

**Learning a Foreign Language in the Formation of
Higher Professional Education**

Silvia B. García Estupiñán, Otto X. Baquero Piloso, Narcisa C. Castro Chávez.

Universidad Agraria del Ecuador, Universidad de Guayaquil

Guayaquil. Ecuador

Email for correspondence: sgarcia @uagraria.edu.ec

Receipt date: April 8th, 2018

Approval date: May 5th, 2018

How to cite this article (APA Norms)

García, S., Baquero, O., & Castro, N. (2018). Learning a Foreign Language in the Formation of Higher Professional Education International Congress on the Didactics of the English Language Journal, Vol. 3, No.1. ISSN 2550-7036. Retrieved from <http://revistas.pucese.edu.ec/ICDEL/index>

International Congress on the Didactics of the English Language Journal. ISSN 2550-7036.

Director. PhD. Haydeé Ramírez Lozada. Phone: 2721459. Extension: 123/126

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Sede Esmeraldas. Calle Espejo, Subida a Santa Cruz, Esmeraldas. CP 08 01 00

65 Email: icdel@pucese.edu.ec. <http://revistas.pucese.edu.ec/ICDEL/index>

Abstract

For some decades now, the English language has begun a process of global evolution, increasing the number of people who learn to speak this language and, more and more, those who depend on it to get a job and succeed. That is why the learning of English as a second language has been prioritized from the primary levels to the university where their knowledge and skills are increased in language skills. The new competitive profile of professionals in Higher Education, scientific development, the free circulation of professionals at an international level and the growing of socio-cultural diversity require that undergraduate students possess specific competences in a foreign language, especially of spoken and written English, so the discipline of English has occupied a prominent place in the curriculum. To analyze the importance of learning English in higher education, through two interrelated lines: the study of English during university and the usefulness in professional training, an investigation was done with the determination of a referential theoretical framework on the subject, as well as the diagnosis made which allowed the design of a methodology that is based on the philosophical, sociological and psychological principles that support the current pedagogy, located in the cultural historical conception and the communicative approach for teaching of a foreign language.

Keywords: communicative competence, integral formation, linguistic competence, Higher Education.

Resumen

Desde hace algunas décadas, el idioma inglés ha comenzado un proceso de evolución global, aumentando el número de personas que aprenden a hablar este idioma y, cada vez más, aquellos que dependen de él para conseguir un trabajo y tener éxito. Es por eso que se ha enfatizado el aprendizaje del inglés como segundo idioma desde los niveles primarios hasta la universidad, donde sus conocimientos y habilidades se incrementan en las habilidades lingüísticas. El nuevo perfil competitivo de los profesionales de la educación superior, el desarrollo científico, la libre circulación de profesionales a nivel internacional y el crecimiento de la diversidad sociocultural requieren que los estudiantes universitarios posean competencias específicas en un idioma extranjero, especialmente del inglés hablado y escrito, por lo que la disciplina del inglés ha ocupado un lugar destacado en el plan de estudios. Para analizar la importancia de aprender inglés en la educación superior, a través de dos líneas interrelacionadas: el estudio del inglés durante la universidad y la utilidad en la formación profesional, se realizó una investigación con la determinación de un marco teórico referencial sobre el tema, así como el diagnóstico hecho que permitió el diseño de una metodología basada en los principios filosóficos, sociológicos y psicológicos que apoyan la pedagogía actual, ubicada en la concepción histórica cultural y el enfoque comunicativo para la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: competencia comunicativa, formación integral, competencia lingüística, educación superior.

Introduction

For a long time ago, the English language began a process of diffusion to the phenomenon of globalization. Continuously Increasing the number of people who learn to speak English, and surprisingly those who depend on it in a professional manner are growing in number.

Biava (2010) states that the use of a foreign language, with an emphasis on English, has gone from being a privilege to being a necessity in the different productive sectors. The process of globalization has been the main reason why English has gained importance worldwide, to the point of being considered as the universal language of business today .

"It can practically be said that it is the language of the current world. It is in this era, the great international language, a lingua franca that has impacted all non-Anglo-Saxon countries, including Spain, and that affects more or less directly the various fields and professions. Its possession can no longer be treated as a luxury, but it is an obvious necessity "(Jaimechango, 2009).

Therefore, their learning is a priority from the primary levels of education, reaching the maximum point of higher education, where their knowledge and qualities in the different aspects of listening, producing and interpreting must be high. According to Ortiz "Recent estimates suggest that some 402 million people speak it as their first language, as it is currently used by more than 1 billion non-native speakers."

"The two best-known dialects of English are American and British, the latter also called Oxford English, because English is taught at the University of Oxford." These two variations of English are increasingly expanding, since they are the ones that they are taught as a foreign language to half of the population in the world and are supported by the spread of English-speaking media services "(Sprachcaffé, 2017).

The main international or world agreements and events, important means of communication, the bibliography of high cognitive level, etc .; all these examples are used and developed in English as a first language.

The process of globalization has led to the signing of free trade agreements with some countries, such as Brazil, Canada, Switzerland and the United States, where many of the negotiations are conducted in English, which has led to the establishment of a fundamental requirement that professionals have a command of this language, to be hired in certain positions and may have the possibility of international labor mobility (Uribe, 2012).

Likewise, by global consensus, English has been chosen as the language of international communication, its knowledge is a mandatory requirement to work in international institutions, in a consultation with the 189 member countries of the United Nations about the desired language for communication between embassies, more than 120 chose English (Ortiz, 2013).

This article proposes as a general objective to address the importance of learning the English language in higher education, through the analysis of two interrelated aspects the study of English during university teaching and the practical utility as a professional.

Through the history of teaching the English language, it has been tried to create a universal method, since this is the way this language is considered, due to the fact that it is spoken around the world. Pedagogues, linguists, psychologists have been creating methods which date back to the sixteenth century, with the methods like the grammar translation to the communicative approach that today many teachers use in many educational centers at all levels around the world.

The emergence of different methods is attributed in great importance to the knowledge of linguistic, pedagogical and even philosophical currents, conducting research within the classroom to know where to direct the teaching. After so many studies there is no ideal method, which will be adapted according to the circumstances of the place, the students and even the teacher.

Brief historical review on the teaching of English as a foreign language

At present, English is the most studied language in the world, as was Latin five hundred years ago. In the sixteenth century, while French, Italian and English gained in importance, as a result of political changes in Europe, Latin was gradually replaced by English, becoming the most important and essential language of the twentieth century.

When modern languages began to be incorporated into the curriculum of European schools in the eighteenth century, they were taught by applying the same basic procedures that were used to teach Latin. In the textbooks there were declarations in the abstract of the foreign language and the objective was not oral practice, which was restricted to reading aloud the sentences they translated.

In the 19th century, textbooks contained lessons on grammatical aspects. Each aspect of the grammar was listed, the rules for its use were explained and these were illustrated with examples based on sentences. The foreign language was normalized in very rigid rules that, in addition, should be eventually memorized. The oral works were reduced to a minimum. The immediate objective was for the student to apply the rules through the appropriate exercises.

In Europe the books included a collection of sentences to translate, lists of words and abstract rules of grammar presented in a disorderly manner, without any planning. The sentences were constructed with the purpose of illustrating the grammatical system of the language and had no relation to real communication.

"The need for a radical transformation arose in the 1950s, and the methodology of teaching English as a foreign language began to be developed more and more, and as a collateral result, the United States government increased its efforts to teach languages. foreign countries, so that the Americans would not be isolated from the scientific development reached by other countries "(Wilkins 1973 & Widdowson 1972, 1978).

International Congress on the Didactics of the English Language Journal. ISSN 2550-7036.

Director. PhD. Haydeé Ramírez Lozada. Phone: 2721459. Extension: 123/126

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Sede Esmeraldas. Calle Espejo, Subida a Santa Cruz, Esmeraldas. CP 08 01 00

65 Email: icdel@pucese.edu.ec. <http://revistas.pucese.edu.ec/ICDEL/index>

In the late sixties and early seventies, linguists undertook a more approximate study of the language and addressed the need to focus teaching in the domain of oral communication rather than structures; thus arose the communicative teaching.

Jonhson and Brumfit (1997) finally placed a compilation of Hymes' works in *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. The catalyzing power of this concept enriched, since its inception, the teaching of foreign languages. The grammar of the text, pragmatics and discourse analysis modified the concept of language in such a way that the teaching of a second language allows numerous approaches adaptable to different needs and circumstances.

It is important in the training of a professional at present, in any branch of the sciences, to know how to access the different types of texts and to appropriate the models of organization of information, as well as to recognize the way in which language acts in the speech to be able to elaborate oral or written texts without informative vacuums and to dominate the procedures that operate in the understanding and construction of the statements.

The English Language discipline establishes a cognitive basis, since one learns to think and express oneself in a foreign language, to recognize key words and to locate information to investigate sources, as well as to use the categorical lexicon of the different training dimensions for a graduate of the different careers; so all knowledge converges in the linguistic axis.

The Teaching of English in Ecuador

One of the realities in the companies regarding the students that participate in the professional internship programs, is the fact of not having an acceptable handling of the English language. Which is a reality, social, cultural and economic, since the phenomenon of globalization invades all fields, that is, companies globalized professional demands.

The future professionals must be clear that the real possibilities of labor insertion are determined, not only by the knowledge, skills, abilities and competences acquired in their professional training, but also by the use of different languages, mainly the English language.

In these times the importance of learning a foreign language at all educational levels both in Ecuador and in Latin America, has increased especially in institutions of Higher Education, which is a requirement both entry or exit. It has become a tool of global communication and with connection to the Tics benefiting the environment and society (Council of Higher Education - Republic of Ecuador, 2013)

Why a university student must learn English?

The person who learns a language correctly throughout his / her student life in this case, English, will have more opportunities in the labor market, and may also be incorporated into the world.

According to Ortiz (2013) The real possibilities of labor insertion of future professionals are determined not only by the knowledge, skills, abilities and competences acquired in the university, but also by the use of different languages, mainly English. In addition, Hernandez (2014) "If you know that language, any professional will be opened many doors in the world of work and it will facilitate the improvement of opportunities." Hence, universities are called to achieve excellence in the training of trained professionals in the specific areas of their profession, with solid knowledge of a foreign language, especially English, to be considered the universal language "Recent estimates suggest that about 402 million people speak it as their first language, as it is currently used for more than 1,000 million non-native speakers.

By global consensus, English has been chosen as the language of international communication. Knowledge of it is a mandatory requirement to work in international institutions. In a consultation to the 189 member countries of the United Nations about the desired language for communication between embassies, more than 120 chose English. Nowadays, any researcher or professional who wants to be up-to-date or access specialized books inevitably needs to know English to be informed, because precisely 75% of the scientific bibliography is in English.

Most of the big corporations demand in the resume of their workers, to have knowledge of English. This skill has been considered a transversal axis between the different professions because an engineer, an economist or a journalist, or any other profession needs this language.

It will show you other cultures, lifestyles and different ways of thinking, you will be able to meet new and interesting people and understand their customs, this will give you the opportunity to see yourself with different eyes, and maybe you'll discover aspects of yourself or of your culture in which you had not reconsidered before.(Sprachcaffe, 2017)

"English is the language of international communication, commerce and finance, English is a lingua franca in many corners of the planet and the official language of many international organizations such as the European Union, the United Nations or UNESCO. This is due to historical and political reasons, because of the importance that the British Empire had in the past, when it spread its language across all continents, and to the importance as the current power of the United States. " ((Sprachcaffe, 2017)

Hernandez, (2014), states that the advantages of having the ability to understand, speak and write the English language are innumerable, and highlights 4 of them:

1. Increase international cooperation among countries and universities through scholarships,
2. Access to research and development projects, international events,
3. Business development and tourism boom,

4. Have access to the information found in this language such as: articles, magazines, books, videos, courses, among others.

Therefore, universities and higher education centers should review their curricula and intercalate the English language with the rest of the elements, creating planning models for university education in response to the demands of the knowledge-based society. Hence the need to develop the capacity and linguistic competence of future professionals, in order that this group has a pluralist vision of the world; get in touch, energetically and effectively, with other ways of expression and thought, and facilitate the recognition of tolerance, respect and acceptance of each other.

Consequently, if there is no pedagogical practice on the part of the teachers in the integration of learning, then the practical mastery of English could be unattainable for the student, who is exposed to more contact hours with technical rather than linguistic subjects, reiterating thus the lack of integrality and effectiveness that the educational process supposes and evidencing the fact that the link of English with the other disciplines that make up the curriculum in the subjects taught in the degrees offered is not clear and could, therefore, not be of formative interest.

Linking English to the university curriculum is the answer for many future professionals who want to work and who, for reasons of social and economic condition, could not have a bilingual education from an early age.

Likewise, the need for the university to pay due attention to the bilingual training of the students in a systematic way and since the beginning of their university education is due to the fact that the student body, in many cases, begins to work from the beginning of their professional career, moment in which the formation of complementary miscalled competences (foreign language or computer science) are positioned far ahead in the study programs or, worse, they can be taken whenever you want, since they are not required to understand other knowledge; but, in turn, assume to be useful enough to meet the linguistic requirement that the labor market demands.

Hence, the learning promoted in the first years of the career and that nurtures the professional training of students could be a hook to enter the labor market, without this being the only competence required to achieve permanence in the work environment of this group.

The need for the university to energetically rethink the curriculum that distinguishes it, and which gives life to its training function, will help the student not to deprive himself more than being able to develop learning that requires the understanding and use of a second language, because, apparently, it is not enough for the existence of need to be recognized, but it is necessary to verify the quality of the training that this student and teacher group receive to take on such a complex challenge.

Therefore, it is necessary to conceive English as a linguistic and cultural tool for the communication and promotion of knowledge, a tool that should be contemplated in the curricular policies of the university and raised in an integral manner with respect to the other subjects to be studied in any academic program, opening the way to the interdisciplinary of educational action.

It is possible to conclude by affirming that the university is called to establish curricular policies and pedagogical orientations that demonstrate the importance of the integration of English in the promotion of learning and its incidence in the quality of training and education promoted, that is to say, the university and its architects should have a clear statement as to why? And for what? English is taught in the university and its implication in the socioeconomic development of the country. Beyond a curricular inclusion, there must be relevance and interdisciplinary linking of English as an essential part of the integrality of knowledge that globalization imposes, and which requires the country to face the onslaught of globalization and the information age, and achieve, well, the required development.

It is important in the training of a professional at present, in any branch of the sciences, to know how to access the different types of texts and to appropriate the models of organization of information, as well as to recognize the way in which language acts in the speech to be able to elaborate oral or written texts without information gaps and to dominate the procedures that operate in the understanding and construction of the statements.

Method

A specific bibliographic review was made of the state of the art that relates the learning of the English language, development of abilities and skills of teaching in higher education as a complement to the training of the future professional. A descriptive investigation was elaborated about: how important is the learning of the English language in the education of the student of higher education? Finally, a proposal of the importance of mastering a second language such as English is presented.

To communicate in the language, one must consider the learning of several integrated skills and through interaction, participation, and communicative activities, students are helped to develop language communication.

To carry out the work the data is obtained in the place of origin of the essay, in the Faculty of Agricultural Economics of the Agrarian University of Ecuador in the Guayaquil headquarters. We worked with the whole universe, that is, the 87 students of the Agricultural Economics courses and Economic Sciences of the 5th semester, day and night shifts, to identify the knowledge and interest of the importance of learning the English language in the formation of their careers.

Technique - Survey

The technique used to collect the information necessary to establish the relationship of English language learning in higher education was through the survey in written form.

Results

Table 1

Survey Questions

.1	Would you like to learn and master English?
.2	Would you like to see videos, movies, sing songs, in English?
.3	Would you like to share what you have learned in English outside the classroom?
.4	Do you think it is necessary for the teacher to apply active strategies to optimize the learning of the English language?
.5	Do you think that raising awareness about English language learning would create a change in the students of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics?
.6	Do you think that learning English will help you in the field of research?
.7	Do you consider it important to learn English for your career?
.8	Do you think that learning English should be a requirement for graduation?
.9	Do you think that learning English will help you in the labor market?
.10	Do you consider that English will be useful in your work development?

Source: Faculty of Agricultural Economics of the Agrarian University of Ecuador Guayaquil

Elaboration: Authors

International Congress on the Didactics of the English Language Journal. ISSN 2550-7036.

Director. PhD. Haydeé Ramírez Lozada. Phone: 2721459. Extension: 123/126

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Sede Esmeraldas. Calle Espejo, Subida a Santa Cruz, Esmeraldas. CP 08 01 00

65 Email: icdel@pucese.edu.ec. <http://revistas.pucese.edu.ec/ICDEL/index>

THEMATIC AXIS: THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

According to the Likert scale, the responses of the surveys were:

1	Totally agree
2	Totally agree
3	Indifferent
4	Disagree
5	Strongly disagree

Table 2

Results obtained

N.	1	2	3	4	5	%	
P.1	69	18	0	0	0	78%	
P.2	51	34	1	1	0	58%	
P.3	34	38	6	7	0	43%	
P.4	58	28	1	0	0	66%	
P.5	47	36	3	1	0	54%	
P.6	51	30	5	2	0	58%	
P.7	55	29	1	2	0	63%	
P.8	15	41	17	13	1	47%	
P.9	42	38	2	5	0	48%	
0	P.1	46	33	5	3	0	52%

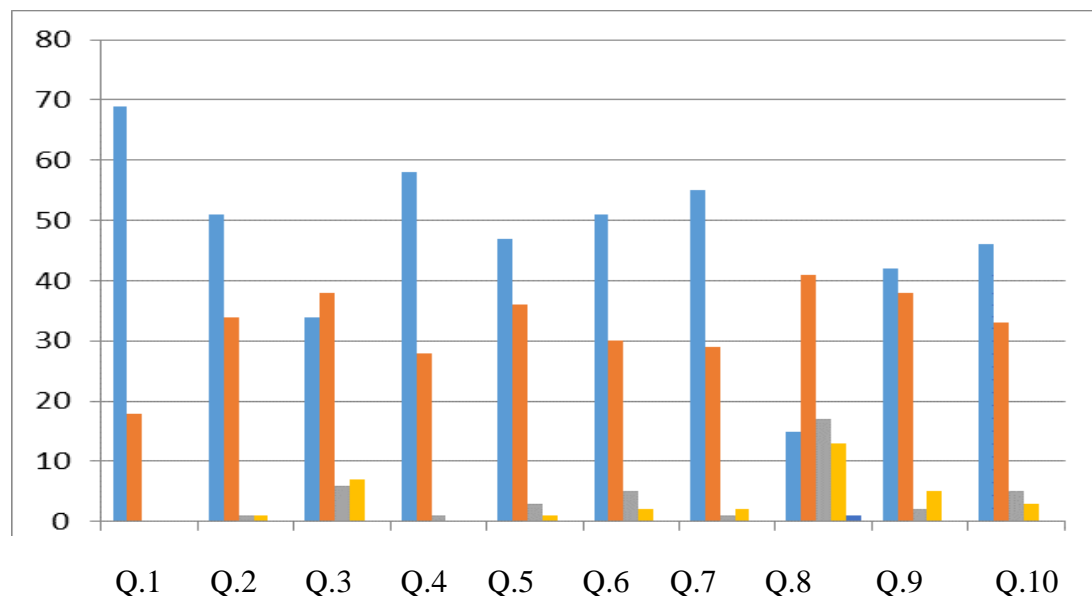


Figure 1: Results of the survey applied

Based on the results obtained through the application of the survey to students. 63% of respondents consider that learning English is important for the career, which they believe should be motivated to learn the language better and will serve as future economists, as well as 58% believe that English will help in the field of research, also they consider that it should be applied in other subjects to improve in the area of research, in another item 48% from the same group they totally agree that the English language will help them in the labor insertion, since they did not think it could be useful in their work field, as 52% equally agree that English will help them in the professional development.

Discussion and Conclusions

In many institutions of higher level, they have redesigned their curriculum, seeking agreements and scholarships by implementing tools to improve the learning of the English language. Considering that the professional future of each student depends on the knowledge of this language, since it has become an indispensable requirement in many transnational companies. In the same way, it facilitates relating to new cultures and traditions with the rest of the world. Having the opportunity to better understand and analyze the surrounding society, that is, to be more in touch with globalization.

In addition, the strengthening of a language in higher education is vital for university students. Therefore, learning a second language such as English allows you to increase your knowledge by the consultation of a wide bibliography found in books, documents, and information on the web, most of which are in this language.

The students of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics of the Agrarian University of Ecuador, Guayaquil, showed interest in learning the English language, since this, among its multiple advantages, will allow it to communicate not only with the teacher but with the educational community. Correct mastery of English language skills guarantees the student good communication with teachers and their peers in the international academic community, with projection to their future professionalization. It is necessary to optimize the teaching of the English language, so that after a time the impact of the same in the work environment can be evaluated, which will generate a new study that will allow to measure the labor insertion of the graduates.

References

- Biava, M. L. & Segura, A. L. (2010). ¿Por qué es importante saber el idioma inglés? Retrieved from <http://www.cepjuanxxiii.edu.ar/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Por-que-es-importante-saber-ingles.pdf>
- Hernandez. (2014). El B-learning como estrategia metodológica para mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de los estudiantes de inglés de la modalidad semipresencial del departamento especializado de idiomas de la Universidad Técnica de Ambato.
- Jaimechango. (2009). Importancia del inglés en la educación. Retrieved from <https://es.slideshare.net/jaimechango/importancia-del-ingles-en-la-educacion>
- Ortiz. (2013). La importancia del aprendizaje y conocimiento del idioma inglés en la enseñanza. *Dominio de las Ciencias*, 761.
- Sprachcaffe. (2017). La importancia del aprendizaje y conocimiento del idioma inglés en la enseñanza. *Dominio de las Ciencias*, 762.
- Uribe. (2012). La importancia del aprendizaje y conocimiento del idioma inglés en la enseñanza superior. *Dominio de las Ciencias*, 762.

Wilkins & Widdowson (1978). La enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera: su inserción en la formación del profesional de la enfermería en Cuba. *Revista Cubana de Educacion Superior*, 62.