



## Immersion Programs: Beyond Language Learning

### Programas de Inmersión: Más allá del Aprendizaje de una lengua

Original Article



✉ Ilba Yaneth Rodríguez Tamayo\*  
Juan Esteban Martínez Rodríguez \*\*  
Andrés Santiago Martínez Rodríguez\*\*\*

**Submission:** august 08, 2024

**Accepted:** september 18, 2024

**Published:** september 21, 2024

#### How to cite this article:

Rodríguez, ilba yaneth, Martínez, juan esteban y Martínez, Andrés Santiago.  
“Programas De Inmersión: Más Allá De Aprender Una Lengua». Enletawa Journal,  
vol. 17, n.º 2, septiembre de 2024,

<https://doi.org/10.19053/uptc.2011835X.17941>

\*He holds a Master degree in Applied Linguistics to the Teaching of English from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. [ilba.rodriguez@uptc.edu.co](mailto:ilba.rodriguez@uptc.edu.co) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5220-5951>.

\*\* He graduated from Colegio de la Presentación Tunja. Currently, he is studying foreign languages with an emphasis on English and French at UPTC. [juan.martinez29@uptc.edu.co](mailto:juan.martinez29@uptc.edu.co) <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6762-4295>.

\*\*\* He is an architect candidate from UPTC. He belongs to a seedbed project at PUR research group. [andres.martinez10@uptc.edu.co](mailto:andres.martinez10@uptc.edu.co) <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6539-988X>.

✉ **Correspondence:** Transversal 11 31a-12 casa 9. Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia Tunja Boyacá. [ilba.rodriguez@uptc.edu.co](mailto:ilba.rodriguez@uptc.edu.co)

## Abstract

This research article is the result of a Project developed in a private school in Tunja, Colombia. It aimed at describing the perceptions of a group of graduates, students, and their parents about an immersion program, after having participated in one of them. Four surveys were applied to four different groups of participants: parents, graduates, students who traveled in 2018 and students who participated in the immersion program in 2019. After conducting the corresponding analysis, following the thematic approach, the perceptions presented by the participants were grouped into the following categories: Immersion programs: beyond learning a language; Knowing me and growing as a person, and My experience as a base to strengthen the program and my own school. It was possible to conclude that the immersion program had academic and social effects on the participants. It can be seen as a resource for learning, practicing, and reinforcing a foreign language as well as learning about other cultures.

**Keywords:** language immersion programs, language and culture, academic achievement, language proficiency, cultural identity, program evaluation.

## Resumen

Este artículo de investigación es el resultado de un proyecto desarrollado en un colegio privado en la ciudad de Tunja, Colombia. Apuntó a describir las percepciones que un grupo de egresados, estudiantes, y sus padres tenían sobre un programa de inmersión en el que participaron. Se aplicaron cuatro encuestas a cuatro grupos de participantes: padres de familia, egresados, estudiantes que viajaron en 2018 y estudiantes que participaron en el programa en 2019. Después de haber hecho el análisis correspondiente, con base en el enfoque temático, las percepciones de los participantes se agruparon en las siguientes categorías: *Programas de Inmersión: más allá de aprender una lengua, Conociéndome y creciendo como persona y Mi experiencia como base para fortalecer el programa y mi colegio propio. Fue posible concluir que el programa de inmersión tuvo efectos académicos y sociales en los participantes. El programa se puede ver como un recurso para aprender, practicar y reforzar la lengua, así como también para aprender de otras culturas.*

**Palabras clave:** Programas de inmersión lingüística, lengua y cultura, logro académico, proficiencia lingüística, identidad cultural y evaluación de programa.

## Introduction

Nowadays, learning any additional language is a challenge and a duty that people have if they want to get better opportunities in the personal, academic and professional fields. However, according to the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI 2023), English holds a unique position in the world, not only because of the language itself, but because of the number of people who speak it. Authors such as Rajathurai Nishanthi (2018), Endang Sri Andayani (2022) and Yanidar Nur et al. (2023) refer to the importance of learning this language due to its undeniable position, importance and necessity. English is the language of communication, of doing business, of knowing other cultures, and of obtaining information. As Yanidar Nur et al. (2023) claim, it is considered “as the global lingua franca of this century” (52).

Colombia cannot isolate itself from this demand and need that has emerged several decades ago. To be immersed in the phenomenon of globalization is a necessity. That is why the Ministry of Education (2006) set as a goal to achieve citizens who are able to communicate in English in such a way that the country could be immersed in universal communication processes, in the global economy and in the cultural openness with comparable international standards. Over time, this Ministry has launched a series of educational regulations that aimed at having bilingual people with high quality standards in English proficiency and that look for favor an updated reality: the coexistence of two or more languages-cultures in diverse contexts (Cobo et al., 2020).

Despite all the efforts made by the Colombian government to achieve the goals, in terms of bilingualism, it has not been possible. Giselle Cobo et al. (2020) present a historical journey about the different bilingual public policies in Colombia, stating that some of them were ambitious. The authors claim that these regulations did not take into account the reality nor the national context, and especially, the authors found the lack of a concrete definition of what being bilingualism means and the type of bilingualism that the Colombian government is looking for. Additionally, these authors explain how some of these regulations have changed and refer to the National Program of English: Colombia Very Well 2015-2025. According to the authors, this proposal presents great challenges in terms of the levels of proficiency that students must have at the end of the 11th grade. Official and private institutions in Colombia must follow each one of the policies established by the Ministry of Education and must point out to the objectives not only to get Colombia as the best country in education, but also to achieve some levels in English, according to the program Colombia Bilingüe (Ministerio de Educación Nacional 2016).

Despite the fact that students in Colombia study English for at least 11 years, their proficiency in the language is not at the desired level, especially when considering Colombia's educational policies. This assumption could be confirmed by the results of the Prueba Saber 11 and other studies such as the English Proficiency Index (2023), in which Colombia is in position 75, with a low level of proficiency. However, schools, especially private ones, have implemented different strategies to achieve the goal of better results in the learning of a second language. The increase in the number of English classes and the definition of specific programs such as the Bogotá Bilingual Program, have been some of the actions to highlight.

As a national policy, it must be adopted by all the regions of Colombia. In relation to Tunja, the Municipal Development Plan 2019-2023 (Alcaldía de Tunja 2020) includes as a goal the number of institutions that are strengthened in the communicative competence of a second language, without forgetting that to be able to communicate in a second language, implies not only the mastery of a linguistic system but the ability to communicate correctly and effectively in a given situation (Jahir Aguirre et al 2024). In this way, another action that can be carried out in the classroom is linguistic immersion.

According to Fred Genesee et al. (1986) immersion programs are developed in elementary schools where the language of instruction is different from the students' native language. These authors emphasize various positive aspects of immersion programs such as the improvement in language skills, cognitive development, better academic level and love for the other culture. Authors such as Dianne Burke Money Penny y Rosalie S. Aldrich (2024) argue that "much of the merit of studying abroad rests in its classification as a high impact practice" (641). The previous points demonstrate that the benefits of an immersion program are many and overwhelmingly positive.

As a starting point, it is relevant to perceive immersion programs as a chance that people must learn or to reinforce a foreign language. These programs were created for various socio-political reasons and, according to Fred Genesee et al. (1986), they have spread to other countries, different from Canada, because they have proven to be effective in learning another language in a natural way and because they are not expensive. According to the same authors, immersion programs originated in Canada in the mid-60s as a result of the special needs of people learning French. It was a case where a community realized that the education their children were receiving at school was not sufficient to enable them to communicate in a second language.

The aforementioned idea reinforces the concern about how to provide students with the necessary tools to learn and communicate in a language other than their mother tongue, which is not a new one. This interest has been addressed in important governmental policies. Many countries in Latin America have made the effort to design and implement policies and programs aimed at improving English learning (Cronquist and Fiszbein 2017). Colombia is not the exception. Documents such as *Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje de Inglés* (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016), enacted by the Ministry

of Education, declare the importance of getting a better educated country by implementing programs such as “Colombia Bilingüe.” This program establishes three strategic projects for competitiveness: the use of media and new technologies, professional competence, and bilingualism. The Ministry of Education defines the latter as the improvement of the communicative competences in English as a foreign language in all educational sectors.

A private Catholic institution in Tunja, Colombia, decided to harness the power of immersion programs. This decision was inspired by the successful experience of a similar school in Bogotá, where students traveled abroad and had an academic and cultural encounter. Both schools are part of the same religious community. Tunja is the main city of Boyacá, near Bogotá, Colombia. According to the Índice de Competitividad Departamental (Gobernación de Boyacá 2023), Tunja is consistently ranked among the top educational institutions in the country. Infobae (2023) reported that this city achieved the best results in the Saber 11 exam, which was held in 2022. Despite the various efforts made by the schools, the results in terms of English proficiency are not satisfactory, and as mentioned earlier, educational institutions have been looking for different strategies to improve the English learning opportunities of the students. One private institution in Tunja started to offer the students the opportunity to travel to England for an immersion experience.

The focus of this article is to describe the perceptions of a group of graduates, students, and their parents about an immersion program. The graduates and students participated in a language immersion program in Eastbourne, England. The program consisted of attending classes in English from 8 to 12 and 2 to 4 times a week. Students studied English (speaking, listening, reading, writing, and grammar) and history, which were combined with the study of culture and national identity. Physical education and art were other subjects included in the program. In addition, immersion program participants had the opportunity to visit museums, shopping malls, parks, and other places where they had to use English to communicate. Academic activities were combined with cultural experiences to promote cultural exposure and language learning.

The immersion programs in Tunja School started with two small groups. One of them has the opportunity to travel to Windsor in Canada, and the other one, to Eastbourne in England. Since the start of the program in 2012, the number of students who have participated in the programs has varied. The cost of the immersion activity has been the one of the key factors according to some informal dialogues the researchers had with some parents.

Since this study focuses on the perceptions of a group of people reveal, it is necessary to understand what a perception is. According to Nadipuram Ram Prasad (2020), it consists of mental constructs that result from the integration of sensory information from the five traditional senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste) and a sixth sense that combines these individual senses. Anders Nes et al. (2021) state that “perceptions have for example been held to justify beliefs without themselves requiring

justifications...” (166). Gilberto Leonardo Oviedo (2004) claims that the perception determines, first, the input of information and, second, that the information allows the formation of abstractions (judgments, categories, concepts). The perceptions in this study were taken from the answers that four groups of participants gave about an immersion program. They made judgments based on what they experienced. Parents participated in an indirect way because they did not travel but the researchers wanted to know about their perceptions because they paid for the program and their permission was necessary for children to travel abroad.

## **Methodology**

This study followed a qualitative approach. Chinyere Ugwu et al. (2023) claim that this type of research deals with feelings, ideas or experiences and excludes range and frequency. According to the same authors, “Qualitative research is used to comprehend how individuals perceive their surroundings” (20). Specifically, the purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions that participants told to explain their experiences when participating in an immersion program.

It was also an exploratory and descriptive study. Through four different surveys, applied to four different groups of people, it was possible to know their perceptions about participating in an immersion program in England. Four graduates, seventeen students and five parents were involved in order to investigate the reality they perceived while participating in the immersion program. It was a descriptive study which highlighted the interpretation of the participants’ perceptions of what they lived in the immersion program, that is, as a product of their experience.

Before beginning to collect information from the participant group (students, graduates, and parents), the researchers administered two surveys, one to the principal and the other to the program coordinator. The purpose was to determine if they had previously used an instrument to evaluate the experience. The school director responded that the immersion program was evaluated when the students came out of the immersion program. However, the results of this evaluation were not found. On the other hand, the coordinator of the immersion program explained that the objectives of the activity were to provide students with the opportunity to participate in an English academic and cultural experience and to give them the chance to grow in their English level through daily practice with native and non-native speakers. The coordinator emphasized that the immersion program goes beyond language learning. He claimed that the program provided opportunities to gain better personal maturity, to be independent and autonomous in facing different situations in a foreign country, and at the same time to be able to communicate with people of different nationalities. However, there was no evidence of evaluation from this side either.

Based on the previous ideas the research question that guided this study was What do the perceptions of a group of parents, graduates, and students from a private institution reveal about an immersion program? In accordance with this question, the following objectives were defined:

- To show the perceptions of a group of parents, graduates, and students from a private institution about an immersion program in terms of its academic and social impact.
- To know the academic issues that may be affected after participating in an immersion program.
- To analyze the social and cultural impact of an immersion program on students at a private school in Tunja.
- The sample for this study consisted of five parents, four graduates and seventeen students. They belonged to a Catholic private institution in Tunja, Colombia. The parents and graduates were contacted by e-mail, and the students were approached at school. The following table shows the main characteristics of the participants in the study.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of participants in the study.

		<b>PARENTS</b>	<b>GRADUATES</b>	<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Number</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	3	3	13	
	Male	2	1	4	
<b>Age</b>	14-15 years			9	
	16 years			5	
	17 years			3	
	18 years		4		
	41-50 years	2			
	51-60 years	2			
	61-70 years	1			

**Source:** Researchers' elaboration.

This information was taken from questions 1 and 2 of each survey. It is important to clarify that the sample was divided into four groups: parents, graduates, students who traveled in 2018 and students who participated in the immersion in 2019. For this reason, four separate surveys were applied.

The survey was the instrument used to collect data. Four different surveys were used, one for each group. This study aimed to collect qualitative data. According to Hamed Taherdoost (2021), "This type of data answers to 'how and why' questions in a research study and mostly covers data regarding feelings, perceptions, and emotions..." (11). This author defines the survey as a convenient method to establish feelings, opinions and thoughts. In that vein, Hamed Taherdoost's (2021) survey definition is

appropriate for this study because it was designed to describe the perceptions of a group of people about an immersion program, both academically and socio-culturally.

On the one hand, the surveys were sent to parents and graduates by e-mail. On the other hand, students who traveled in 2018 and those who traveled in 2019 answered the instruments in the school's library. After the sample answered the surveys and they were collected by the researchers, they were analyzed under the thematic methodology. Muhammad Naeem et al. (2023) claim that this kind of methodology analyzes qualitative data and has some principles such as coding the data, searching for themes, refining the themes, and reporting the findings. The following tables present the common answers reported by participants in the study.

**Parent Surveys**

Table 2- Main concern of the questions and parents' answers

MAIN CONCERN OF THE QUESTION	ANSWERS						
Some parents were worried about...	To be far away from children	Economic issues	To perform academic duties in the Colombian school				
Other parents were not worried about...	To perform academic duties in the Colombian school	To be far from children	Economic issues				
Parents were motivated to allow their children to participate in the immersion program...	To know other cultures	Learning another language	To share, to have fun and to learn	Knowing other lifestyles	To strengthen autonomy and responsibility		
Parents had expectations about	Knowing if their children could	Providing their children with	Where their children	Whether children were in	Knowing other people who	Having a good organization and	Whether their children could



	adapt to live far away from home	enriching experiences	were able to apply what they had learned at school	a safe place	their children could learn English with	children's accompaniment	have cultural experiences and compare them with Colombian's ones
Positive aspects after their children had the immersion experience	Children continued practicing the language	Children strengthened their autonomy	Children talked about their interest in continuing studying or working abroad	Children came back home more responsible	Children gained more culture knowledge	Children were more outgoing	Children had a self-identity recognition
The aspect that participants of the immersion strengthen the most and that parents considered as the most important	Personal growth	Autonomy	Friendship with people from other countries				
Parents would recommend the program because of..	Their children came back home with more expectations about the world	The possibility to visit new places and to know different cultures	It allowed children to know themselves, to be better people, to love their country (Colombia), to	It helped to increase awareness of the importance of learning another language	It favored to learn the language in a real context		

			meet new friends and to set goals				
--	--	--	---	--	--	--	--

Source: Researchers' elaboration.

### Survey Applied to Graduates

Table 3. Main concern of the questions and graduates' answers

MAIN CONCERN OF THE QUESTION	ANSWERS					
Positive aspects they remember from the experience	They practiced English with native people	They met and interacted with people from other countries	They learned how to handle money	They learned about other cultures		
The aspect they would like to change from the program	To give all the participants the chance to live with a host family					
Program's benefits	It allowed for a greater world vision	It gave them the opportunity to learn how to live independently from their parents	It allowed to learn how to handle the money	It favored to be more autonomous and independent. In addition, to grow as a person	It provides many opportunities to improve the listening and speaking skills	It supports the fact of being exempted from taking the first levels of university English
Improvement of their language skills	Speaking and listening					
They would recommend the program because of...	It helps to improve their language skills, autonomy,	It contributes to their personal and	It prepares students			

	money management and comprehension of other cultures	professional growth	for their college entrance exams			
--	--	---------------------	----------------------------------	--	--	--

**Source:** Researchers' elaboration.

## Survey Applied to Students Who Participated in the Immersion Program in 2018

The aim of this survey was specifically to know the academic impact of the immersion program when they took the Saber 11 exam.

**Table 4-** Main concern of the questions and answers provided by students who traveled in 2018

MAIN CONCERN OF THE QUESTION	ANSWERS		
Score they got in Saber 11 exam	76/100	80/100	70/100
Their feelings during the exam	Confident		
They got good results on the exam because of	The participation in the immersion program.	What they had learnt in the school and what they learnt in the immersion program	
The participation in the immersion program was useful in the exam because of	They knew much of the vocabulary they needed, which they had learned during the immersion program		

**Source:** Researchers' elaboration.

## Survey Applied to Students Who Participated in the Immersion Program in 2019

**Table 5-** Main concern of the questions and answers provided by students who traveled in 2019

MAIN CONCERN OF THE QUESTION	ANSWERS		
Language skills they improved during the program	In order of preference: Listening Speaking Writing Reading		

They improved listening and speaking because of	They listened to native people every day	It was necessary and for living with the English language on a daily basis	They took advantage of what they learned in the program	Classes and topics were dynamic	
There were changes in the English class when they returned to school from the program due to	The program motivated to study more <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• En la inmersión tenían buena disciplina y comportamiento.</li> <li>• Le tomé aprecio y día quiero aprender más.</li> </ul>	They understood the topics presented in class better, and they improved their participation	They liked English class more. They felt more confident when they had to speak or work on any language-related tasks		
The institute fulfilled their expectations because of...	They learned about new cultures	The environment was funny and cool			
The methodology used in the institute was	Didactic	Dynamic	Ludic		
The methodology was successful because of	It was motivating due to the dynamic nature of the methodology	Classes were more personalized	It was based on what students actually lived	There was a lot of practice	
The participants wanted to implement in their own school	More dynamic activities	Teaching not just based on grammar	Teaching by levels	Topics based on reality	More conversational practices
Some expectation and fears before traveling were	Not having enough money	Not being able to communicate effectively			

Through culture they understood	The features of social groups: traditions, lifestyles	Values	The language		
The following themes were found to be different between Colombian and British culture	Social organization	Punctuality	Respect	Attitudes	Colombians are known for their warm and welcoming hospitality, which is very different from that of the UK

**Source:** Researchers' elaboration.

## Results

Based on the research question, “What do the perceptions of a group of parents, graduates and students from a private institution reveal about an immersion program?” and after conducting the corresponding analysis, following the thematic approach, the perceptions presented by the participants were grouped into the following categories: *Immersion programs: beyond learning a language; Knowing me and growing as a person, and My experience as a base to strengthen the program and my own school.*

The first category, “Immersion programs: beyond language learning”, is related to participants’ perceptions about language improvement and personal growth. First, participants agree on four key points: the importance of language practice, the improvement of the listening and speaking skills, the strong foundation students and graduates have in the school and the understanding that language is part of a culture. This last idea is settled by Alexandra Baydak et al. (2015) who argue that the idea that language is the main expression of a nation’s culture is an enduring concept. Second, in the social aspect, participants agree that the immersion program was relevant to the growth of autonomy, responsibility and personal improvement. Participants acknowledge that the importance of the immersion program is not only in terms of how much a person can learn about the language in a classroom setting, but because of the opportunities it provides to interact with others and to learn about their culture. In the same vein, the immersion program helps the participants in their personal development and growth. This personal change can be explained by Gloria Onosu (2021), who refers to “the perspective transformation theory [that] explains that when people encounter an unfamiliar situation, it pushes them to alter their regular pattern of thinking, and this experience might lead to the development of new perspectives” (2). For the participants of the immersion program, living in unfamiliar situations such as being without parents,

learning how to manage money, and finding the effective ways to communicate with local people, were some of those the unfamiliar experiences that forced them to change their way of thinking and acting.

On the one hand, the parents of the participants agreed that their main motivation for allowing their children to participate in the immersion program was to learn about other cultures and to have enriching experiences. On the other hand, graduates recalled as a positive aspect the opportunity to meet and interact with people from other countries. Finally, students who participated in 2019 also mentioned the relevance of culture.

In the academic field, the participants recognize that the immersion program has had a positive impact in areas such as confidence to take the Saber 11 exam, better understanding of the English classes in the school, improvement of listening and speaking skills, better performance in English classes. They also showed an increase in their participation and confidence when they needed to speak. The desire to continue learning the language was also expressed by some parents who reported that their children had started listening to more English songs and reading books in the language.

Second category: *My experience as a base to strengthen the program and my own school.* According to the students who traveled in 2018 and 2019 the academic benefits were as result of the methodology implemented in the institute. Most of the students said that the methodology was dynamic and playful and it led to learning with more motivation. In addition, they mentioned the advantages of having more personalized classes, taken into account their reality. The continuous practice was another key point highlighted by students, who also said that it allowed them to have more confidence when they had to speak.

The previous perceptions allowed the students to suggest that the school in Tunja could consider having more dynamic classes in English, classifying students according to their language level, teaching English based on real life and giving more opportunities to practice speaking skills. These new thoughts were born after encountering different ways of approaching English teaching. The participants found new points of reference that make them think. In Gloria Onosu's words: "Whenever a person encounters a disruptive event, it triggers a transformative learning process and creates a new reference point, which causes them to reflect on their beliefs, norms, values, ideas, and expectations" (2).

The institute met the expectations of the participants. However, it was very interesting to read one graduate's suggestion regarding the benefit of living with a family rather than in the institute. According to Francesca Di Silvio et al. (2014), living with a local host family could be seen as ideal due to the opportunities to develop different language skills. Learning about a language and about a specific culture on a daily basis and in authentic situations could be beneficial for second or foreign language learners in terms of gaining confidence in both linguistic and communicative competences.

Finally, the third category: *Knowing me and others*. Because the research question addressed social concerns, it was possible to demonstrate that the participants' perceptions revealed that the immersion program had effects in the following areas.

Parents wanted their children to learn more than just a language; they wanted them to learn about other lives, other cultures, and to think about their future. This means that parents were aware of the importance of going abroad to learn a language, but also to benefit from other experiences that their children could bring with them. Returning with different expectations was a prospect mentioned by graduates when one of them referred to *have a wider vision of the world* and the comprehension of other cultures. Students who traveled in 2019 mentioned that the immersion program allowed them to learn from new cultures. Gloria Onosu (2021) says that “Study Abroad Program (SAP) frequently involves a cultural immersion experience that purposely exposes students to a cultural environment that is different from their local community” (1). In this way, students clarified that when they talked about culture, they meant understanding characteristics, customs and lifestyles. Students were able to interact in a different context that allowed them to compare their local context with the one in which they lived. That is why students mentioned the following words for differentiating Colombian culture from British culture: food, music, punctuality, social organization, cleanliness, and respect. Immersion programs can help participants identify differences or similarities between their own culture and the host culture. Based on Wai Meng Chan and Sasiwimol Klayklung (2021) participants in immersion programs can identify, analyze, interpret, and evaluate both their own and the host culture through the nature of their experiences.

Personal growth or development was the other theme the researchers found. Parents credited the immersion program with increasing their children's autonomy and responsibility. They would recommend the program because it allowed their children to know themselves as better human beings. Tara Williams (2012) claims that “Becoming bilingual leads to new ways of conceptualizing yourself and others. It expands your worldview, so that you not only know more, you know differently” (12). Students and graduates who participated in the immersion program acknowledged the benefits beyond the language itself. The program allowed them to see themselves, others, and the world differently.

## Conclusions

Based on the research question, “What do the perceptions of a group of parents, graduates and students from a private institution reveal about an immersion program?”, it is possible to assert that the immersion program had academic and social effects on the program participants.

The immersion program can be seen as a resource for learning, practicing, and reinforcing a foreign language as well as learning about other cultures. Students and graduates said that after

participating, they noticed a great interest in learning English and they were aware of their improvement in this language. Being in a place where they had to live or interact with native speakers helped them to strengthen their listening and speaking skills.

Students and graduates credit the immersion program with their improved academic performance in the school. Graduates were able to waive the first levels of English when they enrolled in university. Similarly, students who took the Saber 11 exam claimed that they felt more confident because of the vocabulary they had learned. The different methods used by the Institute allowed the participants to learn more about the English language, to reinforce it and to practice it.

In the social aspect, the participants of the immersion program together with the parents said that they changed in the personal aspect. They learned to live without their parents, they learned how to manage their time and their money.

## **Implicaciones éticas**

Esta investigación se desarrolló con menores de edad y en una institución educativa de carácter privado, por lo que se pidió a los padres de familia y a la Rectora del Colegio, la autorización para aplicar las encuestas. Se les comunicó que las respuestas solo se tomarían para efectos del estudio.

## **Contribución de los autores**

**Autor 1:** conceptualización, recolección de datos, investigación, metodología, redacción del manuscrito original.

**Autor 2:** conceptualización, recolección de datos, investigación, redacción del manuscrito original, revisión y edición.

**Autor 3:** recolección de datos, investigación, redacción del manuscrito original.

## **Declaración de fuentes de financiación:**

Los autores declaran que este estudio fue autofinanciado.

## **Conflictos de interés:**

Los autores declaran no tener conflictos de interés.



## REFERENCIAS

- Aguirre Morales, Jahir, Bertha Ramos Holguín, e Ilba Rodríguez Tamayo. *Addressing the Basics of EFL Classrooms: Key Elements for Pre-Service Teachers*. Editorial UPTC, 2024. <http://dx.doi.org/10.19053/uptc.9789586608244>
- Alcaldía de Tunja. *Plan de Desarrollo de Tunja. Tunja la capital que nos une*. 2020. [https://alcaldiatunja.micolombiadigital.gov.co/sites/alcaldiatunja/content/files/000802/40091\\_pdm-tunja\\_la\\_capital\\_que\\_nos\\_uno\\_20202023.pdf](https://alcaldiatunja.micolombiadigital.gov.co/sites/alcaldiatunja/content/files/000802/40091_pdm-tunja_la_capital_que_nos_uno_20202023.pdf)
- Endang, Sri Andayani. "The Importance of Learning and Knowing English in Higher Education in Indonesia." *Research and Development Journal of Education*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2022, pp. 372-379. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30998/rdje.v8i1.13315>
- Baydak, Alexandra V., Claudia Scharioth, and Irina A. Il'vashenko. "Interaction of Language and Culture in the Process of International Education." *Procedia, Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 215, 2015, pp. 14-18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.567>
- Chan, Wai Meng, and Sasiwimol Klayklueg. "Critical Cultural Awareness and Identity Development: Insights from a Short-term Thai Language Immersion." *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, vol. 15, 2018, pp. 129–147. doi.10.56040/amck1521
- Cobo, Giselle, Lizeth Ramos Acosta, y Heriberto González Valencia. "Políticas públicas sobre bilingüismo en Colombia y la formación de docentes de lenguas extranjeras." En *La formación del profesorado. Teoría y práctica pedagógica*, editado por M. C. Cano Quintero, pp. 25-42. Editorial Universidad Santiago de Cali, 2020.
- Cronquist, Kathryn, and Ariel Fiszbein. "El aprendizaje del inglés en América Latina." *Fundación Lúminis*, Biblioteca Virtual, 2017. <https://www.fundacionluminis.org.ar/editorial/el-dialogo-liderazgo-para-las-americas>
- Di Silvio, Francesca, Anne Donovan, and Margaret E. Malone. "The Effect of Study Abroad Homestay Placements: Participant Perspectives and Oral Proficiency Gains." *Foreign Language Annals*, vol. 47, 2014, pp. 168-188. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12064>
- "English Proficiency Index." *EF*, 2023. [Reports.https://www.ef.com/assetscdn/WIBlwq6RdJvcD9bc8RMd/cefcom-epi-site/reports/2023/ef-epi-2023-english.pdf](https://www.ef.com/assetscdn/WIBlwq6RdJvcD9bc8RMd/cefcom-epi-site/reports/2023/ef-epi-2023-english.pdf)
- Genesee, Fred, William E Lambert y Naomi E. Holobow (1986). "La adquisición de una segunda lengua mediante inmersión: el enfoque Canadiense." *Infancia y Aprendizaje*, Vol. 33, 1986, pp. 27-36.
- Gobernación de Boyacá. "Índice Departamental de Competitividad." *Consejo Privado de Competitividad*, 2023. [https://cctunja.org.co/boyacacompite/indice-departamental-de-competitividad-2023/#:~:text=El%20IDC%202023%20eval%C3%BAa%20la,mercados%20y%20iv\)%20ecosistema%20innovador.](https://cctunja.org.co/boyacacompite/indice-departamental-de-competitividad-2023/#:~:text=El%20IDC%202023%20eval%C3%BAa%20la,mercados%20y%20iv)%20ecosistema%20innovador.)
- Infobae. "Prueba Saber 11 2023: matemáticas e inglés, las materias con puntajes más bajos." *Infobae*, 14 nov. 2023.

- <https://www.infobae.com/colombia/2023/11/14/prueba-saber-11-2023-matematicas-e-ingles-las-materias-con-puntajes-mas-bajos/>
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional. “Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lengua Extranjera: Inglés.” *Santillana*, 2006. <https://santillanaplus.com.co/pdf/estandares-basicos-de-competencias.pdf>
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional. “Programa Nacional de Inglés: Colombia Very Well.” *Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, 2014. [https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-343837\\_Programa\\_Nacional\\_Ingles.pdf](https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-343837_Programa_Nacional_Ingles.pdf)
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional. “Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje de Inglés.” *Santillana*, 2016. <https://santillanaplus.com.co/pdf/DBA-ingles-espanol.pdf>
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional. “Colombia Bilingüe: Conozca el programa.” *Santillana*, 2016. <https://rutamaestra.santillana.com.co/programa-colombia-bilingue-2014-2018/>
- Money Penny, Dianne Burke y Rosalie S Aldrich. “Study Abroad and Intensive Linguistic Immersion in Spain: Undergraduate Oral Proficiency for Short-Term Study Abroad.” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, vol. 36, no 1, 2024, pp. 640–659. <https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v36i1.781>
- Muhammad, Naeem, Wilson Ozuem, Kerry Howell, and Silvia Ranfagni. “A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 22, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Nes, Anders, Kristoffer Sundberg, and Sebastian Waltzl. “The Perception/Cognition Distinction.” *Inquiry*, vol. 66, no. 2, 2021, pp. 166-195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2021.1926317>
- Nishanthi, Rajathurai. “The Importance of Learning English in Today World.” *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2018, pp. 871-874. <http://dx.doi.org/10.31142/ijtsrd19061>
- Nur, Yunidar, Muhammad Yunus and Ulinsa Ulinsa. “Psychological Aspects of Second Language Acquisition: A Case Study Indonesian Educational System.” *Euromentor*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2023, pp. 50–73. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2799231138?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journal>
- Onosu Gloria. “The Impact of Cultural Immersion Experience on Identity Transformation Process.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 18, no. 5, 2021, p. 2680. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052680>
- Oviedo, Gilberto. Leonardo. “La definición del concepto de percepción en psicología con base en la teoría Gestalt.” *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, vol. 1, no.18, 2024, pp.89-96. <https://doi.org/10.7440/res18.2004.08>
- Prasad, Nadipuram Ram. “Perception and Reality”. In *Statistical and Fuzzy Approaches to Data Processing, with Applications to Econometrics and Other Areas*, edited by V. Kreinovich, pp.193-2018. Springer, 2020. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45619-1\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45619-1_15)

- Taherdoost, Hamed. "Data Collection Methods and Tools for Research; A Step-by-Step Guide to Choose Data Collection Technique for Academic and Business Research Projects." *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, vol. 10 no. 1, 2021, pp. 10-38. <https://hal.science/hal-03741834v1/file/Data%20Collection%20Methods%20and%20Tools%20for%20Research%20.pdf>
- Ugwu, Chinyere. N. and Eze Val, H. U. "Qualitative Research". *IDOSR Journal of Computer and Applied Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2023, pp. 20-35. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367221023\\_Qualitative\\_Research#fullTextFileContent](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367221023_Qualitative_Research#fullTextFileContent)
- Williams, Tara. *Chinese Language Learning in the Early Grades: A Handbook of Resources and Best Practices for Mandarin Immersion*. Asia Society, 2012 <https://asiasociety.org/files/chinese-earlylanguage.pdf>