



**Factors influencing the attainment to non-attainment of C1 level among students of  
the bachelor's degree in English at a private university: A narrative study**

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**Trabajo de Grado presentado como requisito para optar al título de licenciada en  
lenguas extranjeras con énfasis en Inglés**

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Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios  
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2024



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**Thesis submitted as a requirement to obtain a degree in foreign languages with an  
emphasis on English**

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Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Languages with Emphasis on English  
2024

**CORPORACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA MINUTO DE DIOS - UNIMINUTO  
FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN  
PROGRAMAS DE PREGRADO**

**ACTA DE SUSTENTACIÓN**

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**Del programa:** Licenciatura en Idioma Extranjero Inglés

**Presentaron sustentación del Proyecto de Grado titulado:**

*“Factors influencing the attainment to non-attainment of C1 level among students of the bachelor’s degree in English at a private university: A narrative study”.*

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**Obtuvieron el concepto:**

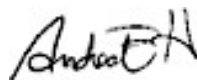
**APROBADO**

**REPROBADO**

**Observaciones:** \_\_\_\_\_

Para constancia se firma en Bogotá, D.C., el día 18 del mes de noviembre de 2024.

**FIRMA DEL JURADO:**



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## **Acknowledgments**

We want to express our most sincere gratitude to all the people and institutions that made this research project possible.

First and foremost, we thank God for allowing us to reach this point in our careers. We extend our deepest thanks to our tutor, Diego Marín, for his invaluable guidance, patience, and constant support throughout the entire process. His advice and knowledge were fundamental to the development of this project.

To our parents and families, Bustos Buelvas, Quintero Ararat, and Solano Vargas, for their unconditional love, understanding, and support at every stage of our academic journey. Without their encouragement and sacrifice, this achievement would not have been possible.

To our friends and study companions, for their company, encouragement, and for sharing with us, both the stressful and joyful moments. Their friendship has been an essential pillar on this path.

To the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, for providing the resources and environment necessary to carry out this research. Their collaboration was crucial to the success of this project.

Finally, we thank everyone who, in one way or another, contributed to the completion of this work. Your support and confidence in us have been a constant source of inspiration and motivation.

### **Dedication**

I, Sarai Bustos, dedicate this work to my mother, Ludis Buelvas, my sister, Lauren Hernandez, and my father, Orlando Bustos, for their unconditional support throughout my university journey. I, Juliana Solano, dedicate this work to my mother, María Angélica Vargas, my lovely family, and my beloved grandparents, Virginia Morato and Raymundo Vargas, who watch over us from heaven, for your unwavering love, support, and encouragement to fulfilling a dream. I, Evelin Quintero, dedicate this work first of all, to my gracious heavens Father God for absolutely everything, to my mother, Amalfi Ararat, my father, Libaniel Quintero, and my brother, Jhonier Quintero, for their love and unconditional support in this important academic step.

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	7
List of Tables .....	9
List of Figures .....	9
Abstract .....	1
Resumen.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1: Contextualization .....	4
Macro context: .....	4
Micro context: .....	5
Chapter 2: Problem .....	6
Description of the problem .....	6
Formulation of the problem.....	10
Justification.....	10
Research objectives .....	12
General objective .....	12
Specific objectives .....	12
Chapter 3: Referential Framework. ....	14
Background framework .....	14
Theoretical Framework.....	20
Legal framework.....	25
Chapter 4: Methodological design .....	28
Type of investigation: .....	28
Method of investigation:.....	29
Stages of investigation:.....	29
Population and sample:.....	30

Data collection instruments: .....	31
Chapter 6: Results .....	32
Data analysis.....	32
Discussion of the results .....	40
Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations .....	44
Chapter 8: Prospective .....	46
Chapter 9: References .....	47
Chapter 10: Annexes.....	52
Appendix A .....	52
Appendix B.....	53

**List of Tables**

Table 1 ..... 7  
Table 2 ..... 8

**List of Figures**

Figure 1 ..... 9

### **Abstract**

This qualitative study aims to investigate, through the lens of student experiences, the factors of attainment or not attainment faced by ninth-semester students at a private university in Bogotá to achieve the C1 level of English proficiency, a requirement for graduating with a bachelor's degree (ELT). Through semi-structured interviews, conducted with a population of 10 participants, key factors influencing the development of C1 level proficiency were identified: autonomy, effective learning strategies, quality of teaching, the language studied, emotional factors, social relationships, and self-perception. Furthermore, the importance of the teaching role and its direct impact on the acquisition process was highlighted, as well as the creation of immersive environments in the English language, since it was identified as a fundamental pillar for obtaining the C1 level. The findings inform evidence-based solutions gathered from students' experiences to improve language teaching, learning, and ultimately, C1 level attainment. Finally, the implications of this study are far-reaching, influencing English language education theory and practice. They not only enrich our understanding but also pave the way for future research such as curriculum design, teacher training, among others, ensuring academic and professional success in a globalized environment among students.

**Keywords:** *CEFR C1 level achievement, English language education, English major university students, Language proficiency achievement, Narrative inquiry.*

### **Resumen**

Este estudio cualitativo tiene como objetivo investigar, a través de las experiencias estudiantiles, los factores de logro o no logro que enfrentan los estudiantes de noveno semestre de una universidad privada de Bogotá para alcanzar el nivel C1 de dominio del inglés, requisito para graduarse como licenciados. A través de entrevistas semiestructuradas, realizadas a una población de 10 participantes, se identificaron los factores clave que influyen en el desarrollo del dominio del nivel C1: autonomía, estrategias efectivas de aprendizaje, calidad de la enseñanza, la lengua estudiada, factores emocionales, relaciones sociales y autopercepción. Además, se destacó la importancia del rol docente y su impacto directo en el proceso de adquisición, así como la creación de ambientes inmersivos en el idioma inglés, ya que se identificó como un pilar fundamental para la obtención del nivel C1. Los hallazgos informan soluciones basadas en evidencia recopiladas de las experiencias de los estudiantes para mejorar la enseñanza, el aprendizaje y, en última instancia, el logro del nivel C1. Finalmente, las implicaciones de este estudio son de largo alcance, influyendo en la teoría y la práctica de la educación del idioma inglés. No sólo enriquecen nuestra comprensión, sino que también abren el camino para futuras investigaciones como el diseño curricular y la formación docente, entre otras, garantizando el éxito académico y profesional en un entorno globalizado entre los estudiantes.

***Palabras claves:*** Logro del nivel C1 del MCER, enseñanza del idioma inglés, estudiantes universitarios de lengua inglesa, logro de competencia lingüística, investigación narrativa.

## **Introduction**

In today's increasingly interconnected world, proficiency in English has become a crucial skill for accessing better job opportunities, academic advancement, and social integration. Achieving a C1 level, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - CEFR (2001) represents an ambitious milestone. It not only signifies advanced comprehension and production skills in the language but also instills the confidence needed to navigate complex, professional, and high-stakes environments.

However, despite the efforts of many educational institutions to enhance English instruction, a noticeable disparity remains between students who attain this level and those who, despite receiving similar training, do not. Thus, this research aims to explore how ninth-semester students in a bachelor's degree on English (ELT degree) explain that phenomenon from their point of view through their narratives.

The study uses a qualitative approach, employing semi-structured interviews to gather students' personal stories, backgrounds, and perspectives on their English learning experiences. These narratives offer deep insights into the emotional, motivational, cognitive, and pedagogical aspects that shape the language acquisition process, providing a holistic view of the barriers and enablers influencing the students' academic performance progress.

All in all, understanding students' perceptions about their learning process might give them a voice in the academic debate on English language teaching. Their reflections probably help identify barriers and facilitators in the achievement of the C1 level. Additionally, the academic community could consider practical recommendations for enhancing teaching and learning based on them.

## **Chapter 1: Contextualization**

In this chapter, the contextualization of the study is presented, divided into two sections: macro and micro context. In the first section, the national educational framework in Colombia is analyzed, emphasizing the importance of bilingualism and foreign language education. In the second part, the specific context of the private university where the study was conducted is examined, highlighting the challenges faced by students in the Bachelor of Foreign Languages with an emphasis on English (ELT degree) in reaching the C1 level of English proficiency.

### **Macro context:**

In Colombia, the Ministry of Education has long recognized the importance of bilingualism within the national educational framework. Since 1994, bilingual education has been emphasized as a key component of the country's academic system, reflecting a commitment to developing global citizens with the necessary linguistic skills for success in an interconnected world (Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN], 2005).

This commitment is evident in the focus on English proficiency, which is seen as a gateway to academic and professional opportunities (MEN, 2005). The private university where we carried out this study exemplifies this dedication to linguistic excellence, with its bachelor's in foreign Languages serving as a foundation for preparing graduates to thrive in a globalized society.

**Micro context:**

Despite the program's rigorous standards and the international goal of achieving a C1 level of English proficiency, many students face challenges in reaching this goal. This discrepancy raises important questions about the effectiveness of the curriculum and the teaching methodologies employed in the program. Specifically, some students in the Bachelor's in Foreign Languages program are not reaching the C1 level, hence an analysis of the discourse these students construct around their low achievements is fundamental (Council of Europe, 2001).

Students' attitudes and motivations toward learning English are also important considerations. Some students may lack commitment or fail to see the importance of achieving a high proficiency level, relying solely on classroom instruction. By addressing these factors comprehensively, the study seeks to enhance the educational experience and ensure that the foreign languages program at the private university continues to be a model of linguistic excellence, contributing to Colombia's broader goals of international recognition and competitiveness.

Finally, addressing low levels of English proficiency has significant professional implications. A workforce equipped with advanced language skills enhances Colombia's standing in the global job market and in this specific context, it could contribute to upgrading the educational quality of the university and better-equipping graduates of the ELT program for success.

## **Chapter 2: Problem**

This section establishes the foundations of the research, presenting the description of the problem, the statement, and or research question that guides this study. In addition, the justification, general and specific objectives that conduct the exploration of the acquisition or not of level C1 are explained.

### **Description of the problem**

The increasingly globalized world demands professionals with advanced linguistic skills to compete in the international job market. However, despite the emphasis on bilingualism in Colombian education, students in the bachelor's degree in foreign languages with an English concentration at a private university in Bogota face significant challenges in achieving the desired level of linguistic competence.

Within this problem, the low performance of students in the examined context raises questions about the factors that may be influencing the learning process, such as inadequate language instruction, limited exposure to authentic linguistic contexts, and insufficient teacher training.

This concern is reinforced by Resolution 18583 of 2017, issued by the Ministry of National Education, which states that undergraduate programs with a focus on a foreign language must demonstrate that students have achieved level C1 in the language of emphasis, according to the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), verified through standardized tests or designed by higher education institutions

(MEN, 2017). Specifically, section 3.4 states that, after three years, students must demonstrate having achieved level C1 in the language of emphasis.

In this context, it is essential to investigate the factors that contribute to the attainment or non-attainment of level C1 by students, in order to improve teaching and learning processes, and generate effective strategies for graduates to achieve this level.

A diagnostic English test was administered at the university to identify student current level. According to the CEFR, level 2 corresponds to B1 and B2 and level 3 corresponds to C1 (See Table1). Notably, the private institution conducted the diagnostic test between the eighth and ninth semesters, after students completed and passed the advanced English C1 course in the seventh semester.

**Table 1**

*Standardization to the CEFR levels*

Raw Score	Description	CEFR Level
90 to 140	Superior Proficiency	C1 - Level 3
75 to 89	Above average proficiency	B2 - Level 2
56 to 74	Average proficiency	B1 - Level 2

Note. The clarification on levels 2 and 3 in the third column is due to the diagnostic test used, which considers these levels to assess (see Appendix B).

The diagnostic test examined three aspects: language, reading, and listening. As a result, it yielded a total percentile score and an approximate score range. However, only 4 out of 15 students achieved level 3, corresponding to the C1 level.

**Table 2**

*Specific results of the diagnostic test*

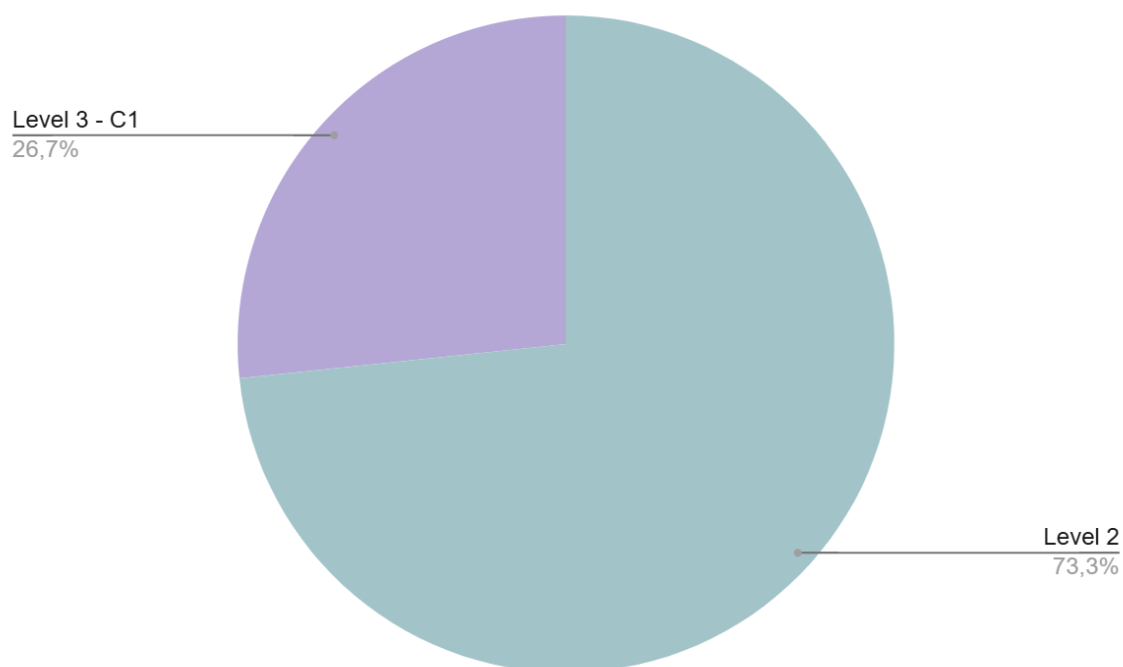
Students	Language	Reading	Listening	Total percentile score	Approximate Score Range
Student 1	74	50	63,33	62.44	Level 2
Student 2	60	66,77	70	65.56	Level 2
Student 3	74	73,33	83,33	76.89	Level 2
Student 4	78	83,33	90	83.78	Level 2
Student 5	94	86,67	90	90.22	Level 3
Student 6	82	90	90	87.33	Level 3
Student 7	82	86,67	83,33	84	Level 2
Student 8	74	83,33	86,67	81.33	Level 2
Student 9	70	66,67	86,67	74.45	Level 2
Student 10	88	86,67	96,67	90.45	Level 3
Student 11	74	60	70	68	Level 2
Student 12	42	70	66,67	59.56	Level 2
Student 13	92	86,67	90	89.56	Level 3

Student 14	78	76,67	70	71.56	Level 2
Student 15	82	73,33	86.67	80.67	Level 2

Note. Table 2 presents the detailed results of the test, including scores for each skill, total scores, and approximate score ranges. This table facilitates a comparison of the outcomes and reveals the percentage of students who attained level 3 (C1) and level 2, underscoring the difficulties in achieving the C1 level.

### Figure 1

*Comparison of results*



The diagnostic outcomes indicated that merely 26.7% of the students, namely four out of fifteen, reached Level C1, whereas the remainder achieved Level 2, corresponding to

B1 and B2. This disparity implies the presence of critical factors influencing the attainment of Level C1.

The consequences of this problem are multifaceted. Students who fail to reach the C1 level may experience fewer job opportunities, limited access to academic and professional opportunities, difficulties communicating effectively in authentic linguistic context, and reduced participation in this globalized world. Furthermore, this deficiency undermines Colombia's efforts to develop a bilingual and competitive nation. Addressing this challenge requires a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to students' difficulties in reaching the C1 level. By exploring the experiences and perspectives of ninth-semester students, this study aims to identify key challenges and opportunities for improvement.

### **Formulation of the problem**

In response to the comments above, the researchers posed the following question:

What factors contribute to ninth-semester students' success or failure in attaining C1 proficiency in a Bachelor's Program on English (ELT degree) at a private university in Bogota from their perspectives?

### **Justification**

The acquisition of English as a lingua franca is an essential requirement in the vision of the globalized world, we find ourselves in. For this reason, it is crucial to have qualified professionals with the necessary skills and tools to proficiently communicate and teach English. Likewise, these competencies are fundamental to achieving the language

goals set by the government as outlined by the Ministerio de Educacion nacional (2005), in which it highlights the objective for a bilingual and competitive nation. However, it was found that, despite the importance of the goals, several students are struggling to reach the C1 level in the institution where we carried out the study.

This is how this particular inquiry becomes fundamental. By analyzing the narrated experiences of ninth-semester students of the degree in ELT, we can gain a better understanding of the success or failure in the attainment of the C1 level. Additionally, it recognizes their role as agents of their own learning, aligned with the goals of *Resolución 18583* (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2017), which underscores the need for proficient English speakers to support Colombia's bilingual education policy and enhance students' competitive abilities in a global context.

Additionally, this study paves the way for future research, ensuring continuous quality improvement in university processes and student outcomes. Our investigation provides the crucial first step towards advancing and strengthening these processes, ensuring university graduates attain the C1 level and are prepared to face the challenges of the workforce and academia.

In conclusion, this study significantly contributes to understanding the factors influencing C1 level acquisition among undergraduate students. The research findings can inform effective educational policies and practices, enhancing education quality and increasing opportunities for graduates. Moreover, we lay the groundwork for future research that continues to explore ways to improve English language teaching and learning in university contexts.

### **Research objectives**

In this section, the general and specific objectives that guide this research will be presented in order to understand the factors that influence the acquisition of the C1 level of linguistic competence in English among students. These objectives focus on the identification of the strategies and factors that facilitate or hinder the acquisition of this level, and on the exploration of the beliefs and expectations of the students concerning their learning.

### **General objective**

To identify and analyze the personal and institutional factors that contribute to the success or failure of ninth-semester students in achieving C1 language proficiency in an ELT degree at a private university in Bogotá, through semi-structured interviews, focusing on the students' experiences.

### **Specific objectives**

- To design a questionnaire to identify the participants' context, experiences, and strategies to achieve C1.
- To analyze participants narrated lived experiences learning English by a semi-structured interview.
- To present the results of the interviews to reveal the common characteristics of students who do or do not reach C1.
- To make proposals or recommendations for improving training and with this the scope of C1 through experiences.

In conclusion, this chapter established the research problem, identifying that many ninth-semester undergraduate students at a private university in Bogotá fail to achieve the C1 level of English proficiency despite having completed and passed the corresponding course. The diagnostic test revealed that only four out of fifteen students achieved a C1 level, while the others demonstrated lower levels (B1 and B2). This issue led to the formulation of the research problem, which seeks to investigate the factors contributing to students' success or failure in achieving the C1 level. The study's justification highlights its relevance and motivation for improving educational quality. The study's objectives focused on designing semi-structured interviews to analyze the experiences of ten students and present results and improvement recommendations. This study will lay the groundwork for future research, contributing to the continuous improvement of English language education in university contexts.

### **Chapter 3: Referential Framework.**

This section seeks to establish the theoretical basis that supports the qualitative research carried out. We are starting with an in-depth examination of six pivotal studies that have profoundly influenced our comprehension of the topic. These studies, chosen for their conceptual clarity, methodological soundness, and empirical rigor, shed light on the intricate mechanisms, processes, and relationships that characterize the phenomenon. By engaging with this body of research, we establish a nuanced understanding of the topic, identify research gaps and opportunities, and situate our investigation within the broader theoretical and empirical landscape. Additionally, in the second part of the chapter, which constitutes the theoretical framework, key concepts are presented for the understanding and conceptualization of the problem question as well as the purpose of the research and its results. That is why there you will not only find keywords of our research but also topics that contribute to the analysis of the results in their concepts.

#### **Background framework**

To begin our analysis of previous studies, we have identified six relevant investigations that addressed topics related to linguistic competence acquisition in various contexts. Conducted in Colombia, Chile, and other continents, these studies provide significant contributions that inform our research. This section is organized to present each study, highlighting its characteristics, similarities, and differences with respect to our investigation.

To provide a clear and comparative overview, we will begin with a brief introduction to each study, followed by a detailed analysis that highlights the similarities

and differences between them and our study. This approach enables the identification of relevant patterns and trends that enrich our understanding of the topic. In particular, we focus on studies that emphasize the qualitative aspects of language learning, such as the learners' needs, communicative skills, and the emotional factors like anxiety that influence their progress. Furthermore, we examine how learning strategies, self-regulation, and learners' beliefs about language acquisition play a crucial role in achieving linguistic competence.

To start with the first study called: Learning Needs of English and French Students from a Modern Languages Program at a Colombian University. This study investigated the learning needs of modern languages in English and French students at Universidad del Cauca, analyzing their expectations, learning strategies, and competences. A mixed-methods approach was used, gathering data from 108 students through questionnaires and documentary review. The results showed the importance of autonomy in their process as well as the students' need to develop it. Similarly, the fundamental part of instruction in learning strategies, language practice, and the importance of their role as future English teachers in the Colombian context was identified. They also require innovative methodologies, exposure to the target language, and cultural knowledge. The findings suggest that the modern languages program should adapt to meet these needs, promoting learner autonomy, meaningful learning, and effective language development. Finally, the study highlights the importance of considering students' interests and motivations beyond teaching and addressing the need for more resources and innovative methodologies in the program. (Encarnacion-Mosquera, 2022)

As we can appreciate, this first research which investigates the needs and expectations of students learning English and French, focusing their attention on their learning strategies and competencies, reveals the importance of promoting learner autonomy and innovative methodologies. The findings suggest that meaningful learning and language practice are crucial, especially for students training to become future English teachers in Colombia. This connection to autonomy is essential in understanding C1 attainment in our research, as ELT students with higher levels of independence may be better equipped to reach advanced proficiency. Additionally, Encarnación-Mosquera (2022) revealed that "in fact, students are aware of their lack of autonomy and commitment to do independent tasks" (p. 21). This finding is relevant to our study, as it suggests that autonomy is a crucial factor in students' success or failure, even in different contexts.

The study *The Incidence of Communicative Strategies in English Language Learning* explored the impact of communicative skills on language acquisition among Agroindustry students. Findings highlighted the effectiveness of practical communication activities, including storytelling, games, and oral discussions, in enhancing English proficiency. These interactive methods were found to boost students' confidence and provide essential practice in using English in real-life contexts, a crucial aspect for those striving to achieve C1 proficiency (Chavés et al., 2020).

This research is relevant to our study as it underscores the importance of communicative strategies in ELT programs. For students working toward advanced proficiency, the integration of such strategies can facilitate the transition from classroom learning to practical application, potentially improving C1 attainment rates. The study's emphasis on bridging academic and real-world language use aligns with our focus on

understanding student experiences and suggests that ELT programs could benefit from incorporating more communicative approaches to support students' language development.

In *English Pedagogy Students' Motivations towards the C1 Advanced Test as a Tool to Measure English Language Proficiency* (Ramires & Cardenas, 2023), the study highlights the complex emotions that senior English pedagogy students experience regarding the C1 Advanced test, including nervousness, stress, and the weight of self-worth attached to their test results. This study calls for program authorities to support students emotionally, proposing strategies like meta-affective training to separate test results from self-worth. These findings are highly relevant, as they underscore the need to address emotional factors that might hinder students from achieving C1 proficiency. Recognizing the role of anxiety and the pressures associated with high-stakes tests provides a valuable framework for understanding the barriers to C1 attainment and the necessity of emotional support within ELT programs.

The study *Non-Linguistic Aspects Causing Students' Foreign Language Anxiety in Speaking English* (Saleh et al., 2023) examined factors contributing to students' anxiety, including fear of public speaking, lack of preparation, and unclear instructions. Utilizing the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, the research identified how these non-linguistic elements negatively impact students' class performance and willingness to participate. It recommended strategies such as fostering positive learning environments and promoting group discussions to reduce anxiety. For ELT students working toward C1 proficiency, managing these stressors is essential, as such anxiety can significantly hinder language performance.

This study is relevant to our thesis, as it highlights the role of non-linguistic, emotional factors in language learning. For C1 attainment, reducing anxiety and creating supportive environments can enhance student participation and performance, an insight that aligns with our focus on students' experiences. The findings reinforce the importance of addressing emotional barriers, suggesting that our own study could further explore strategies to support students emotionally as they work towards C1 proficiency.

The investigation *A Systematic Review of Language Learner Strategy Research in the Face of Self-Regulation* (Rose et al., 2018) presents a comprehensive review of language learning strategies, emphasizing the importance of self-regulation. The findings demonstrate that self-regulation is a key predictor of language acquisition success, highlighting factors such as motivation and emotional control. For ELT students aiming for C1 proficiency, self-regulation enables them to effectively manage challenges and sustain motivation, thereby enhancing learning outcomes.

This research is relevant to our study, as it reinforces the role of self-directed strategies in language attainment. The suggestion to integrate self-regulation frameworks into ELT programs aligns with our focus on C1 proficiency, indicating that such frameworks could support students in overcoming obstacles and achieving advanced levels. By highlighting the link between self-regulation and successful language acquisition, this study underscores the value of fostering autonomous, self-regulatory learning strategies within ELT curricula.

Lastly, *Investigating Learners' Beliefs in Learning English: A Case Study*, Iswati (2019) explores how students' beliefs about learning English are shaped by their expectations, experiences, and learning environments. The research found that regular

practice, repetition, and positive, collaborative classroom environments significantly contribute to students' positive beliefs about their ability to succeed in language learning. These beliefs, in turn, influence motivation and the commitment needed to attain advanced proficiency.

This study is particularly relevant to our thesis, as it highlights the importance of students' beliefs in their language learning journey. For ELT students pursuing C1 proficiency, fostering positive beliefs and creating an environment aligned with their expectations can help overcome challenges. The study underscores the potential for ELT programs to empower students by cultivating a supportive atmosphere that reinforces their self-efficacy and motivation, directly supporting their efforts to reach higher proficiency levels.

In conclusion, these studies collectively highlight the range of factors that impact language proficiency attainment, including autonomy, emotional and motivational support, communicative strategies, self-regulation, and learner beliefs in ninth-semester ELT students. This framework aligns with the objectives by providing a multi-dimensional view in identifying and analyzing the personal and institutional factors that contribute to the success or failure of ninth-semester students in achieving C1 language proficiency in an ELT degree. Finally, supported by designing a questionnaire to capture students' contexts and strategies for achieving C1 and analyzing their lived experiences through semi-structured interviews. By revealing common barriers and strategies, this approach will inform recommendations to enhance ELT training, thus promoting better support and outcomes for students aiming to attain C1 proficiency.

## **Theoretical Framework**

To lay the groundwork for our research, it is essential to establish the key concepts that underpin it. This chapter will define and explore the terms that comprise the theoretical framework, providing a solid foundation for understanding our investigation. Sociocultural and monitoring theories, as well as contributions from prominent authors, will be considered, as their hypotheses and findings align with the results and experiences of students presented in subsequent chapters.

### *Narrative*

The term narrative comes from the verb “to narrate” or “to tell (as a story) in detail” (Ehrlich et al., 1980, p. 442, as cited in Creswell, 2012, p.502). In our research, narrative would be defined as a fundamental instrument to analyze the experiences of individuals through their stories. This is how narrative becomes an indispensable element, since through the experiences of the students, we may well gain insights into the factors, challenges, and realities influencing their language proficiency, and with that, provide a deeper understanding of their processes. Likewise, and as Creswell (2012) claims, the narrative is a medium in which not only the participants but also the researcher will be able to enrich their knowledge since on the one hand value is given to the voices and stories told. On the other hand, it serves as a basis to discover and analyze significant processes and thereby, give rise to relevant solutions that have an impact. positive in the exposed contexts.

### ***Competence***

The Ministry of National Education (n.d.) defines competence as a grouping of knowledge, attitudes, dispositions, and skills (cognitive, socio-affective, and communicative) that facilitate adaptable performance in specific situations. Communicative competence encompasses linguistic (formal language aspects), pragmatic (discursive and functional competence), and sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of social and cultural conditions) (Encarnacion-Mosquera, 2022, p. 17). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), cited in Encarnacion-Mosquera (2022), describes competent users as those who: "understand a wide range of texts, recognize hidden meanings, express themselves fluently and spontaneously, and use language flexibly and efficiently for social, academic, and professional purposes, and write clear, well-structured, and detailed texts on complex topics at the C1 level" (p. 18).

### ***Communicative competence***

Communicative competence makes reference to the ability to achieve in an effective way the communication goals in order to be socially acceptable. It is structured and purpose-driven, meaning it involves the capacity to choose and apply the appropriate skills that are both suitable and effective for the given situation. This competence involves two important things, verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. The use of communicative competence follows a great process, where different actions and steps are coordinated in a typical order, requiring precise timing and control of specific behaviors. It is shaped by the actions of the other person involved and the surrounding context and demands the readiness and willingness to engage in communication for mutual benefit.

Moreover, communicative competence can be developed over time, as the necessary skills are acquired through continuous, reflective practice and experience (Ludwigs, 2021).

### ***Autonomy***

Autonomy refers to self-governance and originates from a Greek term meaning independence. It emphasizes self-regulation. While there are self-regulating artifacts or components of biological systems that govern themselves, the source of their regulation lies outside of them. In contrast, autonomous systems, such as autopoietic systems (meaning "self-producing"), generate their own regulation and rely on that regulation to sustain themselves. A system is considered autonomous if and only if the organization of its internal processes is the primary factor in maintaining its self-preservation, ensuring that both the system and the processes supporting autonomy are functional (Collier, n.d.).

### ***Proficiency***

Proficiency is understood as the level of linguistic competence that enables individuals to communicate effectively and accurately in various contexts and situations, encompassing receptive, productive, and interactive skills (Council of Europe, 2001). This concept is crucial in language teaching, as it aims to develop skills that allow students to interact effectively in real-life situations, navigate complex social and cultural contexts, and express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas with clarity and precision.

### ***Self-awareness***

Self-awareness is an individual's conscious recognition of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It involves understanding one's internal states, motivations, and impact on the environment. In the context of language learning, self-awareness enables learners to

identify their learning strategies, recognize gaps in knowledge, and make intentional adjustments to improve proficiency. It is closely related to the concept of "awareness" as described by Schmidt (1994), where conscious noticing and reflection on language features are critical for successful language acquisition.

### *Academic performance*

Academic performance refers to how well a student can achieve learning objectives in educational settings, often measured through tests, assignments, or other evaluative methods. It reflects the extent to which a student has acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies in specific subjects. In the context of second language acquisition, academic performance is often assessed through achievement tests designed to evaluate the student's proficiency in the target language, as seen in studies examining the relationship between learning styles and performance in English as a second language. As highlighted by Akbari Chermahini et al. (2013), different learning styles, such as accommodating, diverging, assimilating, and converging, significantly affect students' performance on achievement tests. Understanding these styles can serve as a predictor of success and help optimize teaching strategies to enhance student outcomes.

### *Learning strategies*

Learning strategies are deliberate actions, techniques, or procedures that individuals use to enhance their learning process and achieve specific goals. In the context of second language acquisition, these strategies help learners manage and control their own language development. According to Montaña-González (2017), learning strategies can be divided into three main categories: cognitive (e.g., summarizing, note-taking), metacognitive (e.g., planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning), and social/affective strategies (e.g.,

collaboration with peers, self-talk). These strategies are essential for learners to become more autonomous and effective in their language acquisition journey.

### ***Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory***

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory argues that "learning is a social process that takes place in interaction with others" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). This theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaboration in developing communication skills, which was evident in our data analysis. According to Vygotsky, learning is a dynamic process that takes place in a social context, where individuals interact with others to construct meaning and develop skills. This perspective is fundamental to our research, as it highlights the importance of interaction and collaboration in learning a foreign language.

### ***Stephen Krashen's Monitor Theory***

Krashen's Monitor Theory (VanPatten, B., & Williams, J., Eds., 2014) provides a solid theoretical framework for understanding the barriers and factors that influence foreign language learning. This theory includes five key hypotheses: the affective filter, which refers to the learner's emotional state; the monitor, which refers to the learner's awareness of his or her own processes and errors; acquisition versus learning, which highlights the difference between the unconscious acquisition process and the conscious learning process; input, which refers to the quality and quantity of linguistic information the learner receives; and output, which refers to the learner's ability to produce language effectively. Our study found that these hypotheses are relevant to foreign language learning, as motivation, anxiety, metalinguistic awareness, exposure to a variety of texts and situations, and practice and feedback are fundamental to the development of communicative skills.

## **Legal framework**

In the Colombian context, some laws and regulations to be considered in ELT and higher education are:

### ***1. Law 115 of 1994 (General Education Law)***

This law establishes the general guidelines for education in Colombia, including the obligation to teach a foreign language at all educational levels, providing the foundation for studying second language acquisition.

### ***2. Decree 1295 of 2010***

This decree sets the basic competency standards in foreign languages for students in basic and middle education, aiming to improve the level of English in the country and align teaching with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

### ***3. Law 1651 of 2013 (Bilingualism Law)***

This law reinforces bilingualism in Colombia and mandates the compulsory teaching of English in educational institutions, which directly impacts bachelor's programs in foreign languages with an emphasis on English.

### ***4. Decree 1075 of 2015 (Unified Regulatory Decree for the Education Sector)***

This decree compiles the regulations governing the education system in Colombia, including provisions related to the training of foreign language teachers and the teaching of foreign languages in higher education.

### ***5. Decree 2450 of 2015***

This decree establishes quality criteria for higher education programs in Colombia, including bachelor's programs in foreign languages, emphasizing the importance of teacher training in advanced linguistic competencies.

#### ***6. Resolution 02041 of 2016***

This resolution defines the guidelines for certification of foreign language competencies at the university level, setting C1 level as the target for bachelor's programs in foreign languages, directly related to your research on the failure to achieve this level.

#### ***7. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)***

Although not a Colombian law, the CEFR is an international standard adopted in Colombia to assess and certify foreign language proficiency, and it is crucial for analyzing the attainment of C1 proficiency in English.

#### ***8. National Bilingualism Program (2004-2019)***

This program, promoted by the Ministry of Education, aims to improve English proficiency among Colombian students, influencing educational policies and university programs focused on foreign language teaching.

#### ***9. Agreement 0003 of 2019 from the National Accreditation Council***

This agreement establishes the parameters for accrediting higher education programs, including the requirement that bachelor's programs in foreign languages guarantee high standards in English teaching and the achievement of advanced language competency levels.

### ***10. Resolution 18587 of 2017***

In Colombia addresses the framework for bilingual education, aiming to enhance students' English proficiency across the country as part of the broader national goals in education. This policy aligns with the National Bilingualism Program's objectives, which seek to ensure Colombian students acquire effective communication skills in English, primarily for academic and professional competitiveness.

In conclusion, this section presented a normative and regulatory framework that underpins the research on acquiring C1 level English proficiency in Colombia. Laws, decrees, and resolutions establishing standards and policies for foreign language education were analyzed, highlighting the General Education Law, the Bilingualism Law, and the Unified Regulatory Decree for the Education Sector. International references such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the National Bilingualism Program were considered as well, providing a framework for evaluating and improving Colombian students' language competence.

Finally, this third chapter provided a solid foundation for our research, identifying previous studies that significantly contributed to our objective. Valuable similarities and connections were found with crucial aspects of our investigation, offering new perspectives and approaches. Key concepts and theories were established, supporting our analysis and laying the groundwork for subsequent chapters.

Furthermore, this chapter presented a legal framework in the Colombian context, enabling us to consider current guidelines and policies in education and linguistics. This theoretical and legal basis allows us to proceed with confidence in our research, ensuring a profound understanding of the factors influencing the acquisition of the C1 level of English.

### **Chapter 4: Methodological design**

This section presents the methodological design used to explore the factors influencing the attainment or non-attainment of a C1 level in English. Given the complex and personal nature of language acquisition, a qualitative approach was chosen to provide deeper insights into students' experiences. The semi-structured interview instrument was particularly suited to capture the detailed accounts of how autonomy, strategies, the role of the teacher, emotions, social relationships, and self-perception influenced their learning journeys.

#### **Type of investigation:**

##### ***Qualitative methodology***

Qualitative methodology explores more than statistics or numbers, it "is concerned with the understanding of meaning" (Hignett & McDermott. 2015. p.120) This is how this type of research allows researchers to analyze and observe "how people make sense of their world and how they interpret and experience different events. (Hignett & McDermott. 2015. p.120) In addition, the purpose of qualitative inquiry is not to generalize to a population, but rather to uncover a deeper understanding of a central phenomenon. (Creswell, 2012) taking into account features such as the context of the participants and the investigation, experiences, the scale which means focusing on the individual rather than large groups, subjective human experiences, and so on by providing answers to questions about why and how.

Consequently, this study was based on a qualitative research approach, specifically using narrative inquiry. On the one hand, according to Creswell (2014), qualitative research

is essential to studying diverse, complex, and contextual phenomena. On the other hand, Clendenin & Connelly (2000) argue that narrative research allows us to understand both the personal and professional experiences of educators. Thus, we attempt to identify, through the students' own narratives, the challenges, and opportunities in obtaining the C1 level.

### **Method of investigation:**

The narrative method with semi structured interview was employed to collect data as it facilitates and provides a better focus on detailed and personalized accounts of participants' experiences. According to Seidman (2013), narrative interviews allow for the exploration of educators' personal and professional stories. The author further noted, "Stories are a way of knowing" (p. 7). Moreover, Polkinghorne (1995) highlights the importance of narrative in qualitative research as it enables an understanding of participants' subjective meanings and experiences.

Accordingly, this method gives us a glimpse into the participants' own explanations, opportunities, and challenges they have faced regarding the achievement or failure of the C1 level in English.

### **Stages of investigation:**

The investigation consisted of four stages:

#### ***Stage 1: Participant Selection***

The population was chosen. See the details below

### ***Stage 2: Data Collection***

Narrative interviews were conducted via Teams, a digital video conferencing tool. With participants' consent, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As Creswell (2012) emphasizes, textual transcription ensures data accuracy and reliability.

### ***Stage 3: Data Preparation***

Transcripts were analyzed using conventions inspired by Creswell (2012) and Dörnyei (2007) to facilitate clarity and data retrieval.

### ***Stage 4: Data Analysis***

The transcribed data were analyzed to identify key concepts and themes among participants, crucial for achieving the research objectives.

### **Population and sample:**

The population for this study consists of 10 ninth-semester students pursuing a bachelor's degree in foreign languages with an emphasis in English at a private university. They participated voluntarily. Some of them had finished the C1 course the previous semester and others who were finishing it at the time of the study. The main variable to choose the participants were the semester they were in. Other characteristics were not considered. Thus, the sample was carried out from different student perspectives and provided a comprehensive view of the challenges and achievements encountered in their language learning.

**Data collection instruments:**

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was the narrative one with a semi-structured interview. This tool allowed students to share their personal stories, providing a rich source of qualitative data on the factors influencing their progress toward C1 proficiency. A set of 10 open-ended questions was designed to encourage participants to reflect on key aspects of their learning experiences, such as autonomy, learning strategies, teacher roles, emotions, and social relationships (see Appendix 1).

Additionally, to ensure a better understanding and participant comfort, the interviews were conducted in Spanish, the native language of the students. With an average duration of 10 minutes (ranging from 7 to 20 minutes), Each interview was carried out individually using the Microsoft Teams platform, allowing for the recording and transcription of the sessions. The variability in duration was primarily due to technical issues and the depth of participants' responses. A total of 10 students participated in the study, each in a single interview session, except for participants 1 and 2 who were interviewed simultaneously in the same session. This format ensured a flexible, participant-centered approach, enabling students to express their thoughts freely while capturing valuable insights for the research and detailed information about their learning experiences.

## **Chapter 6: Results**

Using a narrative interview approach, the research captured students' personal experiences and perspectives, revealing key themes that impact language acquisition. The main factors discussed by the participants include autonomy in learning, the use of strategies, the role of the teacher, the influence of the language studied, and the emotional and social relationships that shape their learning experiences. Self-perception also emerged as a significant factor in determining students' progress toward C1 proficiency.

In this section, we will analyze these key themes, offering insights into how they collectively influence the students' ability to achieve advanced English proficiency.

### **Data analysis**

This data analysis section presents some common reasons participants of the bachelor's degree in English at a private university are mentioned to explain attainment and nonattainment of the C1 level through a series of interviews conducted in Spanish. In terms of language use, the researchers translated the direct quotes to keep only a language in the presentation of the data. AI-powered tools such as Google Translator and Meta AI were used for that purpose.

The analysis reveals that the students' explanations are multifaceted, highlighting the crucial role of both teachers and students, the significance of autonomy and strategies, the impact of language learning background, the influence of emotions and social relationships, and the drive for self-perfection.

### *Autonomy*

Autonomy through the learning and acquisition of a second language is crucial for the effective success in the development of each student. Paula highlights the importance of identifying her own weaknesses in order to get over them. "It is an important factor... have autonomy, learn vocabulary, know the grammatical rules, listen carefully, and be surrounded in an immersive context with native English speakers" (Paula, Line 16). Emma concurred as she underlined that the autonomous process is essential "Perhaps professors can improve teaching, but if the student does not have autonomy at the end, they are not going to achieve any specific point" (Emma, line 17). Both participants seem to agree that self-assessment and independent hard work are the key to progressing in English learning.

Additionally, María's experience exemplifies the importance of this aspect, as she attributes her attainment of the C1 level to autonomous work, stating, "I think that one of the best strategies is to work autonomously .....In my case, I have worked quite a lot autonomously, so clearly that has helped me a lot" (Maria, line 13). Conversely, Fredrik's narrative illustrates the consequences of lacking autonomy, particularly in time management, as he notes, "Not knowing how to use my time, I could say, is a constant in my learning process since many times I didn't find the time or... I preferred to do other things. That type of inconvenience would be what affected my process." (Fredrik, Line 25).

### *Strategies*

Through the interview, it was found that the implementation of effective strategies is pivotal for enhancing learners' success. Several strategies were identified among the participants. As an illustration, Paula mentions that she uses listening and sensory strategies in order to facilitate her learning "I am very into listening, also a very sensory person... I try to use applications where I can speak with native English speakers" (Paula, line 19).

This combination of strengths might allow them to reinforce their understanding and use of the language. On the other hand, Emma, highlights introspection as a tool for improvement: "I would consider myself a person who analyzes a lot introspectively... I try to have immersive environments" (Emma, line 20). Both approaches possibly demonstrate the importance of adapting study strategies to personal needs and preferences to maximize learning.

Moreover, immersion in both academic and daily life contexts emerges as a crucial factor. Elly stresses the importance of total immersion, stating "The strategy that I consider most effective is to be totally immersed in the language... If one leaves the language aside... one will not acquire the desired level, which is C1. It also helps to... talk with other people in the language, listen to podcasts..." (Elly, line 14). Haily suggests that workplace immersion, such as practicing English in a call center, can be highly effective, noting "In the workplace, because there are some people who, let's say, work in a call center, they can practice their English every day; suddenly, the fact that they look for strategies like listening to podcasts, watching videos, etc., that they have a more real immersion in the language" (Haily, line 10). Additionally, Sofi emphasizes the importance of time, arguing "Maybe people who completed a C1 also had the opportunity to practice with friends, with family, with their workspaces...maybe, people who are successful at that level have a little more time" (Sofi, line 12).

Additionally, Stiven claims "communication, dialect, I feel that dialect is the most important thing and that it should be very focused on the strategies they implement to learn languages, communication, speaking, speaking, speaking" (Stiven, line 40). Finally, Dulce Maria's words are also relevant in this respect: "I consider successful strategies to be grammar first. Yes, for me, if you learn grammar, then you begin to nourish the structures

that you already know with vocabulary and that helps you learn better." (Dulce Maria, line 79).

### ***Role of the teacher***

It was found that teachers play a crucial role since this can stagnate or help students advance. The teacher must have good preparation and have the knowledge to engage the students. This must also go hand in hand with the institution and the process that takes place during learning. For instance, Dulce Maria mentioned "it seems to me that some teachers were really not prepared when it comes to teaching the language, in this case we are talking about English, why do I say this, because we could go or come with a teacher who has a very good preparation, a very good methodology and in the next semester, as in each semester, the teachers changed, that changed then that made the learning process stop. For example, we were seeing verb "to be" and the teacher had us up to present perfect and then again the other teacher from the other semester returned, which made the learning process interrupted because we were used to, let's say, a much higher pace of demand. Secondly, much as I mentioned before, many of the teachers are not fully trained to have a good learning methodology or their attitude was often not very favorable" (Dulce Maria, line 83).

Likewise, Paula attributed their progress in English to "having good teachers who provided effective feedback and personalized support; the presence of skilled and dedicated teachers in the university played a significant role in their language development" (Paula, line 22). Emma emphasized that "the attitude and methods of the teacher greatly influence the learning environment, teachers who create a secure and supportive atmosphere facilitate better learning results (Emma, line 23). Both participants may agree that good teachers, who offer constructive feedback and engaging materials, are essential for student success.

Finally, Elly, another participant, exemplifies and agrees with the previous students, claiming "In the English subject... I have a teacher who generates the right atmosphere for one to feel comfortable speaking, however... I had another teacher who... wasn't very interested in the students' learning, but only in himself... doesn't work out of a vocation, but only for... economic reasons. So, it also depends on the teacher for me to feel comfortable to achieve the specific English level goals" (Elly, line 4). Sofi adds that the lack of individualized assessment and low teacher commitment hinder skill development, stating: "Of course, the teachers I've had at this university have also influenced me. Most have been good. However, I also had a bad experience at one level, and I think my process within this university skipped a stage... I lost many grammatical topics, a lot of vocabulary" (Sofi, line 12). She further claims, "In some cases, teachers haven't been demanding enough regarding pronunciation and vocabulary, and moreover... in some classes that are supposed to be in English, Spanish is spoken" (Sofi, line 18). Finally, Maria concurs, adding: "I've had teachers who either don't have the level they should have to teach classes, in this case, English or simply don't have a degree" (Maria, line 18).

### ***The Language Studied***

The initial English proficiency levels of learners significantly impact their language acquisition journey, with continuous practice and immersion emerging as key factors for success. Participants highlighted the importance of engaging with English regularly, both through formal education and external opportunities which enhances their confidence and self-perception in using the language.

Some participants discussed their initial levels of English. Emma highlighted "the importance of continuous practice and being immersed in English, through education or external opportunities such as work. The language studied was received as an important

element in their academic journey, influencing their self-perception and confidence in using English” (Emma, line 20).

In addition, it was found that elements such as specific structures and vocabulary play a significant role in achieving or not the C1 level. Fredrik states “The greatest difficulties in using the language are the structures... they're quite complicated, and that's what affects the most” (Fredrik, line 4). Likewise, he mentioned "C1 involves more... it's the use of more specialized vocabulary" (Fredrik, line 24).

Finally, Hailey introduces a fundamental aspect as the conditions to demonstrate the level, she claims "I need to develop many skills, improve them... An international exam is something that requires much more preparation, and therefore, I think I would need much more time... it's not just about knowing how to speak English, but also having knowledge of the language, using the language, many contexts..." (Hailey, line 20).

### *Emotions*

In the context of language comfort and cultural exploration, participants in the study expressed varying degrees of ease, love but also lack of confidence when communicating in English. The love for the language was highlighted by one of them. Libo mentions: "I feel comfortable because it is a language that I really love, I really like to speak" (Libo, line 32). Accordingly, Stiven relates "I feel comfortable speaking English because let's say that it is quite easy for me and it is a language that has helped me try to get to know other cultures in different countries, and the pronunciation is more fluid for me than in Spanish" (Stiven, line 19).

Besides, Dulce Maria relates "if I feel comfortable speaking English, why? For that reason, because I have had the experience with some Universities from States united type talks speaking with natives" (Dulce Maria, line 69) ... “It has allowed me to have

confidence and also an environment where the natives do not criticize you if you make a mistake, so that has helped me gain confidence in an environment where I interact with natives and in the same way I can correct my mistakes and learn" (Dulce Maria, line 69). On the other hand, Paula emphasized her emotions at the moment of implementing the English learning "I experienced initial fear but gradually became more comfortable acknowledging that emotions like anxiety and nervousness could impact our performance, especially during high stress situations like presentations or exams" (Paula, line 31).

Ultimately, the lack of confidence was an emotional barrier mentioned when asking if they felt comfortable speaking in English. Haily expressed, "Honestly, no, especially in the classroom, I try to generate that confidence, however, I feel that I lack a lot and..., in the sense that there are classmates who have much more competence" (Haily, line 6), revealing feelings of inadequacy and low confidence and comparison to other students. In contrast, Maria's narrative showcased the positive emotional driver of motivation, saying, "I've managed autonomous work since I started my career due to motivation issues. I felt very motivated learning a new language" (Maria, line 21). These emotional narratives underscore the crucial role of emotions in the language learning process.

### ***Social Relationships***

Participants concurred on the significance of social relationships and interactions in achieving or not a C1 level. Fredrik, who communicates with native speakers daily at work, feels comfortable speaking English. For him, speaking with others in English is not a problem, but notes that "it helps to practice more and use it in other contexts. However, I feel that something is still missing... some people do not participate in class and do not improve as much as they should reach C1" (Fredrik, line 18). Sofi, Elly, and Haily all concur that social factors contribute to students' success or failure, emphasizing the

importance of practicing and applying English beyond the classroom. Elly even uses a platform to talk with native speakers, stating “There’s a platform I use to speak with native speakers” (Elly, line 16). This underscores the crucial role of social relationships and interactions in achieving fluency in English and a C1 level.

Furthermore, Paula pointed out “got support from classmates and teachers, which helped them feel more comfortable and motivated” (Paula, line 6). Emma also mentioned “the importance of surrounding themselves with native speakers to improve their language skills, the positive impact of working in a second language environment, which provided constant practice and reinforcement” (Emma, Line 20). Both participants agreed that social interactions, both inside and outside the classroom, significantly contributed to their language learning progress.

Finally, the participants' shared insights underscore the pivotal role of social connections in language proficiency development, particularly in reaching a C1 level. Listening to native Speakers helps to improve English as mentioned by Dulce Maria "interacting with natives that helps a lot because generally the English language or any language is learned by interacting with the context, but since here we do not have the possibility of interacting in an environment where we are always using English, interacting with native speakers either through public platforms or platforms that the University provides helps a lot.”(Dulce Maria, line 79).

### ***Self-Perception***

Self-perception plays a critical role in language learning, as it reflects how learners evaluate their own proficiency and progress. The participants were asked about their level and were assigned a level ranging from A1 to C1. Taking that into account Participants in the study expressed varied self-assessments of their English skills, often placing themselves

at a B2+ level, with aspirations to reach C1. For example, Stiven relates. "Taking into account all the self-learning that I have had and the tools that the university where I have studied has given me, I consider that I am at a level around B2+ and C1" (Stiven, line 4).

Also, Paula described "Ok, well, I think that at this moment and my current real level of English, I think it is a B2+. I still don't consider myself to be a C1, so I need a lot of vocabulary and a lot of practice, also on my part, that is why I consider my current level of English to be a B2+." (Paula, line 2). Emma on the other hand "I feel like I'm also at the same level, at B2+ almost reaching C1, but there are also certain words, certain connectors that are often overlooked and that leaves me at level B2+" (Emma, line 4).

The participants' self-perceptions also revealed interesting contrasts. Fredrik, who initially felt confident in his English skills, later expressed doubts, stating "I consider my current level to be around B2+, since we recently took a diagnostic exam... and the results weren't as favorable as expected" (Fredrik, line 2). Similarly, Elly and Haily initially claimed a B2+ level but later expressed lack of confidence and preparation to reach C1. In contrast, Sofi, who demonstrated a high level of English proficiency, surprisingly showed nervousness about her abilities, saying "I consider that I haven't reached C1 yet, and my current level would be between B2 and B2+" (Sofi, line 4) and "There are still many competencies I need to work on to take the exam" (Sofi, line 22).

### **Discussion of the results**

The results of this research highlight the complexity of the C1 English acquisition process among bachelor's degree in English students at a private university. Autonomy, effective strategies, and the teacher's role emerge as crucial factors in their success.

Additionally, students stressed the importance of continued practice, immersion, and social

interaction to enhance their linguistic skills. Nevertheless, emotional barriers, such as lack of confidence, motivation, anxiety, and nervousness, as well as a high filter as noted in Krashen's Monitor Theory, may hinder the attainment of the C1 level. Students' self-perception of their linguistic competence also revealed interesting contrasts, underscoring the need for objective and continuous evaluation between students and teachers. These findings have significant implications for foreign language teaching, suggesting a focus on learner autonomy, adapting teaching to individual needs, and creating learning environments that foster social interaction and trust.

Now, in accordance with the previous studies, some interesting relationships could be found. In the first work called "Learning Needs of English and French Students from a Modern Languages Program at a Colombian University" carried out by Carmelia Encarnación Mosquera (2022), the importance of autonomy and the lack of it by students was identified. The analysis results of her investigation revealed "in the fact ... students are aware of their lack of autonomy and commitment to do independent tasks"(p.21) our results reveal that a lack of autonomy is a common obstacle for students seeking to reach the C1 level. As in Encarnación Mosquera's study (2022), students in our research recognized the importance of being more autonomous in order to improve their language skills.

Moreover, motivation and social interaction in foreign language learning could be highlighted. In particular, this study emphasizes the need for instruction in learning strategies to promote student autonomy and develop meaningful learning. In the study:

Students referred to their learning needs to develop language skills. For instance, to develop oral expression, they need to overcome the fear of making

mistakes and have greater exposure to L2 with greater accompaniment of native teachers. To develop oral comprehension, they need to be more disciplined and committed, do peer work, and use listening strategies. To develop reading comprehension, they require instruction in strategies and be exposed to different types of texts. Finally, writing can be developed by using strategies. ((Encarnacion-Mosquera, 2022, p. 25)

In addition, both studies agree on the importance of exposure to the target language, immersion, and interaction in real contexts to improve language skills. The findings also suggest that language programs should be adapted to the individual needs of students, including the integration of innovative technologies and resources, and the promotion of the target culture.

Likewise, the findings of the second study conducted by Ramires & Cardenas (2023) show that students consider the exam important to measure their language proficiency, but they associate the preparation period with negative emotions, which may be related to a lack of confidence and anxiety in our analysis, creating a blockage when presenting and, therefore, certifying their C1 level. On the other hand, the third study, Chávez, et al. (2020) which although it was carried out with agroindustry students, identifies the role of teachers in supporting language improvement. Our analysis also highlights the need for effective teaching and learning strategies.

The following study proposed by Saleh et al. (2023), non-linguistic factors such as anxiety can be identified, which generate a high affective filter or a blockage in the process or development of the student's own competencies. In the same way, it was found in the study by Rose et al. (2018) the importance of self-regulation in the language acquisition

process, as well as the need for effective strategies for teaching and learning. Finally, Iswati (2019) gives relevance to students' beliefs in learning a foreign language, in the same way, the positive impact of regular and constant practice is evident, which is related to autonomy in our analysis; the environment, the need to consider the experiences of each one, and the importance and impact of the teaching role in the students' process was also related to our results.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations**

Achieving a C1 level in English, according to students, is hindered by the lack of practice, immersion, and autonomy in learning are significant barriers for students. The results emphasized the importance of autonomy, learning strategies, the role of the teacher, language structure, contexts, emotions, social relationships, and self-perception. These factors are fundamental to developing effective language skills and the confidence needed to communicate in English. According to Vygotsky (1978, p. 88), “learning is a social process that takes place in interaction with others,” so it is essential to create a learning environment that encourages interaction and collaboration.

Furthermore, the research highlighted the need for students to develop effective, autonomous learning strategies to improve their language proficiency. This can be achieved by implementing methodologies that promote autonomy and responsibility in learning. Teachers must play a fundamental role in this process, providing guidance and support so that students can develop their language skills effectively.

The structure of the language and the contexts in which it is used are also fundamental to the acquisition of the C1 level. Students must be exposed to a variety of texts and situations that allow them to develop their understanding and expression in English. Emotion and motivation also play an important role in this process, as students who are motivated and excited about learning are more likely to reach the C1 level.

To address the challenges identified, it is recommended to implement personalized learning strategies that accompany students in their learning process. It is essential to establish immersion spaces with native speakers and to encourage the use of English in all possible contexts within the university. In addition, a more rigorous process for the hiring

of teachers should be implemented, including observation and monitoring of their performance. The university should offer training and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and set higher standards to ensure the quality of teaching.

### **Chapter 8: Prospective**

This research conducted on the attainment or non-attainment of C1 level of English language proficiency opens up new perspectives for future research. One possible line of research is to analyze the curriculum of the Bachelor of English degree at a private university to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies that foster autonomy, effective learning, effective teacher monitoring, and evaluation, as well as language immersion, learning strategies, motivation, and self-perception; key factors identified in our research. This could include the design and implementation of courses and workshops that promote autonomy, the creation of online resources and tools to support autonomous learning, the evaluation of the impact of these strategies on students' motivation and academic performance, and the exploration of the relationships between these factors in the context of foreign language learning. Such future research could provide valuable contributions to educational theory and practice, improving the quality of students' education and training, and ensuring their academic and professional success in a globalized environment.

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## Chapter 10: Annexes

### Appendix A

#### *Transcripts*

The following transcripts were in Spanish because the interviews were conducted in that language. We present the transcripts in the order in which the semi-structured interviews were guided. Additionally, the questions to develop each interview are also presented.

#### *Guided questions*

Preguntas	Cómo nos ayuda a responder la pregunta investigativa
¿Cuál cree usted que es su nivel real y actual de inglés?	Auto percepción del nivel
¿Se siente cómoda hablando inglés? ¿Por qué?	Auto percepción de su confianza para hablar
¿Cuál era su nivel de inglés cuando empezó la carrera? ¿Ese aspecto influye actualmente en el logro del nivel C1 antes de terminar la carrera? ¿Por qué sí o no?	Autoconciencia de la relación entre el nivel de entrada y el de salida.
¿Cuáles estrategias implementan los aprendices exitosos de una lengua para lograr el nivel C1? ¿Usted implementa alguna de esas estrategias? ¿Cuál?	Creencias sobre quién es exitoso para aprender una lengua y qué hace el estudiante para tener ese perfil
¿Cómo percibe la preparación que ha recibido para alcanzar el nivel C1 de inglés en la universidad? ¿Por qué?	Evaluación crítica de la formación recibida.
La licenciatura busca que los estudiantes alcancen un nivel C1 antes de la graduación. Sin embargo, algunos estudiantes no lo logran. Desde su perspectiva, ¿cuáles factores contribuyen para que exista esa brecha entre los objetivos y los resultados?	Permite la respuesta más explícita a la pregunta de investigación
¿Qué factores personales considera que han influido en su nivel actual de inglés?	Nos permitiría saber la autoconciencia del estudiante sobre la relación entre sus posibilidades, su contexto y sus resultados
¿Se siente preparada para demostrar el nivel C1 a través de un examen internacional antes de graduarse? ¿Por qué sí o no?	Nos permitiría saber qué tan preparados se sienten los estudiantes para lograr el C1.

***Participant 0: Maria***

[Click here](#)

***Participants 1 and 2: Paula and Emma***

[Click here](#)

***Participants 3, 4 and 9: Stiven, Libo and Dulce Maria***

[Click here](#)

***Participant 5: Fredrik***

[Click here](#)

***Participant 6: Elly***

[Click here](#)

***Participant 7: Haily***

[Click here](#)

***Participant 8: Sofi***

[Click here](#)

**Appendix B**

The following is the tecs psychometric analysis from raw score to percentile and standardization to the CEFR levels

[Click here](#)