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<i>Aprendizaje</i>	Estrategias de aprendizaje	¿Qué estrategias utiliza para aprender inglés?
<i>Syllabus</i>	Componente del curso	¿Qué tipo de habilidades ha podido desarrollar en el curso de inglés transversal? ¿Cuál es su opinión con respecto a los contenidos brindados en el curso de inglés transversal?

Appendix C. Consent form

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo _____, C.C. _____
declaro que se me ha explicado que mi participación en el estudio sobre
**CONCEPTIONS AROUND THE LEARNING PROCESS OF ENGLISH AS A
FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN A GROUP OF STUDENTS OF THE ENGLISH
TRANSVERSAL COURSE IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY
SANTO TOMAS-CAU BUCARAMANGA** consistirá en responder una entrevista
que pretende aportar al conocimiento, comprendiendo que mi participación es una
valiosa contribución.

Acepto la solicitud de que la entrevista sea grabada en formato de audio para su
posterior transcripción y análisis, a los cuales podrá tener acceso parte del equipo
docente de la carrera de Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Ingles de la
Universidad Santo Tomas, que guía la investigación.
Declaro que se me ha informado y que se me ha asegurado que la información
que entregue estará protegida por el anonimato y la confidencialidad.

La Investigadora Responsable del estudio, Lady Dayan Silva Beltran, se ha
comprometido a responder cualquier pregunta y aclarar cualquier duda que les
plantee o cualquier otro asunto relacionado con la investigación.

Asimismo, la entrevistadora me ha dado seguridad de que no se me identificará en
ninguna oportunidad en el estudio y que los datos relacionados con mi privacidad
serán manejados en forma confidencial. En caso de que el producto de este
trabajo se requiera mostrar (publicaciones, congresos y otras presentaciones),
expreso mi consentimiento para que sea publicado o mostrado al publico externo.

Por lo tanto, como participante, acepto mi participación de forma libre y voluntaria,
y declaro estar informado(a) que los resultados de esta investigación tendrán
como producto un informe para ser presentado como tesis de grado de la
investigadora.

He leído esta hoja de Consentimiento y acepto participar en este estudio según las
condiciones establecidas anteriormente.

Bucaramanga, _____ de _____ de 2018.

Firma Participante _____

Firma Investigadora _____