



Soft and Hard Skills to be Developed by a Pre-service Teacher Under the Distance Learning

Modality

Ivonne Daniela Orjuela Romero

CAU Chiquinquirá

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Directora:

Mg. Nelly Johana Álvarez Idarraga

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Abstract

This study delves into the development of soft and hard skills and their importance within the academic and educational course of students pursuing a degree in English as a foreign language under the distance mode with the purpose of reflecting on the development of these skills in a trainee teacher. At the heart of this study, the views of 46 students from various semesters underline the fundamental role played by the cultivation of these competencies in distance education. To carry out the axial coding, the qualitative approach and NVivo software were used in a multiple case study. In this way, the information was classified into 6 categories, supported by the opinions provided by the survey participants: Personal Growth, Assertive Communication, Professional Enrichment, Digital Management, Pedagogical Confrontation, and English Proficiency.

By analyzing the perspectives of these students, the research concludes that trainee teachers possess a valuable perspective on skills development and recognize the integration of these skills into their distance learning journey, fostering personal and professional growth for their future teaching roles.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Hard Skills, English as a Foreign Language, trainee pre-service teacher, Distance modality.

Resumen

Este estudio profundiza en el desarrollo de las competencias blandas y duras y su importancia dentro del curso académico y educativo de los estudiantes que cursan la licenciatura en inglés como lengua extranjera bajo la modalidad a distancia con el propósito de reflexionar sobre el desarrollo de estas competencias en un docente en formación. En el centro de este estudio, las opiniones de 46 estudiantes de diversos semestres subrayan el papel fundamental que juega el cultivo de estas competencias en la educación a distancia. Para llevar a cabo la codificación axial, se utilizó el enfoque cualitativo y el software NVivo en un estudio de casos múltiples. De esta forma, la información fue clasificada en 6 categorías, apoyadas en las opiniones proporcionadas por los participantes de la encuesta: Crecimiento Personal, Comunicación Asertiva, Enriquecimiento Profesional, Manejo Digital, Confrontación Pedagógica y Dominio del Inglés.

Al analizar las perspectivas de estos estudiantes, la investigación concluye que los profesores en formación poseen una valiosa perspectiva sobre el desarrollo de competencias y reconocen la integración de estas competencias en su trayectoria de aprendizaje a distancia, fomentando el crecimiento personal y profesional para sus futuras funciones docentes.

Palabras clave: Habilidades blandas, Habilidades duras, Inglés como lengua extranjera, profesor en formación, educación a distancia

Contextualization

Through the advancement and development of new technologies, numerous sectors of society have undergone modernization. Education is among the domains that have actively embraced this evolution (Gutierrez & Sanchez, 2022). Consequently, a multitude of students now could engage in distance learning modalities. However, it represents a challenge, as proficiency in specific skills is vital for optimal performance in such contexts, thereby enabling substantial personal and professional growth within this mode of training (Perez et al., 2022).

In Colombia, it is feasible to pursue a career through distance education, affording individuals the capacity to concurrently cultivate professional and economic trajectories. This is exemplified by undergraduate students opting to pursue English studies, not only as a means of assimilating the global lingua franca but also by seamlessly transitioning from conventional schooling to online higher education. Simultaneously, these students engage in occupational pursuits while actively participating in the pedagogical and developmental continuum (Alvarez, 2021).

The present research arises from the context of the development of a degree that reflects the soft and hard skills that a student should have through distance education and learning a new language in this modality. According to Rodriguez et al., (2021) who states that the importance of the development of these competencies lies in that "they will allow satisfaction for the benefit of the learning agents because they manage to develop and enhance from personal qualities, aspects such as adaptability to new situations that arise in the student and responsibility to meet the teaching objectives." (p.7).

Therefore, the development of soft and hard skills in education is crucial since it influences students to have significant achievements in their academic and professional training by focusing on both types of skills, students can become more adaptable and flexible to the learning environment through which they develop their careers.

On the other hand, developing soft and hard skills is a crucial factor for good performance in different fields of action because it helps people to be more adaptable, better communicators, and more effective problem solvers. According to Carrasco (2015), it is mentioned for his part that these skills are vital "as they allow us to coexist and communicate with our peers, which undoubtedly contributes to personal development." (Para.2). Therefore, personal development is part of the formative process of any person contributes to boost or enhance different affective, psychosocial, academic, and social aspects and environments.

Hence, this investigation unfolds by delving into the academic journey and experiential evolution of 46 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Foreign Language program, spanning from the fifth to tenth semester of a private Colombian university operating under the framework of distance education. This pursuit is underpinned by the escalating interconnectedness of the world, which underscores the burgeoning significance of attaining proficiency in foreign languages.

The bachelor's degree in foreign languages, particularly English, serves as a formidable avenue to amass the proficiencies and expertise requisite for triumph in the contemporary global economy. This academic track offers a holistic approach to language acquisition, encompassing the fundamental quartet of language competencies: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

According to the definition given by Santo Tomas University, n.d. "The bachelor's degree in foreign Languages English is an academic program that responds to the demands of

society and education in Colombia through the open and distance mode” (Para.1). Thus, this approach is a cutting-edge and rigorous educational methodology that promotes access to high-quality higher education and has been developed in accordance with institutional, national, and international policies that govern the preparation of many foreign language teachers.

Its mention intends to give a significant interpretation of its field, as mentioned by the author through the Ministry of National Education MEN. Universities offer this program in response to the educational and training needs of Colombia, also helping in the educational development of their students, this program as mentioned above, contributes to higher education, and likewise forms a way to train teachers, who contribute to its purpose.

This research proposal is associated with Research Line 2: *The Study of English as a Foreign Language and its Contexts* presented by López et al. (2022). This line of research fields is related to this proposal, as it is based on the educational contexts, learning experience and formative process in which pre-service teachers develop, triggering needs that, through this line of research, seeks to dismantle the usual conceptions of foreign language teaching and promote reflection on the meaning of being a teacher by promoting both "soft" and "hard" skills as essential components in a process of education and professional training, which is carried out through the distance modality.

Consequently, through the importance of the development of these competencies, the need arises to know the perspective of a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in training, regarding the value, development, and importance of these competencies in the process of training and learning to become a teacher and likewise the learning of the English language at university level through virtual and distance education.

For this, the method to be implemented is the multiple case design as it focuses on the participants' perspectives on a phenomenon within its natural context and is essential to examine in detail a comparison and contrast between the cases. (Halkias et al., 2022). It is also possible to detect both similarities and differences between them, along with the identification of patterns that emerge from the analysis of the collected and cross-referenced data. On the other hand, this method can contribute to strengthening the validity and generalizability of the results by showing different training processes in relation to the development of soft and hard skills in different contexts, scenarios or situations.

Ultimately, by dissecting the contextual reality and comprehending the unique vantage points and exigencies that emerge within the realm of English teaching and learning, this study becomes a resonant voice of experience. It uncloaks the profound significance underpinning the cultivation of both soft and hard skills within the teacher-training trajectory. Operating as a reservoir of experiential wisdom, this proposition adeptly adapts to the hurdles students may encounter, thereby kindling motivation and fostering substantial enhancements in their academic journey for personal and vocational growth.

Thus, it is expected that the results of this research will contribute to the design of more effective and relevant teacher training programs for the distance modality in the context of foreign language teaching. It is also expected that the findings and recommendations generated will be useful for educational institutions, teachers and future teachers facing similar challenges in online training.

Research Statement

Distance learning poses several challenges in the teacher training process, such as the acquisition of technological competencies, as it becomes essential in an increasingly digitized educational environment. In addition, the development of specific academic competencies, such as lesson planning and effective assessments, requires approaches and strategies adapted to the virtual and autonomous learning environment (Gomez & Castro, 2018). Likewise, the interpersonal aspect of teaching and interaction with students is also modified in the distance modality, which demands a reflective approach and the adoption of skills during the learning process (Cordovi et al., 2018).

In the first place, the interest of the present research arises from the context itself, since it is through this context that the trajectory of a teacher in training in the distance modality of a private university in Colombia has been developed. Thus, in this case, Oxford,(1996) pointed out that "context emerges as an important point because when language learners are asked to tell their stories, they inevitably address contextual, situational and cultural factors as part of the story of their learning" (p.582)Thus, this research idea is manifested through the development of technological, academic, and interpersonal competencies in distance learning. Challenges that are especially relevant as future foreign language teachers, therefore, it is crucial to address this analysis to improve the perception and needs of trainee teachers.

Therefore, this is a problem that lies and is reflected in the acquired perception of students in training regarding the development of technological, academic, and interpersonal skills through online learning, from where different challenges are broken down in the training process as a future foreign language teacher. For this reason, this study aims to demonstrate the

importance of promoting soft and hard skills during academic training as a necessity for both the academic and professional process in the development of a future foreign language teacher.

Consequently, it is intended to build an analysis with a descriptive and qualitative approach since it allows reflecting on the scenario, which implies both an inquiry into the educational reality in which students develop and a reflection on the results of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to address such reality. For its intention and the importance of the scope of this project is proposed:

Research Question

What are the soft and hard skills that an EFL pre- service teacher in distance learning needs to develop?

General Objective.

To reflect on the soft and hard skills that need to be developed by a pre-service teacher under the Distance Learning Modality.

Specific Objectives.

- To identify the soft-hard skills that the bachelor's degree in English as a Foreign Language proposes that its students develop through the program.
- To analyze the English Foreign Language students' opinions about the development of soft and hard skills during their formative and academic process.
- To systematize the English Foreign Language students' opinions about the development of soft and hard skills and their importance during their formative and academic process.

Literature Review

This part of the paper presents the theoretical framework to outline the main topics of this project, which reflects the necessary concepts that structure and support it. It is also intended to present the background and needs that give rise to this research, through a series of sections that will help to clarify and recognize the importance of the development of soft and hard skills during a distance learning process. Therefore, this research proposal aims to analyze from different authors of concepts and background related to soft and hard skills, pre-service language teacher, distance modality and learning English as a Foreign Language.

Acquisition and Learning English as a Foreign Language

Learning English as a foreign language is a valuable skill that can open several personal and professional opportunities (Alvarez, 2021). As the world becomes more connected through technology and global commerce, the ability to communicate properly in English is increasingly important thus according to Becirovic (2017), "English is of particular importance because of its global use in almost all areas of life, but it is also a prerequisite for being a successful person in the modern world." (p.211) Thus, in an increasingly interconnected world English is undoubtedly of great importance due to its widespread use in multiple areas of life. Although in many cases it is a prerequisite for success, it is essential to keep recognize that success encompasses different skills and knowledge relevant in a globalized and diverse context.

Moreover, by developing effective study strategies, acquiring essential skills, and using the many resources available, students can steadily progress toward fluency and unlock the myriad opportunities that English language proficiency offers, for as mentioned in Becirovic

(2017) "Knowing English can enrich a person's life and open up endless possibilities, including (but not strictly limited to): education, business, networking, and relationships" (p.211).

Therefore, it is important to note that learning English as a foreign language is essential for a language teacher, as it expands professional opportunities, provides access to educational resources, promotes ongoing professional development, and facilitates communication.

For mastering English not only enhances a teacher's skills and competencies but also enriches the learning experience of students who wish to learn English, as the impact of English proficiency on the teaching job transcends the classroom to nurture a more enriching and effective learning experience (Pabón et al., 2023). This achievement not only benefits the educator in his or her professional growth but also gives students the invaluable opportunity to immerse themselves in authentic and transformative learning.

Thus, foreign language acquisition is not the same as learning a foreign language. Krashen defines acquisition as a process we go through in which skills are natural, hidden, and unconscious. In contrast, learning is the acquisition of a skill, but it is conscious, attentive, and in an artificial context. Likewise, Caballero (2017) exposes that the process of acquiring a foreign language is distinguished into 3 phases:

1. The cognitive phase oversees the access to declarative, explicit knowledge, to that which is to be learned.
2. The associative phase oversees monitoring, from content to concrete cases.
3. The autonomous phase seeks the fluid, spontaneous, and natural use of the skill.

(p.732)

Therefore, according to these authors, the importance of foreign language acquisition for a trainee foreign language teacher lies in the fact that it allows him/her to have a deeper

knowledge of the language he/she teaches and, therefore, to improve his/her ability to teach it. In addition, knowledge of a foreign language provides the teacher with the necessary tools to communicate with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which can improve the quality of teaching and the student's learning experience.

Soft Skills

Traditionally, education was understood by procedures and knowledge of students leaving aside the attitudes and skills to be developed in their context. Nowadays, through the advancement of education and its evolution processes, it seeks to develop in students different skills that allow their academic and professional development through autonomous actions, which is why soft skills "refer to the skills, competencies and characteristics that relate to personality, attitude and behavior rather than formal or technical knowledge" (Ağçam & Doğani, 2021, p. 35)

These skills include competencies such as communication, problem solving, time management, collaboration, and leadership, and area of great importance and contribution as a professional, especially for teachers, since they are the core of the learning process (Alvarez & Suarez, 2023). In this way, the development of this skill has highly significant value as a student in formation of a degree, since the approach of these competences allows the construction and scale of these in the formative process, contributes, among other opportunities, contributing to be more competent in their pedagogical exercise and in the labor world since they are better prepared to assume and face the challenges that implies to be a teacher of English as a Foreign language.

On the other hand, the study conducted by Tang, K. N. (2018) reveals that the importance of soft skills acquisition in the teaching profession are: "1. delivery of effective and quality teaching; 2. career development and enrichment, and 3. managing student skills" (Tang, 2018, pág. 22). Through this study and its results, it is evident that the development of this skill across the formative process grants future results since he obtains the ability to reflect on the importance he has in his role as a teacher by virtue of the results of his students. Likewise, this author supports the importance of acquiring soft skills in the teaching profession because by developing these skills, teachers can reflect on their role and its impact on student learning, generating positive results both in the short and long term

Hard Skills

Hard skills are essential in education and play a crucial role in shaping successful careers. They provide students with the knowledge they need to excel in their chosen fields. As Tamayo (2022) points out, hard skills encompass a "category of knowledge that can be easily quantified and acquired, usually through formal and informal education, and are influenced by an individual's cognitive ability and IQ" (p. 395). This underlines the importance for educators to continuously improve their hard competences in order to improve their performance.

For example, mastery of technology management is a core competency. A teacher who is skilled in the use of various educational technologies can create dynamic and engaging learning experiences for learners. In addition, the ability to articulate ideas clearly and concisely is another critical skill. This allows educators to effectively convey complex concepts, ensuring that students understand the material. In addition, a sound knowledge of modern pedagogical principles is paramount. Understanding and applying contemporary teaching methods fosters an

environment conducive to optimal learning. These skills not only improve teachers' performance, but also prepare them to meet the many challenges of today's educational landscape.

In the area of professional development, hard skills play a key role. As demonstrated by research conducted by Asbari et al. (2020), which assessed the impact of hard and soft skills on teacher innovativeness, it is evident that "we can look at the thinking-related components of hard skills in the intelligence quotient, which involve indicators for calculation, analysis, design, insight and extensive knowledge, as well as critical thinking" (p. 104). This reaffirms that hard competences are a valuable asset that enriches a person's knowledge base and preparation in their specific field. In particular, they contribute to increasing workers' productivity through the use of sophisticated professional management tools.

Thus, the cultivation of hard competencies is indispensable for educators who aspire to excellence. By honing these competencies, teachers not only raise their own performance, but also enrich the educational experiences of their students, preparing them for success in their future careers.

Pre-Service Language Teacher

The development of skills is an important factor as a future teacher, because, through these skills, teaching performance is achieved as the core of the training and teaching process, which is why as mentioned by (ÜLGÜ et.al,2016) "pre-service language teacher education refers to the education and/or training that language teachers receive before they begin to practice the profession". (p. 681)

On the other hand, as a trainee language teacher, it is also essential to be familiar with the latest methodologies and didactic approaches, as well as to understand the main elements of the

language. This is important as it allows for a more complete understanding of the language and the development of skills in different contexts. For this reason, initial teacher training is an important factor, as it prepares teachers to positively influence student achievement and school effectiveness. Therefore, a pre-service teacher's academic process is crucial in shaping their students' education (Goegan et. al, 2020).

In this sense, the previous training of the language teacher influences the significant development as a professional and future teacher, therefore, it is important to know and identify what a preservice teacher is, helping to understand their role as future foreign language teachers and the influence of the skills in their training process and professional development.

Distance Modality

Distance education has revolutionized the way we learn and acquire knowledge. With the advent of digital technology, learners are no longer limited by geographical boundaries or time zones. This mode of learning has opened new avenues for people who cannot attend traditional classrooms for various reasons and has continually evolved with new innovations and training methods.

Thus, addressing distance education evokes a new era and the use of tics, since, as Hernandez (2021), mentions "Distance education (DE) is an alternative way of educating students, especially in today's world, and is further defined as open and distance learning that uses non-traditional approaches and delivery methods compared to face-to-face education". (p.81) Thus, it is part of the significant innovation in distance education as it uses technology to enhance the learning experience as online platforms offer a range of tools and resources to make

learning more interactive and engaging, helping students to better understand concepts, and providing opportunities for collaborative learning and interaction.

On the other hand, distance education is an exciting and innovative learning modality that has transformed the traditional educational system because it has provided students with flexibility, comfort, and access to specialized training, as mentioned in Covarrubias (2021), this modality "arises as an alternative of modern societies in the interest of expanding education and raising the levels of instruction of large human groups, especially those who cannot permanently attend educational centers" (p. 152) Thus, this modality is an interactive and attractive mode of learning that satisfies the diverse learning needs of individuals and helps them to achieve their professional goals and aspirations.

Furthermore, a study by Dominguez et. al, (2021) reveals through the results that this modality "allows students to acquire the competency-based learning necessary for the development of their professional facet". (p.12) thus emphasizing by the author the value of online environments and collaborative platforms in the training of future teachers. (p.12) Therefore, its effectiveness lies in its ability to meet students' learning and training objectives, while offering them the flexibility to learn at their own pace and convenience. Thus evidenced, this factor highlights how this modality also contributes to the effectiveness of distance education because it offers students an interactive and engaging learning experience.

To conclude, this literature review has laid the theoretical foundation and highlighted the importance of the acquisition and learning of English as a foreign language. The development of soft and hard skills, and the understanding of the role of distance education in language teacher education, providing a solid theoretical framework that establishes the main themes of this research project.

Through this, it has highlighted the need to develop both soft and hard skills in the process of distance teaching and learning in the pre-service training of language teachers allowing them to reflect on their role and impact on student learning, generating positive results in the short and long term in the face of current teaching challenges.

Research Design

This section is framed to describe the tradition in which qualitative research is developed and its main objective in this project. Through which a descriptive approach based on multiple case design will be employed, the participants selected for this study are students who have

directly experienced the undergraduate training process so that they can provide a unique and meaningful insight into the phenomenon in question through the instruments and data collection processes described in detail below:

Qualitative Research

Following the definition of qualitative research, the present study is established as qualitative, since through this according to Ahmad, et al. (2019), who states that:

Qualitative research is used to know in depth the behavior, experience, attitudes, intentions, and motivations of human beings, from observation and interpretation, to know the way people think and feel. (p.2829). It is also mentioned that; it is a form of research in which the researcher gives more weight to the opinions of the participants. (p.2829).

Thus, the research presented in this paper highlights the importance of this approach that favors the in-depth analysis of the data collected on the soft and hard skills. Teachers in training in distance mode must develop to explore and understand the underlying meanings in the behavior of the participants in relation to the development of these skills.

Likewise, through this qualitative research, we seek to address personal attributes that allow us to know and deepen the development of communication skills, and interpersonal skills, among others. Thus, qualitative research can help to identify the specific competencies that are required for the significant development of soft and hard skills in a student in training under the distance learning modality.

Descriptive Research

Descriptive research according to (Guevara et. al., 2020) "is carried out when it is desired to describe, in all its main components, a reality". (p.165) Therefore, the present study is called a descriptive study, since one of its implications is its ability to provide accurate and detailed descriptions of specific phenomena. This research method helps to understand the characteristics, patterns of the population and the specific phenomenon.

Multiple Case Designs

The use of multiple case designs in this research has a significant influence on the understanding and analysis of complex phenomena in the context of distance teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Of which it is important to mention Halkias & Neubert (2020) who state that "The ability of a multiple case study to draw common conclusions in different contexts is one of the strengths of its design" (p. 56). Thus, this research approach allows multiple case studies to be examined in detail, providing a broader and richer perspective on the different issues involved.

In this way, the use of multiple case designs allows for the identification of patterns, similarities and differences among study participants. The value of this approach lies in its ability to facilitate the development of in-depth, situation-specific knowledge and to discern emerging patterns and unique phenomena. For as mentioned by Halkias & Neubert (2020) through this methodology, researchers can discover new perspectives, develop innovative understandings and extract meaningful insights from the data collected (p.59).

This will therefore provide a more complete picture of participants' views on the development of trainee teachers' soft and hard competences in the context of distance education. Contributing to a richer understanding of how to foster and strengthen the development of soft and hard competences.

Type of Data

To collect data, qualitative data will be collected to allow the fulfillment of each of the specific objectives as steppingstones to the goal of the general objective. In the following way:

Specific Objective	Data	Instrument
1. Identify the soft-hard competencies that the bachelor's degree in English as a Foreign Language proposes that its students develop through the program	Qualitative	Curriculum Analysis Matrix
2. Analyze the English Foreign Language students' opinions about the development of soft and hard skills during their formative and academic process.	Qualitative	Survey as data collection instrument.
3. Systematize the English Foreign Language students' opinions about the development of soft and hard skills and their importance during their formative and academic process.	Qualitative	Categorization of collected data

Through this data collection process, the analysis will be performed through the categorization of the data that "involves the use of multiple methods of data collection on the same phenomenon" (Polit & Beck, 2012 cited in Carter, 2014, p.1). This, with the purpose of understanding, analyzing, and making a deep reflection on the development of soft and hard skills during the academic process of an English as a Foreign Language teacher in training under the distance education modality. For which, the analysis will be carried out through the coding of the NVivo data analysis software.

Population

This research focused on students enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree in English as a Foreign Language in the distance mode, from 5th to 10th grade, since through these levels of educational and formative experience, the process and development of specific skills from different personal and formative perspectives of each other can be evidenced. Thus the total population was 489 students, however data collection was extended until the responses began to be repeated, which was crucial to ensure a thorough and accurate understanding of the information available. In this sense, a representative sample of 46 students was selected. Through their responses, a saturation of information was observed, indicating that a sufficient range of ideas had been explored and that no new or different elements were presented to add to the data already obtained.

Procedure to Collect Data.

In this section, the instruments that will allow the collection of qualitative information and the fulfillment of the specific objectives of this research will be presented.

Instrument 1: Curriculum Analysis Matrix

The purpose of this analysis matrix is to compile an analysis through the review of the course plans of the bachelor's degree in English as a foreign language and each of the competencies and sub-competencies established through the formative process of the students that the program has. Likewise, categories will be established to allow the classification of soft skills (personal growth, assertive communication, and personal enrichment) or hard skills (digital management, pedagogical confrontation, and English proficiency). The purpose of this is to identify, through the competencies formulated by the program, the skills that the bachelor's degree in English as a Foreign Language proposes that its students develop through the program.

Instrument 2: Survey as Data Collection Instrument.

According to Puente (2020), who highlights the purpose of surveys in analyzing interactions and communications within a population, regardless of how many individuals share similarities (p.51), Tafur Puente (2020) expands on this idea, noting that descriptive surveys are primarily intended to represent the current situation of a specific group of people. Tafur Puente (2020) expands on this idea, noting that descriptive surveys are primarily intended to represent the current situation of a specific group of people. (p.52) This suggests a convergence of views and the relevance of this approach to the use of surveys in qualitative research, offering a more holistic perspective of the phenomena being studied and providing a more complete and detailed understanding.

Thus, the survey as an instrument intends to collect data that can be used to identify patterns and themes so that these can be analyzed to draw conclusions and make informed decisions helping to analyze the effectiveness of strategies toward the development of soft and hard skills in students of an undergraduate degree.

For this reason, and in compliance with the second objective, a survey was conducted in the Office application called forms in which the opinion and perception of the students of the Bachelor's Degree in English as a Foreign Language on the development of the competencies previously identified during their formative and academic process, composed of 21 questions distributed in 4 sections: personal data, conceptions of the development of soft skills, conception of the development of hard skills and finally the appreciation of soft and hard skills at Universidad Santo Tomas by the students, with the purpose of aiming at the understanding and order of each section.

It should be noted that the survey was applied and designed in Spanish, in order to achieve a better understanding and reflection of the concepts and questions to facilitate the participants' expression of their ideas and allow them a more meaningful participation that contributes in the same way to this study. On the other hand, it is important to highlight that the online dissemination allowed data collection and results to be available in real time. Moreover, in this way, this survey achieved a level of flexibility and could be answered asynchronously, in order to collect as many responses as possible from university students.

Instrument 3: Categorization of Collected Data - Matrix.

Finally, in compliance with the third objective, the categorization of the data obtained will be carried out through a matrix of categories in which the systematization of the opinions obtained through the survey and the categories proposed in instrument 1 will be evidenced, allowing the identification of what is expected through the degree program in terms of soft and hard skills and what is the opinion of the students who experience the distance learning process.

Ethical Aspects

Finally, regarding the ethical aspects, the first step will be to request permission from the University to obtain consent for the application of instruments for the fulfillment of the objectives. Next, an informed consent form will be sent to each of the participants in the research in which it will be made clear that their opinions and points of view will be totally anonymous and relevant to the data analysis of this research project. Finally, the instrument will be sent for validation by experts.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This chapter will explain how the procedures and tools used to collect and structure the information necessary to achieve the established objectives were carried out. For the creation of this report, a research and descriptive study was conducted, through which relevant documents were examined to identify, describe, and contrast the perspectives of different authors, with the purpose of identifying the soft and hard skills that EFL Preservice teachers should develop.

Instrument 1: Curriculum Analysis Matrix

In order to fulfill specific objective 1, the development and analysis of the instrument were based on the systematic compilation of the competencies established by the ~~Bachelor's~~bachelor's degree program in English as a Foreign Language at Universidad Santo Tomás. These competencies are organized and presented in different fields or dimensions that cover various aspects of training. During this compilation process, identification categories were created to show the scope of each these competencies. Presented in this way:

Table 1.

Scope Identification- Soft skills

Skill	Category	Scope Identification
Soft Skill	Personal Growth	It focuses on the development of self-efficacy and self-care as part of acquiring a greater knowledge of oneself, one's strengths and needs, and ethical thoughts, as fundamental tools for personal growth, the achievement of goals, and the improvement of quality of life in all aspects.
	Assertive Communication	It involves the development of competencies such as assertive communication, adaptation, mediation, and teamwork. The use of active listening, context review, empathy, paraphrasing, and reinforcement through questioning, thus allowing for the creation

		of a learning environment that contributes to a positive and enriching learning environment for language learners.
	Professional Enrichment	It focuses on enhancing the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving, creativity, and innovation in teachers of English as a foreign language. Through this professional enrichment, teachers can improve their educational practice, adapt to the needs of their students, and provide quality and meaningful education that promotes deeper and more enriching learning.

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2.

Scope Identification- Hard skills

Skill	Category	Scope Identification
Hard Skill	Digital Management	It focuses on the development of knowledge, skills, aptitudes, attitudes, and behaviors of pre-service teachers in English as a foreign language in the effective and responsible use of ICT, allowing them to design innovative and attractive educational experiences that integrate digital tools in the process of teaching and learning English.
	Pedagogical Confrontation	It focuses on the development of essential competencies that enable pre-service teachers to effectively face and address the pedagogical challenges that arise in the educational context, promoting a reflective, proactive, and creative approach to their educational practice.
	English Proficiency	It involves on the development of communicative competencies in the English language that facilitate effective communication and full understanding of educational activities. A comprehensive mastery of the skills of speaking, reading, listening, and writing in English that allows the pre-service teacher a productive means to carry out their future pedagogical work successfully.

Source: Own elaboration

For the subsequent analysis, each identification category was related to a specific scope, which made it possible to establish the nature and level of skills involved in each competency. The identification of competencies according to their scope and category was carried out with the purpose of obtaining a complete analysis by scope or dimension, focused on the development of both soft and hard skills in the bachelor's degree.

Thus, the objective of this instrument was to provide a clear and organized basis for the identification of competencies in the undergraduate program in English as a foreign language. This process involved the development of precise criteria for understanding how soft and hard skills combine and complement each competency, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the program's approach to holistic student development. Thus, the results of this identification process provide valuable information for analyzing the training offered by the BA in English as a Foreign Language program at Universidad Santo Tomás.

The examination of the competencies was conducted by evaluating the various dimensions or fields in which the competencies are categorized in the curriculum for the undergraduate degree program. This approach yielded the following findings:

Humanistic Dimension/Field:

From the analysis of each of the general and specific competencies established in this one, it was possible to identify that this one, leans towards the development of soft skills, since, what is evidenced is that it is essential to train empathetic, sensitive, and committed teachers with the well-being and integral development of their students. Likewise, this field focuses on the individuality of each student, promotes communication and respect in the classroom, fosters student autonomy, and values meaningful and relevant learning. Teachers in training acquire

skills to support the academic and personal growth of their students, contributing to their personal development and to an enriching and meaningful educational experience.

In this manner, the subjects encompassed within the curriculum effectively align with the two proposed categories of soft skills, as outlined below:

Personal Growth: This category emphasizes the cultivation of critical thinking, along with an exploration of anthropological, epistemological, philosophical, and ethical principles. These components collectively shape the teaching mission within the framework of Dominican Thomistic thought. This approach contributes to the fostering of a humanistic perspective and a heightened recognition of its significance in the development of an English teacher.

Professional Enrichment: Within this category, there is a focus on the application of critical thinking in relation to the multifaceted role that language, culture, technology, and interpersonal dynamics play in the realm of an English teacher's responsibilities.

Furthermore, within this domain, the integration of these soft skills is complemented by the incorporation of hard skills, as observed across the following categories:

Digital Management: This facet encompasses an exploration of utilizing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Technological-Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TAC TEP) as tools to enhance teaching practices.

Pedagogical confrontation: To creatively formulate processes of acquisition and production of disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge in response to the needs and challenges of today's society.

Research Dimension/Field:

Additionally, the examination of the research dimension underscores its alignment with the cultivation of soft skills, resulting in notable contributions to both academic and professional

growth. This is predominantly complemented by the application of English language proficiency (a hard skill), given that a significant portion of these pursuits is conducted in the target language. Consequently, it becomes manifestly clear that the established competencies seamlessly accommodate the nurturing of soft skills, facilitating the acquisition of research capabilities.

In this context, these competencies facilitate the acquisition of research skills, promote introspection into teaching methodologies, and reciprocally, research endeavors stimulate the cultivation of critical thinking skills in students. This entails the students' ability not only to meticulously assess and analyze information but also to challenge underlying assumptions and construct well-structured arguments grounded in their research endeavors. Hence, because of the comprehensive analysis conducted, the research domain is appropriately classified within the following category:

Professional Enrichment: This classification underscores the development of competencies geared towards fostering a research-centered culture. Furthermore, it underscores the establishment of a critical and proactive approach to analyzing one's research practices, with the overarching aim of effecting transformative changes within the realms of education and pedagogy.

Linguistic Dimension/Field:

The linguistic field is centered on the development of both soft and hard skills, synergistically complementing one another. This is notably demonstrated through a pronounced mastery of English, facilitated by competencies in assertive communication and critical sensitivity. Upon reviewing the competencies within this domain, it becomes evident that students acquire robust knowledge in grammar and vocabulary, communicative skills, phonetics

and pronunciation, methodological approaches for English teaching, language assessment, and intercultural awareness. As a result, they are equipped to cultivate abilities that contribute to effective English language instruction and facilitate meaningful learning experiences for their future students.

Thus, through their analysis it is evident that they fit into the following categories of soft skills:

Assertive communication: In which communication is proposed as a fundamental point in the teaching of English as a foreign language using the language in different socio-educational contexts and areas of formal and digital written communication.

Professional Enrichment: The competencies proposed are to adopt a critical vision on the part of the teachers in training of the use of the language of the studied community to express it before an academic community. Analyzing at the same time samples of written or oral discourse, recognizing their contribution to the teaching and professional training of a degree in a foreign language.

On the other hand, in terms of their complement, they are categorized within the following scope of hard skills:

English proficiency: the competencies concentrated in this area aim directly at perfecting the morphological and syntactic aspects of English at the word, text, and discourse levels, encompassing English phonetics and phonology, rooted in the understanding of the processes of sound production and articulation.

Pedagogical Dimension/Field:

There is a greater inclination towards the development of hard competencies since the development of the pedagogical field in English foreign language undergraduate students is

essential to train competent and prepared teachers. Thus, through the analysis, it is evident that they acquire knowledge in theoretical foundations of education, skills in lesson planning and learning assessment, as well as strategies for the effective use of technology in the classroom. In addition, they develop skills in classroom management and discipline, which allows them to create a learning environment conducive to the academic and personal success of their future students.

Therefore, it falls into the next category of hard skills:

Pedagogical confrontation: Through which, the teacher in training manages to develop from the identification of pedagogical processes in an educational institution, to select and apply and incorporate tools for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, thus consolidating their professional ethics.

At the same time contributing to the category of soft skills:

Professional enrichment: by enriching their skills and perspectives. Through this notion, the trainee teacher embarks on a process of personal and professional growth by identifying and understanding the pedagogical processes inherent to an educational institution, thus nurturing the teacher's professional development, providing him/her with the ability to evolve and thrive in his/her educational role, encouraging him/her to be an efficient and ethical educational facilitator in constant growth.

Specific Dimension/Field English:

In the analysis of this field, it is possible to identify that its development is centered on hard skills, through which its focus is the mastery of English through the skills of reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Likewise, on the other hand, grammatical and lexical

competence plays an important role since it is proposed that students should acquire a solid knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary.

For which it was classified in the following categories:

English Proficiency: Through which the development and consolidation of linguistic and pragmatic skills of the English foreign language and learning skills are promoted.

Digital Management: The identification of this category in this field is based on the use of platforms for access to resources, access to different didactic materials and tools that help to fulfill the focus of the field by putting into practice particular skills required in distance education, namely, the use of online resources and platforms, incorporating strategies of self-control, self-regulation, and self-evaluation in their management.

On the other hand, it is also evident that this field seeks to complement this with the following category of soft skills:

Assertive communication: In pursuit of the development of critical thinking and problem solving, this skill involves evaluating real-life situations, proposing effective solutions to problems, expressing personal opinions, analyzing complex scenarios, and collaborating harmoniously with others. It encompasses the ability to evaluate information, make informed judgments, and contribute constructively to diverse contexts.

Dimension/Field Deepening's:

Finally, it becomes evident that this field in general allows students to explore their interests and professional aspirations, this approach enriches their academic training and prepares them to be highly skilled and versatile teachers in the field of language teaching, through different strategies. Through the analysis, the development of both skills is revealed, as it exposes both the deepening of knowledge and pedagogical practices specific to English as a foreign language, as

well as the development of language skills in academic contexts to strengthen the training profile of the English teacher.

Instrument 2: Survey as a Data Collection

The process of creating the survey involved several key steps to ensure its effectiveness in obtaining relevant and meaningful data related to the definition of objectives, starting from the objective of the instrument: "To analyze the opinion of English Foreign Language learners on the development of soft and hard skills during their formative and academic process", the questions oriented to it were elaborated. Being thus designed based on the analysis carried out in instrument 1 and through its categories, in order to disclose and meaningfully capture the scope of each of these, in which different types of questions were included to collect a variety of data, such as rating scales, open and closed questions.

The survey was then distributed and collected through different electronic media to collect as many responses as possible. In which the data collected were through participants ranging from 16 to 40 years old belonging to the bachelor's degree Program in English Foreign Language at the University of Santo Tomas, respectively between V to X semester. Within which 37 of the participants were female and 9 were male.

Instrument 3: Categorization of Collected Data

Finally, in fulfilment of specific objective 3, and based on the responses obtained through instrument 2, the data were manually coded inductively in this study. This means that the codes emerged during the analysis of the data and were then read and analyzed, coded, and categorized. NVivo data analysis software was also used to ratify the subcategories.

Thus giving rise to the uploading of the information collected in this, the rereading of the open responses obtained for their respective categorization was carried out, through which as a first result a graph was created showing the words that were most repeated in these responses obtained, coinciding mostly with concepts that relate directly to the trainee teachers and their academic process, such as: what-to-do, development, training, skills, activities, tools, pedagogy, effective learning, contribute.

Figure 1.

Word cloud of the analysis in the NVivo program



Note: The translation of the words generated by the NVIVO programmer was carried out.

Thus, through the analysis carried out and through the proposed categories, the following subcategories emerge as analysis subcategories from the axial coding and from the coding carried out with NVivo:

Table 3.

Categories and subcategories defined.

SKILL	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
SOFT SKILLS	1. Personal Growth	1.1 Self-directed learning 1.2 Academic and Personal Balance
	2. Assertive Communication	2.1 Humanization of the Teacher 2.2 Communication Skills
	3. Professional Enrichment	3.1 Educational Experiences 3.2 Institutional Support
HARD SKILLS	4. Digital Management	4.1 Recognition of Potential 4.2 Impact on English language learning and teaching
	5. Pedagogical Confrontation	5.1 Impact and value on teacher education 5.2 Need for feedback 5.3 Vision for improvement 5.4 Challenges and adjustments
	6. English Proficiency	6.1 Interaction and integrated skills development in the learning environment. 6.2 Focus on specific skills.

Source: Own elaboration.

Thus, the categories identified in instrument 1 are presented and subcategories are created, through which it is possible to better understand the trainee teachers' perspectives on the development of soft and hard skills during their academic career in the distance learning modality.

The following results were obtained from these categories:

Categories and subcategories of soft skills.

1. Personal Growth

Within higher education, the category of "Personal Growth" is essential for the individual and complete development of students. Two sub-categories crucial to their progress are explored in this domain: Self-Directed Learning and Academic and Personal Balance. These elements are particularly salient in the distance learning Bachelor of Arts in English, where students not only

acquire knowledge but also foster personal skills and a balanced approach to their holistic development.

1.1 Self-Directed Learning

This subcategory is significantly highlighted by the trainee teachers in the significant development of self-directed learning, through which aspects such as responsibility, appropriate time management and academic and personal development are promoted. In which, students highlight how the modality promotes autonomous and individual responsibility in the learning process, encouraging self-regulation and self-discipline, contributing significantly to their learning process, and promoting the formation of more autonomous and disciplined individuals.

Likewise, as Hernández (2021) calls "delivery methods" that contribute, as mentioned by one of them, who states that "personal enrichment is because it is a distance modality and that each student is autonomous, strengthening my discipline and organization by appropriating their knowledge and training"(Student 31). This reflects the fact that students being responsible for their own learning and actively taking ownership of their knowledge and training is a valuable aspect of these delivery methods. This reflection leads us to appreciate how distance learning can have a profound impact on the way students engage with their education and take responsibility for their own personal and academic growth.

1.2 Academic and Personal Balance

The analysis of these responses reveals a very positive aspect of the academic and personal balance that is achieved through the distance learning degree in English. Students highlight several key aspects as it is generally mentioned that the training not only improves their

academic skills, but also helps them to grow as individuals in terms of self-discipline, time management and organization, underlining how this modality promotes the acquisition of personal skills, such as resilience, balance between study and personal well-being, and the ability to manage responsibilities.

Furthermore, several of the students reveal that they feel more empowered and autonomous to manage their academic and personal responsibilities, which allows them to extend their learning beyond academics and to take time for extracurricular activities and personal enrichment.

On the other hand, it is important to mention that it is highlighted by the participants how this modality also fosters collaboration and effective communication, which enriches the personal and social experience of the students.

2. Assertive Communication

Within the educational field, this proposed category occupies a place of relevance when analyzing how the bachelor's degree in English, in distance mode, impacts on the development of students' communication skills. This category is broken down into two essential subcategories: "Humanization of the Teacher" and "Communication Skills", which together highlight the importance of effective communication and the formation of ethics and values in teacher training.

2.1 Humanization of the Teacher

Through the analysis of this subcategory, it is highlighted by the trainee teachers what the degree has contributed to their knowledge and principles, highlighting that this not only focuses

on academic skills but also on personal and ethical development, which denotes a higher level of empathy and interpersonal skills.

In mentioning the above, the importance of teaching good values and humanistic practices is notoriously complemented, as one of them responds to the question "How have the subjects you have studied contributed to your personal growth? "In my opinion, the subjects I have studied have contributed on a personal level in terms of my own knowledge. As I have studied the different subjects, I have expanded my knowledge and knowledge a little more and the elements that make up the degree and how they help me to understand not only what I have to do as a teacher, but also to enrich myself ethically and understand that I am on the path I wish to follow" (student 23). Thus, training is not only limited to academic knowledge but also includes the development of human skills which, based on reflection and critical thinking, contribute to the ethical enrichment of teachers.

On the other hand, the acquisition of greater cultural awareness as part of the training is highlighted in the appreciation of diversity and the importance of respecting differences, contributing to the training of teachers who are more humanized and aware of their role in society.

2.2 Communication Skills

Through the data obtained in this subcategory, it is revealed how the Bachelor's degree program in English in which the students are involved has had a significant impact on the development of their communication skills, several of the responses obtained mention that through the Bachelor's degree program, they have developed essential skills for effective communication, The same is true for language skills and personal awareness, which are part of

this training, as they allow students to get to know themselves and take care of themselves, and can influence how they communicate with others.

Thus, in this sense, several of the soft skills mentioned by the students that encompass the development of assertive communication, such as empathy, teamwork, critical and effective thinking, and active listening, which shows the impact of acquiring these skills, as their contribution is not only relevant to their future role as teachers, but also has an impact on enriching their communication skills. Therefore, as indicated by Tang (2018), through the development of these skills it is possible to obtain a reflective view on their role and impact on students' learning, in the same way it helps to prepare trainee teachers in a comprehensive way for their future role as teachers and professionals.

3. Professional Enrichment

This category emerges as a crucial component shaping the development and preparation of future educators. Thus, it encompasses two essential subcategories: "Educational Experiences" and "Institutional Support" highlighting how educational experiences and institutional support collaborate to nurture the professional side of a teacher.

3.1 Educational Experiences

Based on experiences, the educational experience is evidenced in this subcategory as one of the most important and relevant factors in terms of the practical learning through which the undergraduate students face, who, based on their reflection and experience, state that they have learned through formative practice, which reflects that educational experiences provide them with concrete opportunities to apply what they have learned in real-world situations.

In this sense, several students highlight that the educational experiences have provided them with strategies that they can implement in their classrooms and the planning of topics.

Contributing to how training goes beyond theory and prepares students to be effective teachers.

Accordingly, it is highlighted that the production of individual and cooperative material is an important part of the educational experiences as this encourages personal responsibility and teamwork, problem solving, creativity, and innovation through which they can recognize the reality they may face, thus reflecting a focus on relevance and adaptation to the context.

Thus, it is evident through this subcategory that educational experiences focus on holistic learning, which includes academic, social, and emotional aspects. Thus, highlighting the importance of a well-rounded education that contributes to their profession and career development.

3.2. Institutional Support

The analysis of the responses obtained in the subcategory of institutional support contributes to a vision in relation to the notorious commitment on the part of the university towards the integral growth of its students. The influence of the university on the educational experiences and the support of teachers and administrators in addressing personal and academic concerns and issues is highlighted. In this sense, the students reveal that the university provides a variety of resources, from tutorials to readings, which contribute to the professional enrichment of the students, through which they manage to manage the resources provided effectively.

Having said this, the importance of teaching support is also highlighted as a relevant aspect of institutional support, as this being an essential factor for student success, it is related to the learning strategies proposed by the university and its formative processes.

In summary, the analysis carried out allows us to identify institutional support as an essential factor in the professional development of students in training, also contributing to the adaptation to the learning modality and the different resources and tools that are indispensable for the learning and teaching process in today's education.

Categories and subcategories of hard skills.

4. Digital Management

Figure 2.

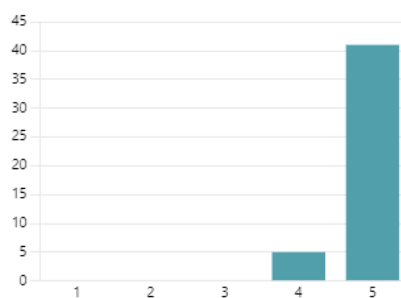
Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of digital tools.

16. ¿Cree que la formación en el manejo de herramientas digitales es esencial para su desarrollo como docente y eficiente en el entorno educativo actual? En una escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 no es efectivo y 5 muy efectivo. (0 punto)

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[Información](#)

4.89
Clasificación promedio



Source: Survey of preservice teachers at the bachelor's degree program.

This category is broken down into two essential subcategories: "Recognition of Potential" and "Impact on English Language Learning and Teaching". And as figure 2 illustrates, these subcategories shed light on how the integration of digital tools in education enriches the educational experience and contributes to the effectiveness of future educators.

4.1 Recognition of Potential.

Many of the preservice teachers during their training process and adaptation to new learning environments revealed a general consensus among them about the importance and benefits they perceive of digital tools. Firstly, the relevance of these tools for innovation in teaching is highlighted, with mentions of the need to implement innovative and creative strategies in all subjects. Students recognize that these tools not only enrich the way in which content is presented but also allow them to approach information in a didactic and effective way.

In fact, one of them mentions that: "this modality quickly encourages us to use these tools, because, from the classes taught by teachers to the classes we have to create using and managing them, digital tools offer a wide range of possibilities for designing innovative and attractive educational experiences in the teaching and learning of English"(student 23). Thus, contrasting this opinion, most of the students express that they have grown and have been significantly trained in the use of digital tools through this modality, which has been crucial in a world where ICT is essential.

4.2. Impact On English Language Learning and Teaching.

The impact of English language learning and teaching through digital tools and from the students' perception, manages to evidence an important contribution in this process, as it is revealed through these, their influence and how these technologies influence the educational process. Firstly, the importance of adapting learning to the needs of the environment is highlighted, which reflects an awareness of the relevance of contextualized education.

Secondly, most students mention that digital tools make learning more interactive and engaging. This demonstrates how these technologies can enhance students' motivation and personalize the learning experience, which is essential in a diverse educational environment.

Likewise, it is observed through the students' perceptions that teachers play a key role in proposing activities that involve the use of digital tools, indicating that the effective integration of technology in the classroom contributes to the development of creative activities to make learning less tedious and more engaging. Therefore, this subcategory reveals that digital tools have a significant impact on the learning and training of English language teaching as future teachers by revealing the importance of adapting to the needs of the context and taking advantage of the opportunities provided by digital technologies to improve the quality of education.

5. Pedagogical Confrontation

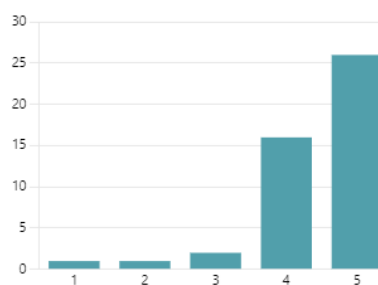
Figure 3.

Evaluation of the training practices by the preservice teachers

17. **Valore de 1 a 5 el impacto de las prácticas en su formación profesional. Donde 1 es poco significativa y 5 muy significativa.** (0 punto)

[Más detalles](#) [Información](#)

4.41
Clasificación promedio



Source: Survey of preservice teachers at the bachelor's degree program.

This category aims to reveal how confrontation with pedagogical practices and feedback impact on teacher education, as evidenced in Figure 3, most students perceive this as a factor that promotes continuous improvement that is continuously preparing future educators to face educational challenges with an adaptive and enriching perspective. Thus, this category is broken down into four significant subcategories: "Impact and Value in Teacher Education", "Need for Feedback", "Vision for Improvement" and "Challenges and Adjustments".

5.1. Impact and Assessment in Teacher Training

Based on the different perspectives of the participants, this subcategory emphasizes the importance and effective influence of pedagogical practices in the process of developing as future educators. Students express that these practices are essential for their professional growth and provide them with valuable tools for their future teaching work. Firstly, it is highlighted that pedagogical practices provide opportunities to put into practice what they have learned in theory, which allows them to better understand the reality of the classroom and the challenges they will face as teachers, thus contributing to their process and to a more complete and contextualized training.

Thus, from the response of one of them to the question "How have pedagogical practices been throughout your training? Reflect on your perception of their development in your process as a trainee teacher, one of them answered: "They are essential to prepare future educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to be effective teachers and adapt to a constantly changing educational environment and meet the challenges of education" (student 32), which shows how the students highlight that the practices allow them to reflect and learn actively.

Observing classes, interacting with students and receiving feedback helps them to improve their teaching and adapt to different contexts and needs and this is supported by the author Goegan et. al, (2020) who, in mentioning this, states that this is an element of great relevance as it enables them to exert a positive influence on both student performance and the overall effectiveness of the educational institution. Thus, the formative process of a trainee teacher plays a critical role in shaping the educational experience of their students through context.

5.2. Need for Feedback

This category is revealed as an important factor, as students take a positive approach to the feedback they receive from their teachers. Most participants consider it beneficial and necessary for their continuous improvement as students appreciate that feedback helps them to improve and understand how they are performing. They see feedback as a tool to identify areas for improvement and to progress in their learning and training process.

On the other hand, although some of the students express the need for broader and deeper feedback, they value the feedback they receive because they feel it could be more detailed and cover additional aspects. It is also recognized that, given the workloads and the number of students and subjects teachers must handle, the depth of feedback may be limited.

5.3. Vision for Improvement

Feedback is seen as a point of value in the training process, as has already been shown above. This subcategory focuses on the perspectives of the students, who consider that it is part of a vision for improvement, as it is part of their training process to feed themselves cognitively and professionally with constructive criticism that allows them to approach and advance their teacher

training since it is highlighted that feedback is seen as an opportunity for improvement through which teachers' suggestions are valued as tools for correcting errors and progressing in their training process.

In other words, this subcategory highlights the value of feedback from supervising teachers and from the students themselves, as it helps to identify areas for improvement and to strengthen pedagogical skills. Feedback is perceived by participants as a valuable tool for professional development and continuous improvement of their process as future trainee teachers.

5.4. Challenges and Adjustments

Through the reading and analysis of data for this subcategory, the importance of mentioning the perspective of the students who showed a critical inclination towards the development of teaching practices became evident, in which one of the students pointed out that the current pedagogical practices are not sufficient to adequately prepare future teachers to face a real classroom. This shows that there is a need to review and improve the focus of these practices in order to make them more effective in teacher training.

On the other hand, it was pointed out by some of the participants that "some pedagogical practices are not adequately preparing future teachers to face the challenges related to the inclusion of students with different abilities"(student 41), which is an important issue in education that deserves attention and action as teacher preparation should focus on effective inclusion, and teachers should be preparing and growing in this aspect to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn and develop in an inclusive educational environment.

For this reason, focus was placed on the analysis of this subcategory to reveal the perspectives of challenges related to the adequate preparation for the teaching work that undergraduate

students have, the need for more dynamism in practices, and teacher education towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in order to address these challenges that provide important areas of improvement for teacher education.

6. English Proficiency

According to Becirovic (2017), this category allows to expose how students perceive the learning of English as a vision of success in their training process, so this category is divided into two essential subcategories: "Interaction and Comprehensive Development of Skills in the Learning Environment" and "Focus on Specific Skills". This is a general overview of how English skills development is vital for teacher education, highlighting the perspectives of the interconnectedness of skills for a complete mastery of the language.

6.1. Interaction and Integrated Skills Development in the Learning Environment.

The analysis of this subcategory reveals a variety of opinions and experiences of the participants in relation to the skills and activities that contribute to English language proficiency. Whereby, its general focus is on the integrated development of the 4 skills for English language proficiency (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) as many participants emphasize that all skills are essential and interconnected. They stress that they cannot be separated and that a holistic approach is necessary for full English language proficiency.

Therefore, interaction and holistic development in the learning environment for English language proficiency involves a combination of the development of these and some activities and approaches that participants have found to be of great importance to their process, such as the educational resources and pedagogical strategies provided in the online practice, of which the

students highlight the usefulness of the online practices and resources, both the classes as part of the interaction, creation of classes, to the "Macmillan" book page, which contribute to integrate the improvement of English skills, thus reflecting the growing importance of the development of these in the mastery of the English language through technology in education.

6.2 Focus on Specific Skills.

From the analysis of this subcategory, the participants reveal an inclination from their perspective on the importance of focusing on specific skills for the mastery of English. Firstly, the emphasis on writing skills is considered by the participants to be a fundamental aspect of learning English, as they argue that writing requires research and information seeking, which promotes a better understanding of the language and teaching practice.

On the other hand, the importance of speaking is highlighted as an essential skill for both professional success and effective communication, highlighting in general that teachers need to master this skill to teach in English and transmit knowledge clearly and effectively, as well as to establish social relationships. Thirdly, in the focus on the skill of Reading, Reading is mentioned as a promoter of familiarization with English spelling, grammar, and vocabulary, which in their view contributes to language proficiency.

Finally, the importance of listening skills is directly related to speaking skills, to the focus of the teaching role and to assertive and effective communication.

Thus, this subcategory shows that, although the opinions of the participants reveal different perspectives on which skills are most important in teaching practice, there is a consensus that they all stem from constant practice, the support of teachers, and the use of educational resources as key elements in the development of these skills in the educational and teaching context, and

thus this influence transcends the limits of the classroom, contributing to shaping a more effective and enriching learning experience (Pabón et al., 2023).

Conclusions

This study inquired the development of soft and hard skills and their importance in the educational and academic process, from the perspectives of the students of the bachelor's degree in English as a foreign language. From the results of the analysis carried out, it can be concluded that pre-service teachers have a valuable perspective towards the development of these skills and significantly perceive the integration of these skills in their educational trajectory under the distance learning modality for their personal and professional development as future teachers.

Thus, as a focal part of this study, the perspectives provided by 46 students from different semesters show how the development of soft and hard skills is a fundamental part of their educational process through the distance mode despite the different challenges and needs that arise through it. Since it was possible to demonstrate from the experiences of the students what Dominguez et al. (2021) mentioned regarding the impulse that this modality provides in the development of learning based on competences as they develop through these for their development and professional phase (Dominguez et al., 2021), enriching the fulfillment of their teaching-learning objectives as part of their teacher training.

Thus, this study manages to confirm through the analysis of the data obtained, different perspectives on what are the most important skills in the practice of teacher training. Based on constant practice, teaching support, and the use of educational resources, these elements are key

in the development of these skills, aiming to transcend the limits of the classroom. This helps to shape a more effective and enriching learning experience (Pabón et al., 2023).

Therefore, it can be seen how the curricula proposed by the university give light to a primary focus for their students. This allows them to develop both personally and professionally, developing these skills that contribute to their teaching work. Simultaneously, it enhances their motivation, learning, and academic process. This will allow them to overcome challenges and contribute innovatively to today's education.

In terms of the methodology used for this study, the use of multiple cases was the best method for giving a voice to the pre-service teachers. Their experiences contributed significantly to the understanding of the study from different perspectives, maintaining and enriching the coherence of analysis as part of the validity in the search for the skills that should be developed as a teacher in training for a distance learning degree. It is essential to emphasize the experiences of the students themselves in the construction of their own development as language teachers.

Thus, through the design of open questions, it was possible to analyze the perspectives, challenges, and needs of the participants in terms of the development of these skills as part of their process. Although the data collection had some limitations, the responses obtained shed light on the saturation of the information, as there was a higher sample population to get the greatest number of responses and experiences from the students. A total of 46 responses in all were recorded.

Finally, as future research, it would be interesting to explore other experiences and examine how the opinions of students in English Foreign Language training, who participate in different educational modalities such as face-to-face and distance education, differ. Are there significant differences in their perceptions of the development of these skills and their integration? On the

other hand, this could be a significant contribution to understanding how these skills evolve and are applied throughout their careers by monitoring a group of students over time, from the beginning of their training to their graduation. This way, it could be analyzed whether they share the analysis carried out and how they approach their teaching practices.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Informed Consent to Participate

Consentimiento Informado de Participación

1. De conformidad con lo dispuesto en las normas vigentes sobre protección de datos personales, en especial la Ley 1581 de 2012, autorizo libre, declaro que conozco que la recolección y tratamiento de mis datos será de manera anónima y confidencial en los informes y reportes académicos que se generen en está así, manifestando que he sido informado de forma clara y suficiente de los fines de su tratamiento. autorizo libre, expresa e inequívocamente para que se realice la recolección y tratamiento de mis datos personales que suministre de manera completa, los cuales serán utilizados para los diferentes aspectos relacionados con la investigación a presentar por parte de la estudiante Ivonne Daniela Orjuela Romero de la Universidad Santo Tomás. *

Acepto

No acepto

Appendix B. Survey to collected data

Survey Link:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?subpage=design&FormId=ynTGmcfACkmu-jxYXJjbzG4EyFs6m_rdGgZ4fC-O8UCNUNkYyS1hEOUw3NUpCWktEUINZME9JSEU4RC4u&Token=5f146dd4fe6942ac896daeb9514902ce

Appendix C. Evidence of expert validation of the data collection instrument 1



Universidad Santo Tomás Abierta y a Distancia
Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés
Rejilla de validación del instrumento

A continuación, encontrará la rejilla de validación del instrumento *“Evaluation rubric to analyze and identify the skills”* Marcar en la casilla de puntuación de 1 a 5 su concepción de esta, siendo 1 (uno) la puntuación mínima y 5 (cinco) la puntuación máxima.

Aspecto	Descripción de asertividad	Puntuación
Objetivo: Identificar las habilidades blandas-duras que la licenciatura en inglés como lengua extranjera propone que sus estudiantes desarrollen a través del programa.	El instrumento presenta cohesión y coherencia con el objetivo.	5
Intencionalidad	Las categorías y secciones tienen el alcance necesario para la recolección de información requerida en el objetivo.	5
Objetividad	Las categorías propuestas permiten reflexionar profundamente cuales son las habilidades que propone el programa a sus estudiantes.	4
Claridad	La información permite el análisis profundo para dar cumplimiento del objetivo.	3
Evaluableidad	La propuesta permite desarrollar una evaluación significativa al plan de estudios a través de sus competencias, lo que permitirá la identificación de las habilidades.	5
Diseño	El diseño de la rúbrica permite entenderla y analizarla claramente para suplir la necesidad de análisis en cumplimiento del objetivo. Su estructura es clara y objetiva.	3

Observaciones y/o sugerencias

El instrumento cumple con el objetivo general señalado en las indicaciones. Se sugiere finalizar el instrumento en un mismo idioma, aunque los descriptivos y criterios están escritos en inglés, las categorías aún están en español y no se ve uniforme.

Al principio, fue difícil poder entender el instrumento pues los descriptivos contienen mucho texto, ese aspecto podría simplificarse.

Silvia Andrea Tarazona Ariza

Appendix D. Evidence of expert validation of the data collection instrument 1



Universidad Santo Tomás Abierta y a Distancia
Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés
Rejilla de validación del instrumento

A continuación, encontrará la rejilla de validación del instrumento *"Evaluation rubric to analyze and identify the skills"*

Marcar en la casilla de puntuación de 1 a 5 su concepción de esta, siendo 1 (uno) la puntuación mínima y 5 (cinco) la puntuación máxima.

Aspecto	Descripción de asertividad	Puntuación
Objetivo: Identificar las habilidades blandas-duras que la licenciatura en inglés como lengua extranjera propone que sus estudiantes desarrollen a través del programa.	El instrumento presenta cohesión y coherencia con el objetivo.	4
Intencionalidad	Las categorías y secciones tienen el alcance necesario para la recolección de información requerida en el objetivo.	4
Objetividad	Las categorías propuestas permiten reflexionar profundamente cuales son las habilidades que propone el programa a sus estudiantes.	3
Claridad	La información permite el análisis profundo para dar cumplimiento del objetivo.	3
Evaluabilidad	La propuesta permite desarrollar una evaluación significativa al plan de estudios a través de sus competencias, lo que permitirá la identificación de las habilidades.	3
Diseño	El diseño de la rúbrica permite entenderla y analizarla claramente para suplir la necesidad de análisis en cumplimiento del objetivo. Su estructura es clara y objetiva.	3

Observaciones y/o sugerencias

El instrumento tiene la denominación de rúbrica, no obstante su organización y alcance corresponde al de una lista de chequeo.

Firma
Maritza Ruiz Martín

Appendix E. Evidence of expert validation of the data collection instrument 2



Universidad Santo Tomás Abierta y a Distancia
Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Ingles
Rejilla de validación del instrumento

A continuación, encontrará la rejilla de validación del instrumento "Survey as data collection instrument"

Marcar en la casilla de puntuación de 1 a 5 su concepción de esta, siendo 1 (uno) la puntuación mínima y 5 (cinco) la puntuación máxima.

Aspecto	Descripción de asertividad	Puntuación
Objetivo: Analizar las opiniones de los estudiantes de Lengua Extranjera Inglés sobre el desarrollo de las habilidades blandas y duras durante su proceso formativo y académico.	El instrumento presenta cohesión y coherencia con el objetivo.	5
Intencionalidad	Las preguntas y secciones tienen el alcance necesario para la recolección de información requerida en el objetivo.	5
Objetividad	Las preguntas propuestas promueven respuestas que permitan reflexionar profundamente opiniones de los estudiantes de la Licenciatura	5
Claridad	La información permite el análisis profundo para dar cumplimiento del objetivo.	5
Evaluabilidad	La propuesta permite desarrollar el análisis significativo y enriquecedor a través de las respuestas de los estudiantes en formación y su experiencia formativa en el desarrollo de habilidades blandas.	5
Diseño	El diseño de la encuesta permite entender y analizar claramente cada una de sus secciones e intencionalidad para suplir la necesidad de análisis en cumplimiento del objetivo. Su estructura es clara y objetiva.	5

Observaciones y/o sugerencias

¿Considera o sugiere que se debe agregar otro tipo de pregunta?

Mónica Rocío Pabón Méndez

Firma

Nombres y apellidos del experto