

Non-authentic sources: a way to boost sociolinguistic competence in undergraduate English
students



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A research report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor's
degree of

Licenciada en Lengua Extranjera Inglés

Director:

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Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés

Decanatura de división de Educación Abierta y a Distancia

Facultad de Educación

Bucaramanga, 2024

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Abstract

The study analyzed the elements of sociolinguistic competence in the MasterMind I digital textbook, a non-authentic source, and its use by five female students belonging to the 9th and 10th semesters of the Bachelor's degree in Foreign Language English (BDFLE) program at Universidad Santo Tomás. The research arose from the students' dissatisfaction with the textbook, particularly its lack of oral and real context activities.

Using a qualitative case study approach, the study collected data through questionnaires and a checklist and analyzed it through triangulation, which included the following procedure: collecting data from the instruments, then dividing the data into three categories according to the constructs taken from checklist models of Lei, W & Soontornwipast (2020) and Sándorová (2020): content, cultural items, and sociolinguistic items, and establishing two subcategories for each category by grouping with colored items with similar characteristics. Subsequently, connecting the data findings with the theory or proposition presented in the theoretical framework.

The results revealed that the MasterMind I book included many sociolinguistic and sociocultural elements, but lacked local cultural context and cross-cultural connections. Despite these shortcomings, the online collaborative tasks included in the material helped students overcome these gaps. Overall, it was concluded that the textbook fostered students' sociolinguistic competence, although there was still room for improvement.

Keywords: Sociolinguistic competence, linguistic markers, non-authentic sources, digital textbooks, distance learning.

Resumen

El estudio analizó los elementos de competencia sociolingüística en el libro de texto digital MasterMind I, un recurso no auténtico y su uso por parte de cinco alumnas pertenecientes a los semestres 9º y 10º del programa de Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés de la Universidad Santo Tomás. La investigación surgió de la insatisfacción de las estudiantes con el material, particularmente por su falta de actividades orales y de contexto real.

El estudio, con un enfoque cualitativo de caso, recogió datos mediante cuestionarios y una lista de control, y los analizó utilizando la triangulación. El procedimiento consistió en recopilar los datos, clasificarlos en tres categorías basadas en los constructos de las listas de control de Lei, W. & Soontornwipast (2020) y Sándorová (2020): contenido, elementos culturales y sociolingüísticos, y establecer dos subcategorías por cada una agrupando elementos con características similares mediante un código de color. Finalmente, se conectaron los hallazgos con la teoría establecida en el marco teórico.

Los resultados revelaron que el libro MasterMind I incluía muchos elementos sociolingüísticos y socioculturales, pero carecía de contexto local y de conexiones entre culturas. A pesar de estas deficiencias, las tareas colaborativas en línea del material ayudaron a los estudiantes a superarlas. En general, se concluyó que el libro de texto fomenta la competencia sociolingüística de quienes lo estudian, aunque todavía puede mejorarse.

Palabras clave: Competencia sociolingüística, indicadores lingüísticos, recursos no auténticos, libros de texto digitales, aprendizaje a distancia.

Contextualization

Today, English serves as the global lingua franca for business, work, culture, education, and beyond. In Colombia, it is widely believed that individuals who speak English as a foreign language are often more competent in both personal and professional spheres, leading to a higher quality of life compared to monolingual individuals (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, n.d.). As a result, many people choose to take courses or pursue formal education to learn English, with some even opting for specialized careers in language learning and teaching (Universidad Santo Tomás, n.d.). Consequently, an increasing number of institutions and universities are offering programs designed to meet these aspirations.

One such institution is Universidad Santo Tomás, which offers an undergraduate program titled the Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Language English (BDFLE) through its distance learning modality. This program promises graduates a professional profile characterized by "high competencies in the discipline field" [translated] (DUAD USTA COLOMBIA, 2020, 1m48s). Given that English is the target language of the program, students are expected to achieve a high level of proficiency. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), this high competency is reflected in reaching the C1 level, which denotes "to use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes" (British council, n.d). Notably, this level of proficiency is a requirement for undergraduate English students as mandated by Ministerio de Educación from Colombia (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, MEN, 2006).

To support this goal, the Bachelor's Degree program has structured its curriculum with a sequence of nine courses: Beginners I and II, Pre-intermediate I and II, Intermediate I and II, and Advanced I, II, and III, guiding students from the A1 to C1 levels. Each course is based on non-

authentic materials, specifically the digital textbooks provided by Macmillan Education Everywhere, a European publisher that "develops products and solutions, both printed and digital, to support academic and educational communities worldwide" (Macmillan Education, n.d.). The textbooks used throughout the BDFLE program include the Mind series, with OpenMind designated for students from Beginners I to Advanced I, and MasterMind I for students in Advanced II.

The digital textbook selected for this research was MasterMind I, as it is intended to guide students to the C1 level, which encompasses a wide range of language and communicative competencies. However, this study focused on sociolinguistic competence, a subcategory of communicative competence, and its development using the textbook mentioned by undergraduate English students.

The participants in this research were five female undergraduate students, aged 23 to 45, enrolled in the BDFLE program at Universidad Santo Tomás via distance learning. These students, one in the 9th semester and four in the 10th semester, were affiliated with the Bucaramanga center in Colombia. Some had prior experience in learning and teaching with different materials, both within Colombia and abroad.

The study aimed to elevate the importance of sociolinguistic competence to the same level as linguistic competence, as recognized by institutions like Universidad Santo Tomás (Universidad Santo Tomás, n.d.). Additionally, it highlighted the continuing relevance of textbooks in education (Engbrecht, 2018), seeking to determine how MasterMind I either promoted or hindered the development of sociolinguistic competence in the students.

Research Statement

In recent years, the creation of new and sophisticated tools such as websites, platforms, and games has facilitated teaching and learning across various fields and professions. However, these modern tools have not entirely replaced traditional ones. For instance, the textbook "continues to be a widely used tool in the classroom" [translated] (Parcerisa, 1996, cited in Fernández & Caballero, 2017, p. 202). The ability to access textbooks in digital formats has allowed them to be integrated into more contemporary educational methodologies, such as distance and virtual learning.

The implementation of digital textbooks, with their advanced functions and features, can yield better results than traditional books. However, the mere design of digital textbooks is not sufficient to determine whether they meet the "teaching/learning requirements in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) / English as a Second Language (ESL) settings" (Ahour et al., cited in Jusuf, 2018, p. 18). According to Cunningsworth (1995), "textbooks should match the aims and objectives of the language learning program as well as take account of students needs as learners and facilitate their learning processes" (cited in Richards, 2001, p. 4).

At Universidad Santo Tomás, digital textbooks have been integrated into distance programs such as the BDFLE program. These textbooks play a significant role in guiding students through each level in their acquisition of English language skills. Given their importance, it was opportune to know students' perceptions about the digital textbook as non-authentic source in terms of development of English skills. To this end, a questionnaire was conducted with five female students from the BDFLE program at Universidad Santo Tomás, who were in the 9th and 10th semesters and affiliated with the Bucaramanga center in Colombia. These students had

the opportunity to work with OpenMind and MasterMind digital I textbooks from Macmillan Education Everywhere throughout their studies. The questionnaire focused particularly on the MasterMind I digital textbook, as it was the final material they used, and the one intended to bring them to the C1 level in English (see Appendix 1).

The questionnaire results revealed that most students frequently engaged with listening and reading activities, citing the availability of “useful material in an international context” (*questionnaire 1, question 4, participant 4*). Regarding speaking activities, most learners indicated that the digital textbook provided opportunities to interact with others and that they did primarily through asynchronous tools. Additionally, some students reported that the digital textbook helped them learn “phrasal verbs” (*questionnaire 1, question 5, participant 3*) and “new words and in a topic real vocabulary used by native speakers” (*questionnaire 1, question 5, participant 1*).

However, despite these benefits, more than half of the students expressed a desire to change the material if given the chance. One participant suggested, “I will change the activities of the book to the learners can interact among them through games or other activities” (*questionnaire 1, question 8, participant 5*). Another participant remarked, “The material could be more dynamic in order to practice speaking with another classmate” (*questionnaire 1, question 8, participant 1*). Another recommendation was to create “a material toward real context” (*questionnaire 1, question 8, participant 4*).

From the questionnaire, it can be concluded that although students found value in the listening, reading, and vocabulary activities, as well as in their experiences applying these skills with classmates in certain exercises, most participants were dissatisfied with the digital textbook.

They felt it lacked sufficient activities for practicing speaking with classmates and did not adequately incorporate real-world contexts. In other words, they believed the digital textbook fell short in providing activities that facilitated authentic interaction between language and society.

These students' opinions highlighted an issue that had not been previously analyzed: whether the content of the OpenMind and MasterMind digital textbooks encouraged or not the development of sociolinguistic competence “that is the ability to produce and understand language in different social contexts” (Saleh, 2013, p. 103)—according to students’ perceptions.

Considering this, and using the MasterMind I digital textbook as a case study, the following research question and objectives emerged:

1.1. Research question

To what extent MaterMind I digital textbook encourage sociolinguistics competence in 5 students at Bachelor’s Degree Program at Universidad Santo Tomás?

1.2. General objective

To categorize the elements of sociolinguistic competence presented in the MasterMind I digital textbook, based on the use of it by 5 students of Bachelor’s degree in Foreign Language English program at Universidad Santo Tomás.

1.3. Specific objectives

1. To identify which elements of sociolinguistic competence are presented in the content and activities of MasterMind I digital textbook.
2. To analyze the elements of sociolinguistic competence presented in MasterMind I, a non-authentic source used by 5 students of the Bachelor's degree in Foreign Language English program between the 9th and 10th semesters at Universidad Santo Tomás.
3. To evaluate which elements of sociolinguistic competence presented in Mastermind I digital textbook, were used by 5 students of Bachelor's degree in Foreign Language English program between 9th and 10th semesters at Universidad Santo Tomás.

Literature review

Teaching and learning English resources have been aimed of study throughout the years. Currently, with the advances in technology, the invention of new tools, and the adaptation of existing ones to digital formats some researchers are now investigating how these innovations enhance language skills, expand grammar and vocabulary knowledge, and foster students' communicative skills. This research also sought to contribute to this field by concentrating on sociolinguistic competence and its learning through digital textbooks.

For this section, the study was not limited to including only investigations related to sociolinguistic competence that refers to “sociocultural rules of use” (Canale, n.d cited in Drlíková, 2011, p.10). It also included sociocultural and intercultural competence, two competencies that complement sociolinguistic competence and are essential for understanding and appropriating the rules of a culture (Council of Europe, 2001). It is necessary to note that others competence or

factors that were related to the competence in question or the objective of the research, were also included. At the end, all of them provided a solid foundation and gave validity to this research.

The literature view was presented following this list: non-authentic vs authentic sources in EFL, digital tools and intercultural communicative competence, sociocultural elements in textbooks, sociolinguistic competence in textbooks, and finally sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence of EFL students. To describe and analyze each research contribution to the present study, the participants, the aim, methods, and findings of each one was mentioned.

The first research was a study developed by Febrina (2017). It had as objective to define non-authentic and authentic sources and then, to establish the advantages and disadvantages of each one by analyzing studies related to using both types of material. At the beginning of the study, the author affirmed that in schools of countries like Indonesia, there was a barrier between the language taught in the classroom and the language used in real life. She explained the use of authentic materials, those used for social purposes in the native language, were becoming popular due to the lack of real language in classrooms. However, because of their complexity, the non-authentic sources, those designed for teaching purposes, were still widely used by teachers.

After analyzing the authors' perceptions, she concluded that since both kinds of sources complemented each other, on one hand, the authentic ones could improve students' motivation, teach cultural content, and influence communicative skills and the other hand, non-authentic ones, were more understandable and suitable for context and English level of students, the key was to learn how to maximize the use of both in the classroom to improve the students' English skills.

Her study became relevant to this research as it underscored the importance of non-authentic sources like textbooks in teaching. These materials, with their specific characteristics, hold significant potential for enhancing learners' English skills. This relevance highlighted the need

to explore how such non-authentic resources contribute to the development of competencies, including sociolinguistic competence, among students.

In the second study Ali et al., (2024) focused their attention on authentic and no authentic digital sources and EFL. They claimed that it was necessary to investigate how their use affected in terms of self-perceived knowledge, learning and use of listening, grammar, writing and speaking skills.

For their research, they selected 296 female students, and 309 male students who belonged to different disciplines of the University of Tabuk (Saudi Arabia), shared the same native language, and had to take two semesters of beginner and intermediate English courses. They filled out two questionnaires, one before using digital tools in class, and another after using these. Then, that information was analyzed through a bivariate correlation test, multiple regression analysis, and a pair test. At the end, the outcomes indicated a positive relation between self-perceived knowledge, learning, the use of English, and the use of Distance Learning (DL) in EFL. For instance, they demonstrated that DL increased students' motivation, allowed classes to be more interactive, and helped to establish collaborative and communicative relationships.

In the third study, Avgousti (2018) carried out quantitative research centered in the relation between tools Web 2.0 and the development of intercultural communicative competence. To collect data, the author developed a systematic selection of previous studies conducted in university contexts considering their place and year of publication, English language, educational context, and the inclusion of participants who belonged to intercultural communication classes, had been assessed for their intercultural communicative skills, used web 2.0, and at least one out of two of them interacted in a language other than their native. Afterward, their findings regarding technology mode, technology modality, and web 2.0 and applications in connection with intercultural communicative competence were compared using the thematic system method.

The results revealed that Web 2.0 tools and applications eradicated some students' preconceptions and stereotyped perceptions about the target culture. They also displayed that interacting with foreign people enhanced intercultural students' sensitivity and made students feel motivated to share their knowledge of their own cultures considering their cultural differences as sources of learning and discussion of culturally rich points which made them acquire critical cultural awareness.

On the other hand, findings also evidenced that synchronous tools proved to be more suitable for discussing cultural aspects because although they demanded communicative skills such as sociolinguistic skills, they had instant feedback, were in line with participants' interests and could help them to develop intercultural awareness. Because of the positive results, the author suggested teachers adopt multimodal tools in their teaching and not use only textbooks.

The participants in this study are pursuing their careers through distance learning, so many of their study materials and sources are digital. They also use digital tools and apps to interact with classmates both locally and internationally. Studies by Ali et al. (2024) and Avgousti (2018) showed that distance learning significantly influences students' English learning, this research also considered the impact of distance learning in undergraduate English students.

Otherwise regarding textbooks, Sugar (2015) carried out a study focused on the analysis of sociolinguistic competence in two ELT textbooks series for students of A2 English level: 'Project' series of textbooks designed by English authors, and 'The Way to Win' series designed by Czech authors that offered insight from the foreign learner's perspective. The author selected activities of both that highlighted any aspect of sociolinguistic competence established by CEFR e.g. cross-cultural awareness; greeting, addressing, and showing interests; expressions; etc. Then, she compared and analyzed those activities along with their qualities and methods to improve language skills.

The findings showed that both series of materials used the audio-lingual method and the communicative approach for boosting sociolinguistic competence within the language skills. On the other hand, they brought to light that some series of 'Way to Win' textbooks contained more regarding American culture and history in their articles, dialogues, marginal notes, grammar exercises, and other extra tools as well as more British Politeness markers in contextualized reading and listening exercises than series of 'project' textbooks.

Additionally, the outcomes also displayed that the 'Way to Win' series provided more marginal notes and idiomatic meanings to explain the linguistic and cultural differences between Czech and English-speaking countries. Conclusively, the author suggested traditional textbooks could integrate modern aids such as audio-visual aids as a communicative method for learning.

In the same vein, Danielsen (2020) compared the fostering of intercultural competence in two English textbooks: *Stairs 5* and *Engelsk 5* (one more recent than the other one respectively) for upper primary in Norway by using critical discourse analysis as a method. The research findings were classified into categories: values, skills, attitudes and knowledge/understanding needed to acquire intercultural competence. Those categories arose from combination of Byram's model for intercultural communicative competence (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2018 cited in Danielsen, 2020) and Barrett (2018) definition of intercultural competence (cited in Danielsen, 2020).

The study found that *Stairs 5* promoted superficial cultural knowledge with brief information and closed-ended tasks, leading to stereotypes. In contrast, *Engelsk 5* promoted deeper cultural understanding with in-depth details and open-ended tasks, aligning with deep learning principles. However, despite some improvements in *Engelsk 5*, such as addressing the intercultural roots of Hadrian's Wall and the influence of Latin on English, it continued to have limitations, such as the tendency to present cultures from a Western-centric perspective focusing predominantly on

England culture and reducing references to other cultures and practices, resulting in incomplete cultural representations that also could have reinforced stereotypes.

In the end, the author recommended that future textbooks should emphasize deeper norms, values, and beliefs in various cultures rather than just cultural facts.

For the following study Razzaq et al., (2021) aimed to examine the socio-cultural values, social, historical, and geographical references—included in the Pupil's English Book and Activity English Book for the 2nd intermediate class in Iraq. They also sought to identify the types of cultures portrayed in these textbooks, whether target culture, source culture, or international culture. To achieve this, they adapted a checklist from Brook's list of sociocultural references and rated the items according to the content analysis of the textbooks.

The authors concluded that textbook writers of the 2nd intermediate stage "English for Iraq" did not adequately consider the socio-cultural values of the foreign language, resulting in a lack of authentic socio-cultural references. Instead, they relied on semi-authentic values, including more social references than historical and geographical references. However, those social references that involved sports, songs, jokes, sayings, jobs and other social references such as: ways of life and interrelationships among individuals, emphasized values of tolerance and cooperation, teaching learners to be tolerant of other people and cultures and to communicate non-violently.

Furthermore, this encouraged learners to express their opinions about their own and other cultures, fostering tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity. By inviting learners to discuss cultural issues openly, the materials helped them appreciate cultural diversity and equality.

A similar study was developed by Hidayati (2022) who considered that sociolinguistic competence teaching was fundamental for students had real-life communication and therefore it had to be immersed in teachers' materials such as textbooks. For that reason, she scrutinized the use of sociolinguistic competence in a textbook entitled "Let's talk for Junior High School Grade IX"

by using content analysis as a method to collect data from dialogs of the book that could include the sociolinguistic competence.

With the information in mind, she concluded that the textbook had applied elements of sociolinguistic competence such as social factors, speech functions, and Leech's Politeness Principle in its dialogs. She also pointed out that the material contained a variety of speech styles in everyday learning experiences which could have helped students become familiar with the implications of sociolinguistic competence in speaking. However, she suggested the material should have supplied more dialog models with multiple sociolinguistic contexts, so learners would have learned how to make effective language use and be more fluent and accurate.

Badarna & Badarna (2021), the authors of the seventh study developed a study like the previously mentioned. They concentrated their attention on defining the concept of sociolinguistic competence and exploring how it was reflected in the oral activities of three textbooks called '*high five*,' '*turning points*,' and '*take a stand*' utilized in Arab sector of high schools in Israel, by considering the following sociolinguistic competence principles established by CEFR "foreign language cultural awareness, speech act functions such as greetings, introductions, invitations, requests, suggestions, offers, opinions, apologies, polite refusals, etc." On the other hand, they tried to find didactic strategies and techniques in the materials that could be used to implement the sociolinguistic competence in English learners.

The authors concluded that none of the materials illustrated the sociolinguistic competence principles. Additionally, they did not contain didactic strategies to practice sociolinguistic competence. As a result, they did not raise students' awareness of using appropriate lexis, grammar, register for each cultural and social setting.

Indeed, Sugar (2015), Danielsen (2020), Razzaq et al., (2021), Hidayati (2022), Badarna & Badarna (2021), had similar objectives to this research. Analyzing what aspects, frameworks,

principles, and instruments they considered to evaluate the textbooks gave us an idea of which ones use to evaluate the textbook in question.

Otherwise, concerning evaluating sociolinguistic competence of EFL learners, in 2016 Koran carried out a study in which the focal point was to assess EFL Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic competence and Performance of EFL learners.

During the research, she first defined those competencies considering authors' and educators' point of view. Then, she established differences between them. After that, she tested the sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge of L2 students and their oral proficiency in the target language. Finally, she compared the relationship between both.

Her research's participants were 36 students from two classes at intermediate level from Ishik University's Preparatory School whose sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies were evaluated by self-assessment questionnaires, oral interviews, teacher observations with a written test that included asks of speech completion and scoring of utterances according to the level of formality and proverb, and a task of interpretation of the tone of the utterance.

The study's results revealed that sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge were not taught consistently and consecutively. Therefore, most students lacked sociolinguistic knowledge as well as sociocultural knowledge, even though some had achieved a certain degree of fluency. In conclusion, the author recommended that sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies needed purposeful teaching. She also impelled teachers to implement the variety of suggested tests and assessments mentioned in her research which complement one another to evaluate communicative competence and its nuances in depth and get a realistic vision of sociolinguistic and pragmatic performance and competence of L2 students.

The Koran's study (2016) provided ways to measure the knowledge of students' communicative competence such as sociolinguistic competence, Furthermore, it reinforced the

importance of evaluating those competencies since the results could give a more accurate vision of the strengths, weakness, and students' limitations for learning sociolinguistic competence and thereafter, provide affordable solutions.

In conclusion, it was not possible to find studies related to sociolinguistics and digital textbooks from America not to mention from Colombia. For instance, the studies of Febrina (2017), Ali et al., (2024), Avgousti (2018), Hidayati (202), Razzaq et al., (2021), Koran (2016) were from Asia. Otherwise, the studies of Sugar (2015), Danielsen (2020) and Badarna & Badarna (2021) were from Europe, which reflected that all were international researchers, and none of those national. Nevertheless, as it was already argued, in Colombia the textbooks have been widely implemented as a tool for teaching English for that reason it is expected that materials selected by the institutions and universities also boost communicative competencies such as sociolinguistic competence in EFL learning programs.

Theoretical Framework

This part of this paper presented the five main concepts that structured and supported this research from the point of view of different authors. The concepts were: English as a Foreign Language, Non-authentic sources, Digital textbooks in English teaching, Sociolinguistic competence in English teaching and Sociolinguistic competence through digital modality. They were displayed in the order they were mentioned.

4.1. English as a Foreign Language

English as a Foreign Language or EFL must not be confused with English as a second language or ESL. On EFL refers to learning English in non-English-speaking countries, whereas

ESL alludes to learning English in countries where the language is formally spoken. (Iwai, 2011 cited in Peng, 2019).

In the case of Colombia, English has little or no internal communicative function or sociopolitical status” (Nayar, n.d, cited in Arango et al., 2019, p. 17) in the country. A proof of it is the statistics, for example in 2014, it was said that English speakers encompassed only the “4.1 percent of the population” (British Council, 2015, p.19), and recent reports have communicated that that percentage has not improved significantly (Benavides, 2021). However, as English is a “lingua franca” (Marlina & Xu, 2018, p.2), and it possess a global status, the Colombian government demanded its teaching at all levels of obligatory education in the state (Zwisler,2018). at all levels of obligatory education in the state (Zwisler,2018) by ley de educación (Ley 115, 1994, artículo 21 & 22), and ley de bilingüismo (Ley 1651,2013, artículos 1, 2, 3 & 4) at all levels of obligatory education in the state (Zwisler,2018). Nevertheless, English teaching as also offered by “private English language training courses” (British Council, 2015, p.19) at public and private universities. In any case English is shown as the key language to expand “employment, cultural and even entertainment opportunities” [translated] (Ministerio de educación nacional MEN, 2006).

4.2. Sociolinguistic competence in English teaching

In the early twenties, language teaching focused primarily on grammar and translation. It was not until later in the century that the term ‘communicative competence’ emerged as a respond by Hymes to Chomsky notion of ‘linguistic competence’, which had omitted “almost everything of socio-cultural, significance” (Hymes, 1972 cited in Saleh, 2013, p.102) Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence defining it as “the level of language learning users to convey their messages to others and to understand others” messages within specific context (cited in Saleh, 2013, p.102).

His concept underpinned the communicative competence model developed by Canale and Swain in 1980, who divided this competence into three domains grammatical competence, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic competence, explaining the latter as “ability to produce and understand language in different social contexts” (cited in Saleh, 2013, p.103) by using “sociocultural rules” of language (Canale, n.d cited in Drlíková, 2011, p.10).

Years later, the CEFR relabeled these domains into “linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence” (Council of Europe, 2001, p.129, 2001). Referring to the latter as “the knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use [...] linguistic markers of social relations; politeness conventions; expressions of folk-wisdom; register differences; dialect and accent” (Council of Europe, 2001, p.129, 2001). CEFR also highlighted that since “language [was] a sociocultural phenomenon, much of what [was] contended in it: skills, competence, domains, etc. It [was] also relevant to sociolinguistic competence”. (Council of Europe, 2001, p.129, 2001).

Wirtz & Pfenninger (2024) pointed out the importance of acquiring sociolinguistic competence since it allowed individuals to communicate more effectively in the target language by understanding and appropriately using language variations influenced by social context, cultural norms, and interpersonal relationships. Put differently, this competence enabled learners to better navigate social nuances and engage in conversations that are culturally and contextually appropriate, as further supported by Rehner & Lasan (2023).

According to Mede & Dililitaş (2015) In classroom, sociolinguistic competence can be taught by using cultural models in which learners learn cultural elements rooted in language or implementing speech acts in which students are obligated to use language considering socio-pragmatic factors. Nonetheless, such as affirmed then Mede & Dililitaş (2015) these and other strategies are seldom implemented in the classroom, partly due to “the transfer of L1

sociocultural patterns to L2 sociolinguistic rules of language use” (p.18) due to lacking of knowledge and instruction to teach it for English teachers and some educators’ misconceptions that include the belief that the sociocultural aspects of communicative competence are acquired incidentally in the process of language learning. Furthermore, many materials lack authenticity which creates an inappropriate classroom environment that hinders the development of the competence in question. (Mede & Dililitaş,2015, p.17).

The above-mentioned concerns some researchers who continue analyzing English materials with which they are involved. Researchers as those cited in the present literature review, specifically Sugar (2015) who analyzed in ‘Project’ and ‘the way to win’ textbooks, aspects of sociolinguistic competence established by CEFR e.g. cross-cultural awareness; greeting, addressing, and showing interests; expressions; etc; and Hidayati (2022) who examined the social factors, speech functions, and Leech’s Politeness Principle in the dialogs of ‘Let’s talk for Junior High School Grade IX’ textbook.

Those two researchers and the explaining previously evidence that exploring sociolinguistic competence’ significance, implications, and the challenges of incorporating it into educational resources, particularly digital textbook, which was the focus of this research, was worthy of study.

4.3. Non-Authentic Sources

According to Febrina (2017): “non-authentic sources are materials designed for teaching purposes, it means, they are planned, designed, and produced based on the curriculum and policy in each country” (p.733). Those materials can be printed, visual, audio, even multimedia such as textbooks, worksheets, flashcards, posters, CDs, CDs with interactive activities, video lessons, digital textbooks, etc. (Santovac & Popović, 2021).

Those materials are used widely because they are simpler and more suitable for the EFL context in comparison to the authentic ones (Febrina, 2017). Nonetheless, based on Belaid and Murray (2015) opinion, they usually focus more their attention on language forms and structures than to develop learners' communicative competence (cited in Santovac & Popović, 2021, p.143). Furthermore, the few speakers' interactions included in the non-authentic textbooks tend to be checked to ensure they are error-free (Santovac & Popović, 2021). Consequently, those interactions or conversations do not “reflect real, everyday, authentic language used by native speakers” (Gilmore, 2007 cited in Santovac & Popović, 2021, p.144).

The MasterMind I, the material used for this research, it was a digital multimedia non-authentic material designed to teach students English competencies. Its examination allowed the researcher to know to what extent the book fulfilled that purpose by focusing on sociolinguistic competence as a subcategory of communicative competence.

4.4. English learning through digital textbooks

In these times “the use of electronic textbooks in educational contexts is gaining increased attention” (Xodabande & Hashemi, 2023, p.1588) because they are innovating and refreshing learning environments and as result of it, stimulating and improving the student's learning. (Ramirez, 2015 cited in Chávez, 2018, p.3).

For example, audio in those materials allows students to listen to a passage with different accents before reading it aloud and thence, to improve their reading and listening abilities (Al-Ali & Ahmed, 2015). Moreover, many digital textbooks include multimodal texts (i.e., written texts, sounds, and images) which help students to develop literacy skills. Also, some have options to answer online questions, while others are linked to platforms for collaboration and exchanging

ideas with classmates (KazazoĞLu, 2020; Lin et al., 2021; Sage et al., 2019 cited in Park & Lee, 2021) which can be useful to improve writing and communicative students' skills.

Since digital textbooks have been integrated into education, some researchers have focused their attention on studying how their features have influenced learners to enhance their language competencies. Researchers such as Curcic & Johnstone (2016) and Gohar (2017) are proof of it. This study examined how digital textbooks influence the learning of sociolinguistic competence, which is a relatively understudied aspect of communicative competence.

4.5. Sociolinguistic competence through the distance modality

The growth and spread of the internet have made possible new study modalities such as: distance modality. It began to get more attention since the covid-19 pandemic obligated its use and adaptation by many educational institutions (Onggirawan et al., 2023).

The distance modality involves among other things, “the use of educational resources, modern technologies, online platforms and tools” (DepEd, 2020 cited in Manolo & Bundalian, 2022) which enable “live interaction{s} among teachers- learners and [learners - learners]” (Manolo & Bundalian, 2022 p. 90). According to Ismailov (2021) distance methodology “allow learners to engage with representatives of other cultures in geographically distant locations through information and communication technology” (p.2) in a synchronous way by using apps like Zoom, Google Meet, and Teams and by “asynchronously” using chats and forums, giving “learners the opportunity to learn about other cultures and their socio-linguistic norms” (O’Dowd, 2012; Thorne, 2010 cited in Ismailov, 2021, p.2) without moving from their immediate context.

Doing so, speakers can manage relationships considering their own cultural beliefs, behaviors, and meanings [...] and those of their interlocutor (Byram, 1997, cited in Ismailov, 2021,)

which “improve learners’ communication skills” and increase “appreciation of cultural diversity” (Su, 2018; Yeh et al., 2020 cited in Ismailov, 2021, p. 2).

At Universidad Santo Tomás, students in the BDEFL program in the distance learning modality often collaborate with classmates from different countries to engage in collaborative tasks and discuss digital textbook activities using both asynchronous and synchronous tools. The study’s finding showed whether such interactions contributed to students’ sociolinguistic competence development.

Research design

This section delineated the proceeding to develop this qualitative research in order to achieve the project's objectives. The methodology, instruments for data collection, participants, and the context in which the research was developed were described in detail below.

5.1. Case study

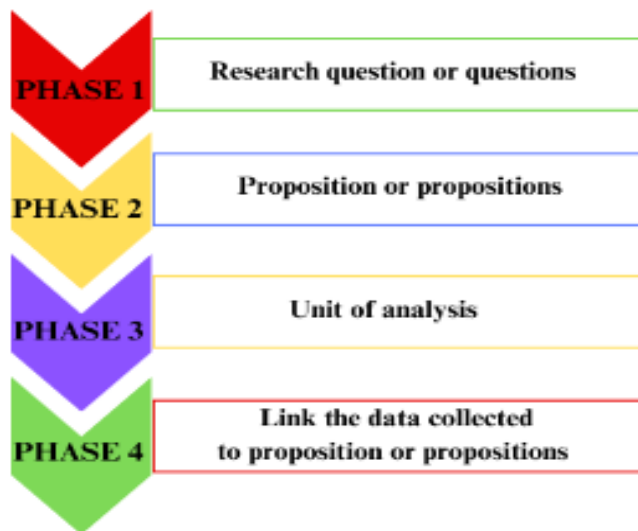
The method used for this research was the case study, as it allows the examination of a contemporary phenomenon to understand “how and why it exists” (Cousin, 2005, as cited in Gustafsson, 2017, p.2; Gray, 2014). This approach involves describing the phenomenon based on data collection and analysis related to the study's subject, including variables, lines of evidence, triangulation purposes, and the use of prior theories to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2002, as cited in Garcia, 2020).

The case study portrayed in this paper incorporated data from three diverse sources. It also contained theories for their corresponding description and a detailed examination of the topic of study (A digital textbook as non-authentic sources and the development of sociolinguistic competence) and the context of the study (five students, users of the material, who coursed 9th and 10th semesters of BDFLE program at Universidad Santo Tomás).

On the other hand, regarding the case study design, Yin (2003 cited in Griffee, 2018, p.88) proposed a model which involved the following phases: first, to create **research question or questions** (especially how and why questions) (Griffee, 2018, p.88) second, to establish a **proposition or propositions** that indicate “the thesis you are trying to show demonstrate or prove.” (Griffee, 2018, p. 89) third, to choose a **unit of analysis** or object of study (Griffee, 2018, p.89) e.g. students, textbooks, teacher, courses, etc. Finally, to **link the data**, collected by instruments such as “structured, semi-structured or open interviews, field observations, document analysis”, etc. (Gray, 2014, p.8) applied to object of study, **to proposition or propositions** to readers determine whether the research was successful or no. (Figure 1).

Figure 1:

Case study phases



Source: elaborated by the author

The model of Yin (2003 cited in Griffee, 2018, p.88) was adopted in this research as

follows: the ‘what’ research question of the first phase, was established as result of analyzing the outcomes of a first questionnaire applied to five undergraduate English students that pretended to know the students’ opinions about the MasterMind I material, a digital textbook conferred by the Universidad Santo Tomás, in terms of development of students’ English skills.

For the second phase, the analysis of theories led to support the following proposition that the research would attempt to demonstrate through the research: whether an English digital textbook encourage or not the development of sociolinguistic competence as a subcategory of communicative competence.

Under the two previous phases, two objects of study were chosen for the third phase: The MasterMind I digital textbook of the editorial: Macmillan Education Everywhere and a group of five students of BDFLE program at Universidad Santo Tomás who had worked on it.

Finally, for the fourth phase: link the data collected to propositions or data analysis (2002 cited in Garcia, 2020, p.18), categories and subcategories of analysis of data collected through a checklist and a questionnaire applied to undergraduate English students by using, were established, and linked to the proposition of the research (see figure 2). Thus, the encourage of the digital textbook on students of BDFLE program at Universidad Santo Tomás in terms of the development of their sociolinguistic competence was determined and portrayed in the findings.

5.2. Qualitative Research

The case study carried out in this research took the qualitative perspective since it “studies things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, on interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people brings to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). In other words, “the purpose of this kind of research is to describe the meaning to object or phenomenon of study given by consulted or observed individuals” (Fernández, 2016, p. 3).

Because of the foregoing, this study gave considerable weight to the opinions of those who had the opportunity to work on MasterMind I digital textbook. Their “experiences, attitudes, intentions, motivations, etc.” (Ahmad et al., 2019, p. 2829) studying that non-authentic source were seen as worthy data that could provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon thus to identify the sociolinguistic elements included in the study material as well as to determine how the study of it influenced the development of participants’ sociolinguistic competence.

5.3. Population

The population for this study was composed of five undergraduate girls, students of BDFLE program at Universidad Santo Tomás under its distance modality. Four of them were coursing 10th semester and the remaining the 9th semester, aged between 23 to 45 years old, and belonging to CAU Bucaramanga, Colombia. The participants had worked on the OpenMind and MasterMind I series of Macmillan Education Everywhere, non-authentic digital textbooks provided by the University. Additionally, some of them had already had learning and teaching experiences with other textbooks in Colombia and abroad.

5.4. Instruments

The instruments to collect qualitative information that led us to accomplish the research's objectives were two questionnaires and one checklist which were detailed below.

5.4.1. Questionnaire

Openheim (2001) defined questionnaire as an instrument that serves “for gathering and documenting data on specific topics of interest” (cited in Taherdoost, 2021, p.5). A remarkable

characteristic of it is that due to its systematic nature, it makes data analysis more effective by providing essential information for both quantitative and qualitative data evaluation, “contributing significantly to the research endeavor” (Taherdoost, 2021, p.6).

The questionnaire can contain open or closed questions. The open questions allow respondent/respondents to give an explicit answer. On the other hand, the close questions limit respondent/respondents to choose among options designed previously. (Martínez, 2013, p.6).

Considering the previous mentioned, it was designed two qualitative questionnaires in distinct phases of the research since those allowed to collect data about “opinions and experiences” (Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017, par.5). The first questionnaire aimed to learn the opinions of undergraduate English students belonged to 9th and 10th semesters from Universidad Santo Tomás, concerning one of their study materials: MasterMind I textbook and its role in the development of their English skills.

The questionnaire composed 4 opened questions and 4 closed questions in English, and it was distributed to students in printed format (see appendix 1).

Otherwise, after exploring the students’ opinions about the digital textbook as non-authentic source in terms of development of English skills and in commensurate with the third objective, a second questionnaire whose aimed was to evaluate which elements of sociolinguistic competence presented in MasterMind I digital textbook, were used by students of BDFLE program, was administered to the same population of the first questionnaire. The questionnaire that was also delivered in printed format, contained 13 closed questions in English that participants answered based on their own perceptions about their acquisition of sociolinguistic skills and others related to it from the material. They had to choose between three types of answer: Poor, Good and Excellent (see appendix 3).

It is important to highlight that the questions for the second questionnaire were adapted from standards established by CEFR (2001, p. 136) for Communicative C1 users as well as from the items proposed by Lei & Soontornwipast (2020) and Sándorová (2020) for evaluating sociolinguistic competence and others competencies in connection with it such as: intercultural, socio-cultural and intercultural competencies. It should also be noted that the questionnaire included definitions and examples of metalanguage words for better understanding by students and, thus, a significant participation of them in it.

5.4.2 Checklist

Hamidi et al., (2016) defined a checklist as a “list of features of successful learning teaching materials” that can be checked quantitatively and/or qualitatively (Zohrabi et al., 2014). Among the attributes of the checklist are “time-effective, less training required and reliable instrument” (Wilson, 2013 cited in Lei & Soontornwipast, 2020).

The checklist design does not require “strict criteria to follow” (Budiarsih, 2022, p.13). Hence, the evaluator can adapt criteria considering his context, research purpose, and “features of textbook” to evaluate (Lei & Soontornwipast, 2020).

For that reason, considering the theories and checklist models of Lei, W & Soontornwipast (2020) and Sándorová (2020) authors mentioned above, and in compliance with the first objective: to identify which elements of sociolinguistic competence are presented in the content and activities of Mastermind I digital textbook, a checklist was developed in Word office and delivered in printed format to the participant. The checklist was composed of 31 items divided into 7 categories: objectives, content, cultural elements, socio-cultural knowledge, sociolinguistic elements, intercultural elements and methods, techniques, and tools of digital textbook material. It also

included 4 options for students to rate each item or element: No evidence, Poor, Good and Excellent (see appendix 2).

On the other hand, like the questionnaire, it incorporated definitions and examples for metalanguage words for a better comprehension of those by students and as a result, they could make a significant contribution to it.

Ethical aspects

Respecting ethical aspects, the first step was to design an informed consent in which the researcher asked students to collaborate with the project by explaining the nature of the study, the role as participants, the freedom to participate on it, the time required to complete the questionnaires and checklist, the confidentiality and anonymity of the research, in accordance with national data protection regulations, and the assignation of codes for identifying them example: participant 1, participant 2, and so on. Then, it was sent to the BDFLE program coordinator via mail for its respective approval, printed, and distributed in person to students at the CAU Bucaramanga for completion (see appendix 4).

Otherwise, the second instrument, the checklist, was validated before applying it to the participants. The validation was carried out by two experts: Nelly Johana Álvarez Idarraga and Lili Ariana López Ortiz, two magisters in education [who authorized the use of their names in this study] (see appendix 5). After reviewing it, one of the teachers suggested emphasizing the content and the skills addressed in each chapter. Nonetheless, as the textbook was going to be evaluated as a whole and not by chapters, the suggestion was not taken.

Data analysis and discussion

Thematic analysis was the technique used for the data analysis since “it identifies and interprets patterns, themes [categories or codes] in a data set [which] often leads to new insights and understanding” (Boyatzis, 1998; Elliott, 2018; Thomas, 2006 cited in Naeem et al., 2023, p.2). This thematic analysis technique can be deductive or inductive. However, in this research, the deductive analysis was the most suitable due its nature of applying “an existing theoretical or conceptual framework to structure and interpret the data” (Naeem, et al., 2023, p.8). In that sense, “the researcher applies their theoretical framework to the data and creates themes [categories or codes] based on established constructs” (Crabtree, 1999 cited in Naeem, 2023, p.9).

In that respect, the data was organized and prepared for its analysis considering the following procedure: first, the data was collected from the instruments (checklist and questionnaire), then it was classified into three main categories based on constructs from checklists models for evaluating the sociolinguistic content of Foreign Language Textbooks from Lei, W. & Soontornwipast (2020) and Sándorová (2020): content, cultural items, and sociolinguistic items. Next, each main category was further into two subcategories by grouping items with similar characteristics using color coding (green for objective and tools and techniques subcategories, dark blue for intercultural elements subcategory, light blue for intercultural elements subcategory, pink for linguistic markers of social relations and expression of folk-wisdom and dialect and accent subcategories) (see appendix 6). Finally, the findings were connected to the theory or proposition established in the theoretical framework.

Figure 2:

Triangulation and análisis



Source: Adapted from “Modelo a Seguir para Presentar la Información en la Fase de Reflexión” by P. Albarracín (2021, p.202).

Table

Categories and subcategories established for the data analysis

Research question	Categories	Subcategories
		Objective
To what extent MaterMind I digital textbook encourage sociolinguistics competence in 5 students at Bachelor's Degree Program at Universidad Santo Tomás?	Content	Tools and techniques
		Intercultural elements
	Cultural elements	Sociocultural elements
		Linguistic markers of social relations and expressions of folk-wisdom
	Sociolinguistic elements	Dialect and accent

Note: table adapted from the checklists of Lei, W & Soontornwipast (2020) and Sándorová (2020).

After establishing the categories and subcategories of analysis, it proceeded to carry out triangulation of information following the model established by the researcher previously (see figure 2). This approach facilitated the interpretation of relationships between each category and the proposition, which was derived from the analysis of theoretical framework.

Each category was explained as follows:

6.1. Category 1: Content

The term 'textbook content' refers to an educational textbook's structured materials and resources. These include texts, exercises, audio-visual aids, activities, assessment guidelines, and

other *tools and techniques* that aim to achieve a common educational *objective* (Graves, 2000; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Derewianka & Jones, 2012).

Considering the above-mentioned and in line with the purpose of the research, it was pertinent, in the first instance, that within this category to determine what the *objective* of the Mastermind I English digital textbook was (*subcategory 1*) and *the tools and techniques* included in it to achieve it (*subcategory 2*).

6.1.1. Subcategory 1: objective.

According to Cunningsworth, textbooks “should align with the aims and objectives of the language learning program as well as take account of students' needs as learners and facilitate their learning processes” (cited in Richards, 2001, p.4). As previously mentioned, the objective of the BDFLE program at Universidad Santo Tomás is for students to obtain ‘high competencies’ in aspects such as the English language that is the program's primary focus.

Following the establishment in CEFR, achieving ‘high competencies’ in the English Language refers to achieving proficiency in both linguistic and communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2001). Regarding before mentioned, Belaid and Murray (2015) affirmed that non-authentic sources are at a disadvantage, because, according to them, they usually tend to aim at “teaching language structures and language forms [linguistic competence] than on developing learners’ communicative competence” (cited in Santovac & Popović, 2021, p.143).

Nevertheless, in contrast with Belaid and Murray’s affirmation, three of five participants considered the Mastermind I digital textbook to correspond ‘well’ and even one of five of them dared to say that “excellently” to the objective of the university program (*checklist, category 1, objectives:1*) (see appendix 7). In fact, four of five affirmed that the digital textbook had trained in a range of ‘well’ to ‘excellent’ their writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills (*checklist,*

category 1, objectives: 3) (see appendix 7 and 9). Skills that most students considered specifically good but not excellent in speaking and listening (*questionnaire 2, communicative skills: 1, 2*) (see appendix 8).

In general terms, it could be concluded that the digital textbook corresponded well with the objective of the BDFLE program and students' communicative needs. Although indeed the material did not fully meet the expected ideal of 'excellence.' Opposed to Santovac & Popović asserted that the textbooks do not "reflect the real, everyday, authentic language used by native speakers" (Gilmore, 2007 cited in Santovac & Popović, 2021, p.144). The MasterMind I included in great part of its content in authentic language from the target country. In that respect, according to the results obtained from the checklist and questionnaire 2, it could be interpreted that, the students might have encountered occasions on which understanding and appropriately using their language skills in different social contexts was challenging however such occasions would have been rare.

6.1.2 Subcategory 2: tools and techniques.

As discussed earlier, digital textbooks offer numerous advantages compared to traditional textbooks. Many digital textbooks include audios (Al-Ali & Ahmed, 2015) and texts with sounds and images (KazazoĜLu, 2020; Lin et al.; 2021; Sage et al., 2019 cited in Park & Lee, 2021). MasterMind I is not the exception, most of the participants noted that digital textbook integrated conversations, illustrations (graphics, pictures, etc.) in a good to excellent way (*checklist, category 7, methods, techniques and tools: 2*) (see appendix 7 and 9). Considering the benefits of using those kinds of tools like improve their reading and listening abilities as acknowledged Al-Ali & Ahmed (2015), it is possible that those contributed to developing students' language skills indicated in the previous subcategory.

On the other hand, some digital textbooks entail extra resources or tools e.g., printable sources, vocabulary bank, grammar bank, notes, etc. Which supports students' autonomous learning of language. For example: marginal notes and idiomatic meanings can help learners to understand linguistic and cultural differences among countries (Sugar, 2015). Unfortunately, more than half of respondents affirmed that MasterMind I lacked those extra resources or tools. (*checklist, category 7, methods, techniques, and tools: 1*) (see appendix 7).

Otherwise, concerning collaborative learning of language, Mastermind I included discussing and negotiating tasks taken as a technique, in a range from well to excellent (*checklist, category 7, methods, techniques, and tools: 2*) (see appendix 7 and 9). According to O'Dowd (2012) & Thorne (2010) those interactions [that usually are online] give "learners the opportunity to learn about other cultures" (cited in Ismailov, 2021, p.2) Thus, speakers learn to make connections by considering their own cultural beliefs, behaviors, and meanings, as well as those of the people they are communicating with (Byram, 1997, cited in Ismailov, 2021). This theory could explain why the participants became good, as themselves communicated, at expressing positions against different cultures, norms and values (*questionnaire 2, category 3, cultural and intercultural knowledge:1*) (see appendix 8). and solving problems from target culture perspective (*questionnaire 2, category 3, cultural and intercultural knowledge:2*) (see appendix 8).

6.2. Category 2: cultural elements

Bennett (2013) defined Culture as "the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people" (p.13). Those patterns or elements are the components that make up a culture and distinguish it from others. To learn those components or **elements** for understanding and respecting people perceived as culturally different from oneself is what **intercultural competence** means (Barrett, 2018 cited in Danielsen, 2020) (*Subcategory 3*), and

recognizing and adapting those **elements** of a specific cultural or social group is what **sociocultural competence** stands for (Geeslin, 2024) (*Subcategory 4*).

6.2.1. Subcategory 3: intercultural elements.

Danielsen (2020) mentioned that when predominate more culture references and practices, it means: values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and behaviors about certain countries than others in textbooks, for instance, Western-centric cultures, there was an incomplete [global] cultural representation that can reinforce learners' stereotypes.

In the case of the Mastermind I digital textbook, the object of this study, more than half of the participants affirmed that there was a deficit of relationships between local culture and target culture in MasterMind I activities nor generate cultural sensitivity to contact other cultures and reduce or even overcome preconceived notions or misconceptions that they might have had regarding those (checklist, category 6, intercultural competence:1) (see appendix 7).

Nevertheless, most learners considered themselves good enough at expressing their position about diverse cultures, norms, and values (questionnaire 2, category 3, cultural and intercultural knowledge:1) (see appendix 8).

On the other hand, it seems that the digital textbook included some resources and/or activities that offered a cultural learning about the target culture because a significant portion of participants contemplated themselves as good at solving problems from the target culture perspective when they used to use the digital textbook (*questionnaire 2, cultural and intercultural knowledge:2*) (see appendix 8 and 9).

6.2.2. Subcategory 4: Sociocultural elements.

Regarding sociocultural elements, more than half of students stated that Mastermind I included social, historical, and geographical references even implicitly in a good quantity (*checklist, category 4, socio-cultural elements: items from 1 to 8*) (see appendix 7 and 9) in which the majority considered themselves skillful at understanding those (*questionnaire 2, category 4, sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge:2*) (see appendix 8).

Those references or elements could have contributed to practice tolerance towards others while engaging in peaceful communication (Razzaq et al., 2021) because students affirmed that when they interacted with other, they were good at avoiding amusing or irritating them or asking them to behave other way on the contrary, to demonstrate empathy by considering their social, behavioral and conversational conventions (*questionnaire 2, category 4, sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge:7*) (see appendix 8). Considering the use of the collaborative tasks presented in MasterMind I, it is probable that students had opportunities “to express their thoughts curiously and open-mindedly about a cultural issue particularly a foreign cultural”. (Razzaq et al., 2021, p.2864).

6.3. Category 3: Sociolinguistic elements:

According to Saleh (2013): *sociolinguistic competence* is the “ability to produce and understand language in different social contexts” (cited in Saleh, 2013, p.103) considering *elements* such as “linguistic markers of social relations [register differences, politeness conventions], expressions of folk-wisdom, dialect and accent” (Council of Europe, 2001, p.129). Those elements were grouped and divided into two subcategories, the first was linguistic markers of social relations and expressions of folk-wisdom and the second one dialect and accent. The findings in those subcategories were described below.

6.3.1. Subcategory 5: Linguistic markers of social relations and expressions of folk-wisdom.

Register differences (linguistic marker) e.g., formal, informal, neutral, familiar, and authority language were included in the digital textbook in a range from good to excellent, based on participants' opinions (*checklist, category 5, sociolinguistic elements:1*) (see appendix 7 and 9). As a result, most students trained well in their ability to adjust their level of formality and consistently adapt to the social context to a certain extent (*questionnaire 2, category 4, sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge:5*) (see appendix 8). In other words, students learned to communicate more adequately by understanding and appropriately using language variations (Wirtz & Pfenninger, 2024).

On the other hand, positive politeness (linguistic marker) to show respect and consideration was also included in the digital textbook (*checklist, category 5, Sociolinguistic elements: 4*) (see appendix 7), helping most students to some extent learn to use the English language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional and sensitive language (*questionnaire 2, category 4, Sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge: 4*) (see appendix 8). It had to allow learners to navigate social nuances more successfully and engage in culturally and contextually appropriate conversations (Rehner & Lasan, 2023).

The digital textbook also contained negative politeness (linguistic marker) that involved criticism, reprimand, and asserting superiority that range, for a greater part of students, from good and excellent (*checklist, category 5, sociolinguistic elements: items from 4 to 6*) (see appendix 7). However, it was not an obstacle for more than half of the students to learn in a good measure to express strong disagreement, avoid aggressive behavior and express regrets diplomatically (*questionnaire 2, category 4, sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge: 6*)(see appendix 8).

On the other hand, most participants confirmed that the Mastermind I had expressions of folk wisdom: proverbs, idioms, slangs, familiar quotations, expressions of belief, attitudes, clichés, etc. (*checklist, category 4, socio-cultural elements:7*) (see appendix 7) which greater part of them recognized in videos, pictures, conversations, etc. (*questionnaire 2, category 4, sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge:3*) (see appendix 8). It could help them to gain deeper insights into the historical and cultural contexts from the target language leading to greater empathy and appreciation for unfamiliar cultural perspectives (The Importance of Cultural Immersion in Learning a Foreign Language, n.d).

6.3.2. Subcategory 6: dialect and accent.

Most of the participants highlighted the lack of variety in Mastermind I of dialects and accents from regional provenances, ethnicities or occupational groups (*checklist, category 4, socio-cultural elements:8*) (see appendix 7). However, it is probable that the few examples included on it allowed learners to understand the importance of sociolinguistic competence in their spoken language skills (Hidayati, 2022) since the majority of them contemplated themselves good at identifying different dialects and accents (*questionnaire 2, category 4, sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge: 8*) (see appendix 8). Nevertheless, as Hidayati (2022) pointed out in her research when the material includes dialog models with multiple sociolinguistic contexts, students can learn to use language effectively, enhancing both their fluency and accuracy.

Conclusions

This study investigated the elements of sociolinguistic competence presented using a digital textbook, MasterMind I, by five students enrolled in a BDFLE program in English as a foreign language at Universidad Santo Tomás. Concern that arose due to the discomfort expressed by five students at the institution regarding using the material (MasterMind I). According to their feedback, the material lacked sufficient activities for practicing speaking with classmates and did not provide a realistic context overall.

In line with the general objective of this research, the analysis concluded that the digital textbook included most elements of sociolinguistic competence and related aspects to it like sociocultural competence, within its texts, graphics, pictures, dialogs, and activities, which referenced the target language culture and other cultures. However, it is noteworthy that the textbook did not incorporate local cultural elements, nor did it establish connections between local and target culture or between local culture and other cultures.

It is believed that the previous shortcomings could potentially have been mitigated by the online collaborative tasks included in the material because of participants indicated that, to some extent, they learned to consider their own cultural beliefs, behaviors, and meanings, as well as those of their interlocutors (*questionnaire 2, category 4, sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge: items 1,2,4*) (see appendix 8). Additionally, they felt competent in expressing opinions about unfamiliar cultures, norms, and values (*questionnaire 2, category 4, sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge: 4 & category 3, cultural and intercultural knowledge: items 1,2*) (see appendix 8).

However, the mentioned previously, is not stated with absolute certainty since the research did not specify whether learners had opportunities to interact with people from other cultures during the collaborative tasks, nor how diverse these cultures were. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether these tasks helped students learn about other dialects and accents, two sociolinguistic elements that the digital textbook also lacked (*checklist, category 4, Socio-cultural elements:8*) (see appendix 7). The fact remains that, since not all students were agreed that the digital textbook incorporated collaborative tasks excellently, it is understandable that these tasks did not fully address the shortcomings of MasterMind I. As the students noted in the first questionnaire, the textbook did not provide enough activities that allowed for genuine interaction between language and society.

It led to appraise and conclude that sociolinguistic competence presented in MasterMind I encouraged the sociolinguistic competence in undergraduate English students to good extension because most students contemplated themselves as good applying most elements of sociolinguistic competence and those related to it when they used to work on the textbook. However, the fact that there is not an excellent homogenous sociolinguistic competence in the students and lack of some elements in the material indicate that there is still room for improvement.

The fact of the matter is that it does not exist perfect English teaching material (Harwood, 2013; Mishan, 2015; McGrath, 2016; Tomlinson, 2023). Nevertheless, in countries like Colombia where English learners have a limited exposition to the English language because of, as cited earlier, its little internal communicative function and sociopolitical status (Nayar, n.d., cited in Arango et al., 2019, p.17). An English material

can be a *complementary* tool for students to acquire competencies such as sociolinguistic competence in the target language.

However, the responsibility of institutions and teachers and future teachers, as it is in my case, is, as repeatedly has been mentioned throughout this research, to choose materials that fit closely to the language learning program purpose and supply specific communicative learners' needs (Cunningsworth, 1995 cited in Richards, 2001). Obviously, the aim is not to place all the responsibility on a textbook since the materials will always fall short of meeting the needs of every student. It is also necessary, as teachers, to adapt and supplement the material's limitations to suit our specific classroom situation (Richards, 2001).

To achieve the above-mentioned, we can adopt some suggestions proposed by other researchers, some depicted earlier but worthy of mentioning once more, for instance using diverse strategies in the classroom such as those recommended by Mede & Dililitaş (2015) like to use cultural models where learners acquire cultural elements embedded in language or implement speech acts requiring students to use language while considering socio-pragmatic factors. On the other hand, Avgousti (2018) also suggested implementing multimodal texts which might be authentic or non-authentic, since like Febrina (2017) remarked both kinds of sources complement each other and the important is to learn how to maximize the use of both in the classroom to improve the students' English skills. For her part, Koran (2016) emphasized teachers to evaluate students' progress by implementing tests and assessments like those included in her research. In that sense, teachers can help students develop the ability to communicate effectively with people from distinct cultural backgrounds, enhancing their social and professional prospects (García & Wei, 2014).

Undoubtedly, by engaging in research on sociolinguistic competence, I gained a deeper understanding of how language functions in social contexts, making me more conscience of the importance of sociolinguistic competence and the necessity to train me in that competence in order to have a more effective practice. On the other hand, the study impels me to examine the teaching materials carefully, to apply strategies to address the lack of communication competencies of the materials, and to study students' effects using those strategies in short, medium, and long-term.

Indeed, the MasterMind I was a pertinent material, worthy of analysis, since it was developed by Macmillan Education Everywhere, a well-known and prominent publishing house with a significant global presence. Furthermore, the series of the editorial OpenMind and MasterMind respectively, has been implemented in Universidad Santo Tomas for more of 4 years for English programs and the MasterMind I particularly, is a book used for students to reach the C1 proficiency level.

However, despite the pertinence of the design used to evaluate this material and the participants who engaged with it, the study encountered some limitations. The instruments used fell short of providing a detailed explanation of how participants utilized elements of sociolinguistic competence presented in the MasterMind I digital textbook. Additionally, it remained unclear to what extent the collaborative tasks addressed the material's shortcomings related to sociolinguistic competence.

Another challenge encountered during the study was the difficulty in recruiting participants. Many of students neglected to participate because of uncertain reasons reducing the study population to just five female students as a result the findings were not as meaningful and enriching as I would have like. Thence, as future researchers, it would be

interesting to apply a similar study with a more extensive population as well as apply methods that allowing for the collection of deeper data such as the interview in order to obtain a broad outlook of the phenomenon and compare whether they share similar findings with the present study.

On the other hand, it could be a meaningful contribution to investigate how teachers in the zone and around the world overcome the shortcomings of communicative competence in the teaching materials, especially in the sociolinguistic competence. Finally, to adopt and implement some of the strategies mentioned in this study and others in classrooms, and monitoring students over time. All with the aim of providing students with a well-rounded language education that equip them to use English in real-world situations where language is not just about grammar but also about social meaning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

[questionnaire 1 instrument](#)

Appendix 2.

[checklist instrument](#)

Appendix 3.

[questionnaire 2 instrument](#)

Appendix 4.

[Informed consent](#)

Appendix 5.

[checklist validation format](#)

Appendix 6.

Coding for aggrupation of information. [Information coding](#)

Appendix 7.

[Checklist evidence](#)

Appendix 8.

[Questionnaire 2 evidence](#)

Appendix 9.

[Mastermind I digital textbook evidence](#)

Figures

Figure 1.

Case study phases. [Figure1](#)

Figure 2.

Triangulation and analysis. [Figure 2](#)

Table

Table.

Categories and subcategories established for the data analysis. [Table](#)