

**EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING IN COLOMBIA: THE  
(NON)PRESENCE OF SYNTACTIC AWARENESS**

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This thesis is presented as a requirement to obtain the bachelor's degree in Spanish and  
English

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## **DEDICATORIA**

*Este trabajo de investigación está dedicado con profundo cariño y gratitud a mi madre, mi padre y mis hermanos, quienes han sido pilares fundamentales en mi formación personal y profesional.*

*A mi madre, gracias por tu apoyo incondicional y por creer siempre en mí. Tu guía ha iluminado cada uno de mis pasos.*

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## Table of contents

Abstract	9
Resumen	9
CHAPTER I: CONTEXTUALIZATION	10
Curricular context	10
Statement of the problem	12
Justification	14
Research question.	15
General objective	15
Specific objectives	15
CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	15
Background	15
Theoretical framework	20
Syntactic Awareness	20
Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)	23
An integration of the disciplinary skill “Syntactic awareness” in TEFL	25
Educational policies on bilingualism in TEFL	26
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN	29
Research paradigm	29
Type of research	30
Instruments for data collection	32
Research documents	32
Rubric	32
CHAPTER IV: STATE OF THE ART	33
Universidad Pedagógica Nacional	35
Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas (1979)	35
Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas (2000)	36
Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas (2018)	36
Universidad La Gran Colombia	37

Universidad Libre	37
Universidad del Bosque	38
Universidad Antonio Nariño	38
Universidad de la Salle	38
Universidad del Valle Syllabus	39
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana	40
Universidad Nacional Libre y a Distancia (UNAD)	40
Institución Universitaria Colegio Mayor del Cauca	42
Universidad de Nariño	43
Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC)	44
Universidad Nacional de Colombia	46
Pattern of bilingual development, linguistic and metalinguistic skills: 2nd and 5th grades in a pilot bilingual educational institution in Quindío	47
Beyond Words: The Role of Cognitive and Metalinguistic Skills in the Spelling Performance of Children and Adolescents	48
CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS	49
Analysis method	49
Categories of analysis	50
Category #1 Fields of knowledge and training components	51
Subcategory #1 Understanding the CEFR	51
Subcategory #2 Understanding of the linguistic foundation (syntactic awareness)	55
Subcategory #3 integration of linguistics into the teaching process	59
Category #2: Context of the program's training	63
Subcategory #1 Theoretical and historical foundations of syllabuses and curriculum	64
Subcategory # 2 Objectives of the academic program and its contribution to the Colombian community	67
Subcategory # 3 Research in TEFL programs addresses the needs	70
Category #3 Innovative proposals for the training of foreign language teachers	73
Subcategory #1 Didactics and new training for language teachers	73
Subcategory # 2 Solving community problems in the future	75
Subcategory # 3 Reproduction and production of knowledge to reality: Implications for language research	77

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	80
Implications	83
Limitations of the study	84
Further Research	85
REFERENCES	86

### **Table index**

<b>Table 1.</b> Documents used in the State of the Art .....	34
<b>Table 2</b> Categories for the analysis of Syllabus and curriculums .....	50

## **Abstract**

The present state of the art aims to analyze syllabi and curricula from higher education institutions in Colombia in order to trace whether the concept of syntactic awareness has been addressed or integrated into higher education. This research follows an interpretive paradigm with a qualitative methodology and is based on documentary analysis. The body of documents reviewed includes information ranging from 1993 to 2025. The conclusions of this study show that the concept of syntactic awareness is part of Colombian education; however, its implementation and integration within curricula and syllabi remain minimal, as public education policies have shifted the focus of competencies required for future foreign language teachers.

## **Resumen**

El presente estado del arte tiene el propósito de analizar syllabus y currículos de instituciones de educación superior en Colombia, con el fin de rastrear si el concepto de conciencia sintáctica ha sido manejado o integrado en la educación superior. Esta investigación sigue un paradigma interpretativo, con una metodología cualitativa, y corresponde a una investigación documental. El cuerpo de los documentos contiene información desde 1993 hasta 2025. Las conclusiones del estudio muestran que el concepto de conciencia sintáctica hace parte de la educación colombiana; sin embargo, su implementación e integración en los currículos y syllabus resulta mínima, ya que las políticas públicas en educación han cambiado el rumbo de las competencias de los futuros docentes en lengua extranjera.

*Key words:* Syntactic awareness, TEFL, EFL, Metalinguistic awareness, Syllabus, curriculum

## **CHAPTER I: CONTEXTUALIZATION**

### **Curricular context**

This state-of-the-art was developed with the Colombian context in mind, considering public and private universities across the country. The objective is to conduct a review of the development of syllabi for foreign language teaching programs (TEFL) in Colombia and their responses to the objectives set forth by the various bilingualism plans implemented in Colombia, such as the "National Bilingualism Program" (2006 to 2010), the "Program to Strengthen the Development of Foreign Competencies" (2010 to 2014), and "Colombia Very Well" (2015 to 2025). The Ministry of Education (2017) establishes that higher education in Colombia is classified into three possible levels: technical, technological, and professional. Therefore, emphasis will be placed on professional foreign language teacher training programs.

The motivation for selecting the topic of syntactic awareness stems from two concerns: the failure to achieve the objectives proposed by national bilingualism plans, and the large number of foreign language teachers who do not master the required levels for teaching. Most universities that offer TEFL programs have courses that pertain to the teaching of the disciplinary field. All of them are supposed to develop language skills for pre-service teachers. Nevertheless, most universities recommend students to study additional courses that help increase their language level. Therefore, the aim is to explore why these same universities seem to fail to develop the required language level.

Turning to data from the Colombian context, it is difficult to accurately determine the current proficiency level of English teachers, as well as to assess whether the national bilingualism plan has been effective. To address this, data from the voluntary teacher

diagnostic tests known as *Teach Challenge* (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2014) were used. This initiative conducted a brief assessment to evaluate teachers' English proficiency levels between 2008 and 2013. It is estimated that most English teachers in Colombia were at levels B1 to B2+. However, due to the limited sample size, this finding cannot be considered conclusive. In this sense, the document says that it is expected that in the worst-case scenario, the majority of teachers fall within the A1 to B1 range. This raises the question of whether the new approach—focused on developing competencies for intercultural integration and the transformation of social realities—has truly been effective in Colombian society.

Additionally, TEFL programs in Colombia are aligned with the requirements established by the National Accreditation Council. This means that most requirements are based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2011), which is associated with language levels known as A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1. These levels, in turn, reflect the number of hours of exposure to the language. The idea behind implementing the CEFR in Colombia is to make language learning more accessible, as well as to implement tools and teaching methods that are not merely international. However, in Colombia, the focus has been solely on the reuse of international methodologies and human development, somewhat neglecting language proficiency.

On the other hand, the Colombian educational vision aims to introduce a new perspective on competencies in English teacher training. The emphasis on social transformation and the responsibility to prepare teachers capable of assessing educational needs has led to new requirements such as intercultural competence, inclusion, and ICT-based learning (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2014). For example, Universidad

Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD, 2025) concludes that nowadays, TEFL or EFL instruction is no longer limited to grammatical knowledge or vocabulary acquisition. In this sense, the analysis shows that the disciplinary component within syllabi has been reduced to promote the development of more holistic skills. In the same line, TEFL programs have integrated more languages and more subjects to increase language exposure. However, exposure does not necessarily translate to more meaningful learning; there are skills that are left out, such as metalinguistic or syntactical awareness, which are part of language acquisition but are not mentioned.

In this sense, to analyze whether skills such as syntactical and metalinguistic awareness have been neglected in TEFL syllabi, the following curricula and syllabi were analyzed to provide an overview of their program construction: National Pedagogical University, Francisco de José Caldas District University, La Gran Colombia University, Universidad Libre, Universidad del Bosque, Antonio Nariño University, La Salle University, Cooperative University, Pontifical Javeriana University, National and Distance University, Colegio Mayor del Cauca University Institution, University of Nariño, Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia, National University of Colombia.

### **Statement of the problem**

This research stems from two interesting questions about bilingualism plans and their stated objectives. First, why do foreign language pre-service teachers not have the expected level of English? Second, what happened in the training of foreign language pre-service teachers? Among the multiple national programs that have aimed to strengthen bilingual education in Colombia—such as the National Bilingualism Program (2006–2010), the Program to Strengthen the Development of Foreign Language Competencies (2010–

2014), and Colombia Very Well (2015–2025)—the expected outcomes regarding English teachers' proficiency and pedagogical skills have not been fully achieved, according to the Colombia Very Well report (2015).

A recurring issue identified in teacher training programs is the lack of emphasis on disciplinary subjects that are fundamental for the development of the capacity for language manipulation. The fact that these subjects are not emphasized results in a lack of reflection on language (Gomber 1992). This author clarifies that metalinguistic reflection is an awareness that develops from metalinguistic development, which in theory requires a conscious reflection on language. In this sense, it is necessary to reach an understanding of the use of linguistic elements in order to make the capacity for self-reflection emerge (Valencia, 2025). However, the problem is that the curriculum tends to prioritize exposure to the language through disciplinary courses such as Advanced English or Literature, but it often omits training that might help future teachers consciously analyze linguistic structures and apply them to teaching.

As a result, many English teachers in Colombia still demonstrate proficiency levels between A1 and B2, with only a small percentage reaching advanced levels. This gap undermines the effectiveness of national bilingual initiatives and raises concerns about whether the current focus on intercultural competences, ICT integration, and social transformation is being balanced with the essential linguistic foundations teachers need to master in order to effectively guide their students.

## **Justification**

Institutional and national policies have served to promote much of bilingualism in Colombia. This issue has been promoted as a tool for social improvement and national economic development. However, there is a significant problem in Colombian society: the training of foreign language teachers in English. It has become evident that, even though they have the ability to speak the language, they do not fully master it. What is lacking is the ability to manipulate it according to their understanding abilities. Therefore, they are not reaching an adequate level, and the levels of foreign language proficiency in Colombia are not as high as expected.

In this sense, the inclusion of metalinguistic skills such as syntactic awareness in TEFL teacher training is necessary for several reasons. First, it is a skill that helps improve syntactic analysis, which integrates processes such as spelling, composition, and writing. In this sense, it should be a central component of academic and professional English programs, as it helps develop the ability to analyze and use structures (Quiroz-Serna et al., 2025). If future teachers lose this ability to use structures, they will have difficulty developing tools and explaining the uses of language in their teaching. This will be passed on to their students, fostering poor performance at the language levels.

Finally, the justification for this research is based on the need to close the gap that has opened up within the objectives of TEFL programs. This includes the language proficiency of pre-service teachers, the transformation of education, and the reality of teachers' performance. This is due to the lack of inclusion of subjects designed to develop metacognitive skills such as syntactical awareness. This research helps to contribute to the

improvement of pre-service teachers, as well as the institutions that train them, by bringing them closer to local, national, and international standards.

### **Research question.**

How has syntactic awareness been integrated into Teaching English as a Foreign Language Programs (TEFL)?

### **General objective**

To explore how Colombian institutions have integrated syntactic awareness into teacher training programs for teaching English as a foreign language.

### **Specific objectives**

-To comprehend the integration of syntactic awareness into the TEFL programs of higher education in Colombia.

-To examine the historical development of syntactic awareness in TEFL-oriented curriculum programs in public and private institutions in Colombia.

-To outline recommendations for integrating syntactic awareness in the development of TEFL programs based on the results of the study

## **CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Background**

The paper “*Investigating the Role of Syntactic and Semantic Awareness in EFL Learners’ Sentence Comprehension*” by Khaksar & Khaghaninejad (2024) examines the influence of syntactic knowledge on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The study involved 188 Iranian EFL students and explored how both semantic and syntactic

awareness contribute to sentence comprehension. The experimental design included five sets of sentences—twenty syntactically correct and twenty semantically incorrect—forming the basis of the analysis. The findings revealed a clear predominance of semantic awareness over syntactic awareness in English comprehension. Specifically, semantic knowledge appeared to be a stronger determinant when students selected the correct options in writing tasks. Moreover, a key outcome of the study indicated that sentence comprehension was highly dependent on semantic knowledge, regardless of learners' syntactic proficiency.

This research is important for this investigation as it helps to identify and contrast the importance of syntactic awareness into the acquisition of language proficiency. In most cases, as the level of the language is too low, language teachers in training tend to teach or learn through semantic knowledge regardless of its syntactic knowledge.

The article "*A Common Curriculum for the Initial Training of TEFL Teachers in Europe*" by Karatsiori (2014) explores the essential requirements for becoming a foreign language teacher in Europe. It analyzes and compares syllabi from several universities—including the University of Vienna, University of Sarajevo, Sofia University, University of Zadar, University of Cyprus, and the University of Manchester—using the framework of "Key Elements–Structure" (Karatsiori, 2014, p. 54) to identify common patterns and differences in teacher education programs across these institutions. These aspects were divided into the potential teaching environment offered by the university, criteria for knowledge and understanding, criteria for strategies and skills, and criteria for values. After reading the document, it is evident that the programs of most European universities teach linguistics within their syllabus, as this helps develop language skills for the maintenance of foreign language teachers' skills.

Also, one important feature that emerges from this research is the preoccupation with teaching; European universities offer specialized subjects in how to teach a foreign language and to maintain personal language skills. Those aspects represent the importance of teaching in European society, as teachers need to develop skills in teaching, experience teaching themselves and receive different information around the globe. In comparison with some of the syllabi of Colombian universities in TEFL programs, the linguistic field and teachers practice is not close to the development offered by European universities. In conclusion, the European syllabi for the initial training of TEFL in Europe are structured based on the needs of the future teachers, also their emphasis is to create teachers that can recognize their shortcomings through different experiences around the world.

Understanding how TEFL syllabi are designed and how teacher training should be approached is essential for this research. In this regard, the article “*Reflections on the Foreign Language Teacher Formation in Colombia*” by González (2019) contributes to understanding the political guidelines established by government institutions and reconstructs a timeline of how TEFL has been structured in Colombia. During the early stages of bilingual education in the country, the British Council introduced the Colombian Framework for English (COFE), a project that failed to distinguish between training and professional development, treating both as equivalent. This represents one of the main issues identified in this study: before higher education programs were formally integrated into the national education system, teacher preparation often consisted of short training courses or workshops provided by normalist schools. As a result, virtually anyone could become a teacher without undergoing formal professional training.

However, the introduction of the National Bilingualism Plan (in Spanish Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo or PNB), and Act 30; both specified and clarified that teacher's education should be professionalized, and it must require a continued process where teachers can reflect on the teaching practice. This was beneficial but it did not clarify what English teachers should be taught. One of the conclusions of this problem is that teachers continue being attached to the international discourses which have not allowed to implement different strategies in our Colombian education.

The article "*The Profile of the Graduate in Foreign Languages: A Pedagogical Challenge for Teacher Trainers*" by Cely-Betancourt (2023) examined the professional profile of foreign language teachers in higher education institutions in Colombia. The study aimed to analyze their performance in pedagogical, research, and didactic aspects. To achieve this, the research collected data through surveys administered to various teachers, employing a mixed-methods approach, and also analyzed twenty undergraduate programs in foreign language teaching.

The findings revealed that program length—ranging from eight to ten semesters—affected the content and scope of teacher training. Longer programs allowed for greater development of linguistic and pedagogical competencies and often included the study of additional languages such as German, Portuguese, and French. Despite institutional differences, similarities were found among the programs, as most shared the same curricular divisions: foreign language didactics, pedagogy, linguistics, and research.

Regarding teacher profiles, 94% of the surveyed educators held undergraduate degrees in foreign language teaching, while only 4% held degrees in other fields. Most respondents reported that their main professional activity was teaching, and only five

participants stated that they also engaged in research. A positive finding was the widespread use of technological tools among teachers; however, a significant weakness lied in research engagement. Although many teachers were formally linked to research projects, they did not actively participate in research activities. This highlights a major gap in professional development.

A critical conclusion drawn from this study is that the actual professional profile of teachers in higher education does not align with the expected profile of program graduates. Therefore, the teachers currently employed in institutions do not necessarily represent the pedagogical models that universities aim to promote.

This document is particularly relevant to the present study, as its analysis of twenty TEFL syllabi from various Colombian universities concluded that only a few allocate sufficient credits to linguistic competence or language study. Approximately 10% of academic credits were devoted to linguistic competences (Betancourt, 2023). Most credits were distributed as follows: between 18% and 26% for intercultural skills, 19% to 29% for language acquisition, and the remainder for pedagogy and ICT-related learning.

Finally, an important conclusion emerges regarding the profile of graduating teachers: there is a significant gap between the expected competencies and the actual objectives outlined in TEFL syllabi. In other words, the two are not fully aligned, as evidenced by the findings of this study. The linguistic abilities that pre-service teachers are expected to acquire are not being effectively developed, resulting in outcomes that diverge from the goals established by Colombian government programs aimed at promoting bilingualism.

The document “*Ambientes de aprendizaje y escritura creativa: mejorando la producción textual*” written by Ávila Mahecha (2017) aimed to determine the effects of strategies implemented in learning environments that promote creative writing. This investigation is important due to analyzing the effects of students from 10th grade from Colegio Hernando Duran Dussan which have complications with the writing process specifically into syntactic structures, making sentences. This study applies to a didactic unit that promotes the development of writing skills and encourages students to question their own understanding of writing. It is not a straightforward process such as taking paper and pencil. Also, there are a lot of factors that we need to consider such as the fact to place graphemes. Students learn to plan, redact, and write their ideas; This process helps to be aware of the sentences and the connections between them. This is part of the syntactic awareness process.

This text is important because it helps to enhance the idea that this concept is important in the implementation of TEFL syllabi, even if there is not a specific subject to develop this skill, it should be taken into account when teaching or learning a foreign language. Also, this metacognitive skill does not help just with writing, it improves and helps to boost the domain of the language avoiding prioritizing semantic knowledge over syntactic knowledge.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Syntactic Awareness**

Syntactic Awareness is a skill often associated with word recognition, and its relevance is closely tied to reading comprehension. However, this definition falls short of

what it really is. Syntactic awareness has two sides: one refers to all the knowledge of syntax, encompassing the system of graphemes and the rules by which words can be combined and their meanings, as well as the units for constructing sentences. The other side refers to the ability to consciously understand and produce grammatical structures within texts, considering different linguistic components and their uses (Roth et al., 1996). This concept has a broad scope, as it is not the same to simply know that in English the verb to be is used for description as it is to understand that it is an intransitive verb—one that can form complete sentences on its own, which is why it is not typically combined with other verbs in base form but rather used to describe with predicates.

The above demonstrates a more focused approach to training in linguistic knowledge. The first perspective relates more closely to the concept of syntactic knowledge, which refers to the ability to create sentences without relying on a specific context. More precisely, syntactic awareness is defined as the learner's ability to manipulate and reflect upon grammatical structures within language (Cain, 2007). However, earlier conceptions—such as that proposed by Tunmer et al., (1988, as cited in Gombert, 1992)—define syntactic awareness as the ability to decode sentences into units or to identify words more easily. Nevertheless, this view is somewhat limited compared to the one presented by Gombert (1992), who argues that syntactic awareness should not be seen as an isolated skill but rather as an integral component of metalinguistic abilities.

On the contrary, syntactic awareness contributes to the enhancement of various levels of reading and linguistic recognition, which, in essence, are related to all language skills, including reading (Roth et al., 1996). Since syntactic awareness belongs to a broader group of abilities known as metalinguistic skills, it is important to recognize that all these

skills are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Metalinguistic skills refer to the collective knowledge that enables individuals to reflect upon and manipulate language. Therefore, tasks that do not require conscious control are typically performed automatically by individuals who have not developed this awareness. This process involves being aware of and gaining control over language processing (Tunmer et al., 1988).

Other definitions are also relevant, as many of them emphasize the different levels of syntactic awareness that students develop. For example, Tunmer et al., (1988) define syntactic awareness as “the ability to perform mental operations on the output of the mechanism responsible for assigning extrasentential structural representations to groups of words” (p. 136). Within the framework that classifies and explains the mechanisms of mental processing, syntactic awareness plays the role of integrating representations, rules, and inferences that help establish relationships between the positions of words, taking into account their functions and uses.

Going beyond its definition, it is important to discuss how syntactic awareness functions within language. According to Davidson (2010), there are two levels that help differentiate whether a task involves syntactic awareness: the detection level and the correction level. When designing tests or analytical exercises to assess levels of syntactic awareness, these two aspects must be considered. However, this represents only the basic stage of development, typically acquired by children between the ages of five and six.

The levels of linguistic awareness are made more explicit thanks to Galambos (1990), who explains that there are three stages of access to metalinguistic processing through which metalinguistic skills must develop: detecting, connecting, and explaining (p. 6). The detecting level specifically refers to the process of identifying grammatical errors,

which arise not only from recognizing a sentence as ungrammatical but also from understanding the meaning and structure with which the sentence is constructed.

Then, correcting, it is based on the idea of making value judgments about the linguistic elements that people have; this skill not only requires correcting but also detecting. It involves elements such as short-term memory and the ability to process non-grammatical sentences, since students make the effort to understand what has not been well formulated. Finally, explaining level, which is considered as one of the skills that makes evident the domain of metalinguistic skills, it is the ability to associate the incorrect forms are the correct forms.

Finally, it can be said that the journeys involving metalinguistic skills go from implicit to explicit knowledge to clearly identify how learning is being understood. Syntactic awareness is not an isolated ability, but on the contrary, it is an ability that enhances reading, writing, and listening, so its relevance is vital within the development of skills for learning a foreign language.

### **Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)**

TEFL stands for Teaching English as a Foreign Language. However, it is important to recognize the distinction between a foreign language and a second language. The former refers to a context in which the target language is not part of everyday life; rather, it is used only on specific occasions and is not constantly embedded in a bilingual environment. In contrast, a second language is one that is used in daily interactions and is practiced naturally in various social settings. In Colombia, English is taught as a foreign language because there are limited opportunities for immersion in everyday contexts. Nevertheless, it

is essential to reflect on how the teaching and learning of a foreign language are perceived within this educational reality.

The first conceptions about the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) in Colombia are mainly related to methodologies. Since English teaching has emerged not as a national but as an international need for commerce, communication, and global understanding, foreign strategies have often been adopted. However, López and Bonilla (2021) argue that TEFL in Colombia remains weak because these foreign methodologies are implemented as trends rather than contextualized tools. Instead of being adapted to the local context, they are applied superficially for their appeal.

In Colombia, the Ministry of National Education (in Spanish Ministerio de Educación Nacional or MEN) is the entity responsible for regulating educational policies. However, many of the reforms it proposes are not adapted to the Colombian context. On the contrary, they are often based on policies from other countries and are rarely modified to meet local needs (López & Bonilla, 2021). Within universities, it is very common that curricula and syllabi are adjusted according to the needs and policies; both do not mean the same thing: Curriculum is known in Colombia as the structure of the programs in general, which are offered by higher education institutions, within them we find characteristics such as the institution's vision, profiles of the graduates, etc. Different from the syllabus, which refers to the specific characteristics of each course—such as the content to be covered and the sequence in which it should be taught (Charnie, 2013).

TEFL teaching is guided by the two previous concepts, as they define the direction and approach that the process follows. However, it is different when we talk about learning English as a foreign language and teaching English as a foreign language. Usually, both

have a connection point on the syllabus. To name their connections, we will see the existing types of syllabi: Grammatical syllabus, which is based on the acquisition of knowledge of the language through grammar. Lexical syllabus, which can become predominant in TEFL since what is sought is the acquisition of knowledge of the language through vocabulary. Then, skill-based syllabus, which is based on the development of skills directly such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Task-based syllabuses, which focuses on making learning conscious in the classroom and students are the main reason that drives learning through activities. According to Chanie (2013), the types of syllabi developed in Colombia have followed the guidelines of the CEFR. However, it is important to remember that the Council of Europe (1997) clarifies that these frameworks are flexible and should not be strictly bound to a single standard, as they must be adapted to meet the specific needs of the population

### **An integration of the disciplinary skill “Syntactic awareness” in TEFL**

The importance of syntactic awareness in the role of pre-service foreign language teachers lies in the fact that linguistic proficiency—such as language manipulation— influences the techniques teachers use to teach their students the language (Seifoori, 2016) states that adding an hour and a half of grammar to foreign language teaching programs, or adding planning, helps to embody more knowledge within teaching, achieving higher levels of efficiency and development. It is important to add that the development of metacognitive skills helps learners develop techniques and mechanisms that help them learn even more. Raising awareness about language learning processes, such as learning grammar and syntactic structures, helps them become more autonomous (Wenden, 2002), as cited in (Seifoori, 2016). To achieve these levels of autonomy and build awareness of language

skills, Nunan (1991, as cited in Seifoori, 2016) proposes five theoretical stages: awareness-raising, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence. However, in this research, the levels of awareness-raising and transcendence are particularly emphasized, as they reflect the stages in which metacognitive skills become most evident. For example, when reaching the level of transcendence, it can be highlighted that students acquire the ability to explain and develop strategies to make themselves understood, which already shows a mastery of language manipulation. Creating tools or material to explain a topic is another clear example of these levels of transcendence and creation.

Foreign language teachers must be able to create content or tools that make it possible to simply explain the uses of the language to others, whether by linguistic section or with the strategies they develop; this is a clear example of a decline in current TEFL teacher training programs, because most current programs include a wide range of courses aimed at developing skills for managing cultural diversity in the classroom. The problem with TEFL syllabi is the poorly defined expectations for future language teachers. Shulman (1987) states that a foreign language teacher must be a good pedagogue, must have mastery and knowledge in the disciplinary area, be good with technologies, language teaching, an analyst, and a researcher. Thus, TEFL teachers in training must possess a broad range of skills, which is why higher education institutions' syllabi attempt to cover most of them. Currently, the rise of intercultural competencies has led to their modifications to give importance to other skills.

### **Educational policies on bilingualism in TEFL**

Bilingual programs such as the National Bilingualism Plan (PNB), Colombia Very Well, the Program for Strengthening the Development of Competencies in Foreign

Languages (PFDCLE), and the National English Program sought to address the challenges surrounding English as a foreign language in Colombia. These initiatives introduced policies aimed at strengthening English language proficiency. In order to understand better these programs, it is necessary to establish that an educational policy can be understood as a formal initiative through which actions are taken towards educational practices; that is, when a private or governmental entity seeks to regulate or establish guidelines for the production and provision of education (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

An example of an educational policy is the integration of native English speakers into schools and universities to enhance language learning, as well as the increase in English teaching hours to create more intensive and demanding schedules. However, as noted by Caracol Radio (2009), Cárdenas and Chaves (2013), and Cely (2007), as cited in González (2009), one of the structural issues with these programs was that many English teachers lacked the linguistic competence required to achieve the proposed objectives.

González (2009) also clarifies that, according to his research, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) stated that the low level of English proficiency in the country is due to the inadequate preparation of future teachers in undergraduate English language programs, a situation that has not yet been resolved. Even considering the research by (Gonzales, 2009), universities were not considered as the main actors. See Figure 1.



Figure 1. Taken from *Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo* (MEN, 2009, p. 5).

However, Figure 1 shows that universities and higher education programs were considered; the proposal was to work with universities nationwide to help strengthen bilingualism in Colombia. However, most of the strategies, as evidenced by the results shown by (MEN, 2021), have focused more on the implementation of an ecosystem that further fosters a bilingual environment, such as Inspiring Teacher—additional training in diplomas for language teachers—and multiplatform resources such as Talkative-E; however, there is no evidence of a direction that corrects the main problems of future teachers in training towards strengthening their language knowledge.

In conclusion, it can be said that although the proposed bilingualism plans, along with the policies developed by the government, seek to promote a bilingual environment, they focus on elements that clearly do not correspond to Colombian needs. The National Bilingualism Plan (PNB) is divided between training teachers with a pedagogical approach that seeks to develop skills beyond the purely educational sphere—transcending them towards the formation of exemplary professionals—and strengthening language teachers who master the language in accordance with the needs of the Colombian community. Therefore, there must be a focus or designation of curricula that successfully captures the

proposed objectives; in this case, strengthening the linguistic proficiency of foreign language teachers in English.

### **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN**

#### **Research paradigm**

This document employs a qualitative methodology and an interpretive paradigm, both of which helped shape the analysis and the way the selected documents were examined. An interpretive paradigm refers to the way or representation that humans construct to make sense of reality (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Shah et al., 2013; Bhattacharjee, 2012). In this sense, the elements selected for the analysis are based on the comparisons and differences identified by the researcher, which are then interpreted and shared with the readers.

The reason why the interpretive paradigm was selected is that, although documents such as syllabi and curricula are clear about the current legal regulations established by Resolution 18583 of 2017, each higher education institution presents its own perspective on what it means to train a foreign language teacher and the rationale behind it. Therefore, to analyze the wide range of variables involved such as objectives, methodologies, methods, evaluations, and contexts it is necessary to break down each component and interpret how it responds to specific educational challenges and issues.

In order to support such interpretations, it is necessary to use a qualitative methodology that allows for appropriate descriptions and analyses of the categories to be developed. In this regard, this research understands qualitative research as an approach that helps explore a human problem, which can be of a social or individual nature, and that

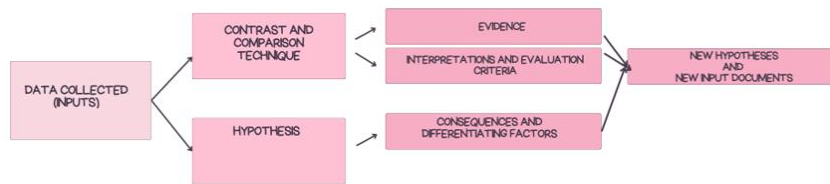
involves the emergence of questions, hypotheses, and deductive analyses of the collected information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, it should be noted that this method goes beyond mere interpretation; it is not just about shaping or observing phenomena, but a scientific process that requires the systematization of elements such as behavior, adjustments, artifacts, and actions, in order to achieve an adequate understanding of the phenomena under study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Qualitative research is relevant for this document since it helps to establish and criticize the regularities of the behavior of the actors in the educational field and the complex phenomena that will arise from the analysis of the syllabi of language teaching programs foreign in English. Social research, such as this study, seeks epistemic support, which usually resides in the social factors manifested through the subjects. An important aspect of qualitative research is that it is framed within the social spheres where the phenomenon arises, providing explanations (Rojas, 2019). In this sense, qualitative research allows for the formulation of new questions that enable inquiry, correction, and progress.

### **Type of research**

This document is a documentary investigation that used the state of the art, which seeks to solve the problems posed regarding the training of future foreign language teachers through research and documentary collection. Documentary research is seen as a systematic process of criteria and empirical assumptions which are applied to observable phenomena (Cegarra, 2004). It should also be clarified that when referring to research, it requires a step-by-step process for its elaboration. That is why the character of the state of the art is important since it gives meaning and organization to the body or object of analysis.

Figure 2 Procedure for the step-by-step method.



Own elaboration based on: Bunge, M. (1969). *Scientific research: Its strategy and philosophy* (p. 9).

Figure 2 provides an overview of the step-by-step method used, drawing on the interpretation previously made by Bunge (1969). The idea behind this proposed sequence is its relevance, as it helps to contrast and identify the elements towards which the research should be directed. As can be seen, some processes can occur simultaneously, such as the formulation of hypotheses and the development of techniques, since possible testing techniques need to be designed once knowledge from the documentation is gathered, guiding the research path. As clarified, this represents the researcher's perspective, which evolves during the writing process. It is important to note that the research process is not necessarily linear, as it has a flexible structure. While writing the document, new deductions may emerge, which, by moving from the general to the specific, allow a deeper focus on particular cases (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Now, it is worth noting that the state-of-the-art review is relevant because it functions as a repository of knowledge, providing information on possible changes or origins in the object of study. This allows for the validation of previous findings and the emergence of new conclusions, questions, and perspectives (Londoño, 2014, cited in Rojas, 2019). The state-of-the-art review in the Colombian context also has a similar focus. For example, Marín and Vélez Restrepo (2002) analyze the state of the art within qualitative

research, describing it as documentary research that reflects and transcends previously explored approaches, with the main objective of revealing the authors' interpretations.

In conclusion, the use of the state of the art within the present research is important as it helped interpret the interactions that develop between phenomena such as syntactic awareness and its relationship with social actors, such as foreign language teachers in training, and the TEFL curricula in higher education in Colombia. Interpretation is necessary since analyzing the historical context is required to understand the curricula and syllabi of some Colombian universities.

### **Instruments for data collection**

#### **Research documents**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that documents or studies are among the most common data collection tools in qualitative research, as they fully align with the processes addressed by qualitative inquiry, such as observing, examining, interpreting, and generating hypotheses. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), since documents represent information recorded over time, the interpretations of different perspectives from future lecturers help to understand and formulate new hypotheses. Documents can be of a public or private nature, including diaries, letters, newspapers, meeting reports, and more. In this study, syllabi, curricula, and educational program projects (PEPs) were used to address the need to evaluate academic programs in foreign languages.

#### **Rubric**

The main tool used to assess the state of the art was the rubric. This was understood as a direct evaluative instrument, which applied a scale with either qualitative or quantitative criteria to evaluate the object of study or the material collected for analysis (Gordillo & Rodriguez, 2010). This data collection tool was important because it allowed for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. For instance, when evaluating the number of times a TEFL syllabus offered subjects focused on linguistics, it was necessary to account for a certain number of repetitions. In this sense, its relevance was key to the development of the research project.

There were also other definitions of rubrics that helped to understand their use (Escalante, 2018). Rubrics also had subtypes; in this case, we used an analytical rubric (Ramirez, Galvan, & Galindo, 2022), which aimed to create a project unit with established criteria. In other words, it sought to break down a unit to identify its elements.

In conclusion, the rubric served as a key data collection tool for identifying the syllabi of TEFL programs. It provided an analysis and breakdown of the syllabi to understand their structure. Likewise, it allowed to comprehend what each element referred to and to identify its relationship with future teachers in training.

#### **CHAPTER IV: STATE OF THE ART**

The following chapter aims to review the state-of-the-art documents. Twenty documents were selected, consisting of curricula and syllabi (See table 1.). Additionally, two other documents were chosen that addressed research conducted on syntactic awareness. Because direct research on the concept in Colombia is scarce, metalinguistic skills were used as a synonym, as they are part of this group. The objective is to analyze the curricula and syllabi of the following universities listed below. Their components, subject

descriptions, approaches, and developments in foreign language teacher training are described.

**Table 1.** Documents used in the State of the Art

	<b>Document/program</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Type of document</b>
1	Licenciatura en Español y Lenguas Extranjeras; Inglés y Francés (V4)	Universidad Pedagógica Nacional	2019- 2025 (Current)	Curriculum
2	Licenciatura en Lenguas modernas-Español e inglés V1	Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas	1979	Curriculum
3	Licenciatura en educación básica con Énfasis en Inglés V3	Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas	2000	Curriculum
4	Licenciado en Lenguas extranjeras con Énfasis en Inglés V4	Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas	2018 (Current)	Curriculum
5	Licenciatura en Lenguas modernas	Universidad La Gran Colombia	2025 (Current)	Curriculum
6	Licenciatura en español y Lenguas Extranjeras	Universidad Libre	2024 (current)	Curriculum
7	Licenciatura en Bilingüismo con Énfasis en Inglés y Español	Universidad del Bosque	2023 (Current)	Curriculum
8	Licenciatura en Educación Bilingüe	Universidad del Bosque	2014 (Current)	Curriculum
9	Licenciatura en Español e Inglés	Universidad Antonio Nariño	2023 (Current)	Curriculum
10	Licenciatura en Español y lenguas extranjeras	Universidad la Salle	2021 (Current)	Curriculum
11	Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras con Énfasis en Inglés y en Francés	Universidad del Valle	2002 – 2024 (current)	Syllabus Curriculum
12	Licenciatura en lenguas modernas con énfasis en inglés y francés	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana	2022 (Current)	Curriculum
13	Licenciatura en lenguas modernas con énfasis en inglés	Universidad Nacional y a Distancia	2018 (current)	Curriculum Syllabus
14	Licenciatura en español e inglés	Institución Universitaria Colegio mayor del Cauca	2021 (Current)	Curriculum
15	Licenciatura en español e inglés	Institución Universitaria Colegio mayor del Cauca	2021 (Current)	Syllabus Curriculum
16	Licenciatura en español e inglés	Universidad de Nariño	2017 (Current)	Curriculum
17	Licenciatura en español e inglés	Universidad de Nariño	2017	Syllabus Curriculum
18	Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas con énfasis en inglés	Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia	2019	Syllabus Curriculum
19	Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas con énfasis en inglés	Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia	2019	Curriculum
20	Licenciatura en Filología e Idiomas: alemán, Francés E inglés	Universidad Nacional de Colombia	2015	Curriculum Syllabus
21	Patrón de desarrollo bilingüe, habilidades lingüísticas y metalingüísticas: grados 2° y 5° en	Angelmiro Galindo - Margarita Botero	2016	Article

	una institución educativa bilingüe piloto del Quindío, Colombia			
22	Más allá de las palabras: el papel de las habilidades cognitivas y metalingüísticas en el desempeño ortográfico de niños y adolescentes	Leydy Quiroz-Serna Fanny Patricia Urrego-Quintero Renato Zambrano-Cruz	2025	Article

In the following section, brief descriptions of the curricula for the foreign language bachelor's programs and the syllabi are provided. The purpose was to summarize what each document offered. As Estrada (2009) stated, the foreign language bachelor's programs in Colombia revolved around three main axes: first, the use of the foreign language; second, the teaching of the foreign language; and third, subjects related to pedagogy and institutional values.

### **Universidad Pedagógica Nacional**

The curriculum at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional includes 53 courses, each with 148 required credits and 12 core credits or elective credits. These courses are divided into nine practice areas: six courses dedicated to communicative foreign language learning, seven courses dedicated to teaching didactics in pedagogy, 14 courses dedicated to teaching Spanish and literature, and five courses focused on research. The remaining 12 courses are divided between courses for teaching institutional values and foreign language teaching. The university's curriculum is not very clear in defining the approaches within the disciplinary and/or pedagogical core, but there is a clear division between the research and practice components for preservice teachers.

### **Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas (1979)**

The Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas bachelor's degree program in modern Spanish and English, in its first version, was composed of 48 subjects divided as

follows: 21 subjects are dedicated to learning Spanish and literature or history; 13 are dedicated to learning English; four subjects are dedicated to research; and five are dedicated to sociology. The remaining three subjects are divided between pedagogy and language didactics. It is a curriculum that is not directly divided among its focuses. The distinction between research and pedagogy was largely blurred, as the courses did not have explicit titles emphasizing these areas. On the other hand, it was noted that the program spanned four years.

### **Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas (2000)**

This district university program contains 71 subjects, divided into 17 courses dedicated to language learning or disciplines, 15 focused on pedagogy, 4 on language didactics, 5 on institutional values learning, 14 research-based courses, and 16 elective courses. It is noteworthy that this curriculum clearly divides the subjects into discipline-based, pedagogical, communicative, and research-based courses, which facilitates a quick understanding of what it offers. Furthermore, the research branch evolves alongside the previous curriculum.

### **Universidad Distrital Francisco José De Caldas (2018)**

The current program at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas is clearly divided into the following components: 11 courses focused on the disciplinary branch, 13 courses focused on the pedagogical component, 6 courses focused on a communicative method of language, 4 focused on university ethics, 5 courses focused solely on research, 8 courses for learning a third language in addition to those already offered, and 8 courses for strengthening electives, for a total of 55 courses. This curriculum has integrated specific

spaces for learning a third language in addition to those already offered in Spanish and English, which is a significant advance.

### **Universidad La Gran Colombia**

Universidad La Gran Colombia offers a bachelor's degree program in modern languages with an emphasis on English. This program includes 50 courses divided as follows: 10 courses focused on learning English and French, 5 focused on linguistics, and 8 courses on education and technology. 9 courses focused on research, 8 on pedagogy, 4 courses for developing basic competencies, 9 courses for teaching university ethics, and 9 courses dedicated to elective courses for comprehensive training. In this sense, this curriculum is divided in a more organized manner since, in addition to integrating the concept of modern languages, it integrates elements such as training in new technologies, which opens a new perspective on what is understood about foreign language teacher training.

### **Universidad Libre**

The Universidad Libre offers a 59-subject program with a total of 144 academic credits. This program is structured as follows: 18 subjects are focused on learning English and French, 7 subjects are dedicated to teacher training, 11 subjects are on language teaching and disciplinary training in Spanish, and 8 subjects are dedicated to research and teaching practice. The remaining 15 subjects are divided between electives designated for comprehensive training and subjects assigned to the development of institutional values. This program lasts four years and does not present a clear division in its curriculum regarding the approaches proposed for each area.

### **Universidad del Bosque**

The Bachelor's Degree in Bilingualism with an Emphasis on English and Spanish is composed of 39 subjects divided into fundamental components—basic competencies with a total of 7 subjects, 8 courses for language learning and mastery, 6 designated for internships, 11 focused on language development, 2 courses dedicated to thesis, and 4 designated for electives. It is a fairly short, 4-year program that is well-organized to provide a clearer focus for the teacher it aims to train.

### **Universidad Antonio Nariño**

The Bachelor's Degree in Spanish and English at Universidad Antonio Nariño offers 38 subjects divided into seven courses focused on foreign language learning, seven courses dedicated to Spanish as a foreign language, seven courses for language teaching, eight courses for pedagogy, two for research, and the last seven divided into electives, internships, and the acquisition of university values. Its curriculum is fairly short in terms of the number of subjects offered. However, it has something extra: it is one of the few programs that offers training in Spanish as a foreign language.

### **Universidad de la Salle**

The Bachelor's Degree in Spanish and Foreign Languages at Universidad de la Salle offers a 60-course program divided as follows: 10 courses are assigned to English learning, 11 courses are assigned to French learning, 11 courses are focused on the pedagogical component, 5 are on pedagogical research, which also have a practical component, and 10 are focused on the ethical component. Finally, the remaining 12 courses are divided between language teaching and Spanish learning. This curriculum has a very interesting

contribution: it is the first to focus on training its teachers for the TOEFL and DELF exams. It is also organized by semester, always teaching both Spanish and French simultaneously.

### **Universidad del Valle Syllabus**

The Academic Program for a Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Languages with an Emphasis on English and French establishes the context for the syllabus and curriculum. It is divided as follows: first, it presents general information about the program, then provides a historical description of the need for its academic offering. It then explains the epistemological and pedagogical foundations of the program, as well as the training expected of future teachers in training. Second, it looks at the objectives and profiles that future teachers in training must meet, taking into account the institutional values and vision. Third, it outlines the curricular organization, as well as the study plan and its development. Fourth, it outlines the integration of different projects, such as academic mobility, research, and practice, within the program.

This program is made up of 10 semesters, a total of 5 years, which raises the need to train graduates in language sciences because it recognizes that the Colombian context has had a demand for learning English for the internationalization of institutions, for the construction of knowledge, culture, policies and national plans. The University of Valle (2020) clarifies that the idea is to meet the demand for 1,600 to 3,900 English teachers who can meet the requirement of teaching the weekly hours of English required in public and private schools, in order to achieve the expected level of B1 in students.

Within the training model of the bachelor's degree in foreign language with an emphasis on English and French, the social constructivist approach, the reflective approach,

and the critical social approach stand out, which seek to create the integration of socio-critical skills that allow for a social transformation from the understanding of the cognitive dimensions of the subject (Universidad del Valle, 2020).

The objective of the program is the creation of foreign language graduates in English and French who are comprehensive, autonomous in teaching and can reach the classrooms to recognize the educational realities of the country, always addressing them from the ethical and social commitment that was formed. (Universidad del Valle, 2020). In this sense, to reach this training, they have divided the curriculum into 50 subjects as follows, it has the basic cycle training for learning and teaching the language with a number of 20 subjects distributed between French and English, then continues its professional cycle which is divided into the training of these language skills and research training with a number of 28 subjects, Finally, it has General training which is dedicated to providing comprehensive training or ethical component, which has 10 subjects.

### **Pontificia Universidad Javeriana**

The Bachelor's Degree in Modern Languages with an Emphasis in English and French from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana consists of eight semesters, divided into the core, which contains the disciplinary subjects; this includes courses for learning English, French, linguistics, university ethics, and pedagogical training; the in-depth core, which is based on research; and the elective core, which refers to other subjects to help strengthen the training of future teachers. This curriculum includes 42 subjects.

### **Universidad Nacional Libre y a Distancia (UNAD)**

The Universidad Nacional Libre y a Distancia (UNAD) offers a bachelor's degree

program in English as a foreign language. Its syllabus is structured as follows: First, it mentions the objectives, mission, and vision of the program, discussing the benchmarks it considers. Second, it discusses the dimensions of the academic program, focusing on the competencies to be developed, the levels of knowledge to be mastered, and the division of the curriculum. Finally, it discusses its integration or relationship system, such as the projects and mobilities it intends. It also addresses the evaluation of the curriculum and system.

First, the vision of Universidad Nacional Libre y a Distancia (UNAD) aims to create leading foreign language teachers with intercultural competencies who can contribute to society through the use of technological tools (UNAD, 2014). The bachelor's degree program in English as a foreign language meets different conditions than other programs because it is a virtual program. It seeks open and distance education, and therefore must use flexible methods, understanding that the student is at the center of learning. In this sense, it should be noted that it is aimed at an audience that has assumed autonomous learning processes, capable of identifying and making decisions for themselves (UNAD, 2014).

The UNAD curriculum is described below. The first area of training is the common socio-humanistic core, which has seven subjects; the second is the common research core, with three subjects; and then the disciplinary core, with 12 subjects; this is divided into pedagogical training. Then, the specific professional field related to English language proficiency has 23 subjects; and finally, the elective component, with 12 subjects, for a total of 54 subjects offered by the program.

Regarding the program evaluation section, the document clarifies that a meeting will be scheduled annually with the designated teacher to design a work agenda that will

address the curriculum structure, research, faculty, resources, etc. The goal is always to provide a quality education that empowers future teachers to navigate their diverse environments (UNAD, 2014).

### **Institución Universitaria Colegio Mayor del Cauca**

The syllabus for the Bachelor's Degree in Spanish and English at the Institución Universitaria Colegio Mayor del Cauca is divided as follows: first, it presents the problem addressed by the degree program, then proceeds to discuss the visions and profiles expected of future teachers. Second, it discusses the justifications and curricular content that the curriculum should include, addressing the theoretical foundations and methodological aspects. Finally, it addresses the development strategies, micro-curricula, and evaluation of the program itself.

The Spanish and English bachelor's program is considered necessary due to the precedents established by the National Bilingualism Program (2015-2025), which clarifies that English teachers are required for secondary school, but these teachers must have a B2 language level; this is necessary to help close the gaps that have opened in English learning in Colombia. The Ministry of Education (2015), as cited in (Institución Universitaria Mayor de Cauca, 2020), states that there are approximately 3,200 teachers who teach English and are not at the required level, or some are even below the expected level of B1. This context is extremely important for research since foreign language proficiency is considered one of the main factors for strengthening the syllabus and curriculum.

The syllabus of the Colegio Mayor del Cauca University Institution states that its emphasis is on the commitment to the social contribution it must make in Colombia by

providing English teachers with the required level of foreign language proficiency, thus meeting the standards proposed in the current national English program "Colombia Very Well 2015-2025."

The proposed curriculum is divided into core, disciplinary, and professional pedagogical fields. The courses offered have been categorized as core, specific, pedagogy, didactics, research, and complementary. There are eight core courses, 22 disciplinary courses, eight pedagogical courses, four didactic courses, eight research courses, and three complementary courses. This totals 52 courses.

### **Universidad de Nariño**

In its syllabus for the Bachelor's Degree in Spanish and English, the Universidad de Nariño first discusses the relevance of language teaching in the country and its relevance within society. It then justifies the academic program, clarifying its scope and its purpose within current trends in foreign language teaching. Second, it clarifies the curricular aspects and the rationale behind its development. Finally, it explains the competencies to be developed each semester, the research role, and student assessment.

The syllabus of the Universidad de Nariño explains that in the current 21st-century world, it is necessary to acquire language skills. These are understood as linguistic, textual, discursive, pragmatic, sociocultural, etc. (Universidad de Nariño, 2017). Even though there is an empirical context and people manage to communicate, there are difficulties or barriers that exist in the world. The main one is language, the language that is used and allows us to connect with more people around the world. Another point worth highlighting is that it focuses on training teachers in their native language to help meet the national and

international demand for Spanish, recognizing that Spanish is a language that has gained relevance in today's world.

The training intended for future teachers in training is based on the premise that the curriculum must be comprehensive, an organization of knowledge that allows for the development of competencies, ethical, political, and civic values, enabling professionals to respond to reality. The University of Nariño has decided to develop the following skills and competencies for its curriculum: foreign language, reading and writing, computer skills, and finally, quantitative reasoning.

The curriculum is structured as follows: Specific knowledge includes 14 subjects dedicated to the acquisition of Spanish as a foreign language, 19 subjects dedicated to the acquisition of English and literature. The transversal area is divided into the following: 9 subjects dedicated to pedagogy and education, 7 focused on language teaching, 7 for pedagogical practices, and 3 subjects dedicated to research. However, it should be noted that this syllabus described is current as of 2018, and their document clarifies that they have a transition plan due to the updated curriculum.

### **Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC)**

The Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia in its syllabus for the Bachelor's Degree in Modern Languages, with an emphasis on English, structures the presentation of the program as follows: First, it identifies the relevance of the training program and its role within Colombian society, in turn, it also compares it with other programs of the same nature to then justify and differentiate the training of foreign language teachers at UPTC; Second, it goes on to give the objectives, profiles and

competencies that future foreign language teachers in training should have, in turn describing the distribution of subjects and skills that must be developed in each of the academic semesters. Finally, it explains the methods that have been used to carry out the evaluation of its academic program.

The curriculum is divided as follows: the disciplinary subjects block; understood as the collection of all those concepts and practices that allow the future professional to create and deepen their own knowledge of the discipline (UPTC, 2022). This block contains elements such as the foundation, understood as the space of language knowledge, there is also the disciplinary and in-depth, which focuses on developing all the skills and competencies that comprise the teaching profession, as well as foreign language didactics. Then there is the Social and Humanist block; this block is considered the space of interaction for the formation of citizenship, ethics, and critical thinking. In turn, it is divided into Humanism and Languages, which is a block built for the formation of criteria so that the student learns to function in their environment by resolving conflicts, taking into account professional ethics (UPTC, 2022). Finally, the Social and Environmental component, which refers to the understanding of the reality and environment in which professionals work, allows them to develop a social and historical perspective that links the needs of citizens to their professional work.

The curriculum includes 14 subjects dedicated to the foundation, 34 subjects focused on the disciplinary component, and in-depth subjects, which refer to all language and didactic training. Finally, there are five subjects for the Social and Humanistic component. For a total of 53 subjects offered by the program.

The purpose of the Bachelor's program in Modern Languages with an emphasis on

English is framed within the dynamics of responding to the technological revolutions and globalization that have been impacting Colombian society. In this sense, it is proposed that future teachers in training must be able to respond to internationalization and respect the principles and practices of other cultures. The program's innovative approach to promoting the learning of other languages, such as German, Portuguese, Italian, and languages of Colombian aboriginal origin, stands out.

### **Universidad Nacional de Colombia**

The Universidad Nacional de Colombia (2015) in its philology training program, although it does not directly clarify it as a bachelor's degree, its syllabus and educational project classify it as a Bachelor's Degree in Philology and French and English Languages. It is a program that focuses directly on training teachers with a strong command of the linguistic area; In this sense, to review the syllabus, it is divided as follows: First, it covers the identity of the program and its relevance, then it goes on to give a review of the curricular structure it has, and finally it talks about the articulation of the program with the environment.

Within the history and creation of the program, it should be noted that the National University of Colombia initially proposed the curriculum for the Bachelor of Languages degree, from its first version in 1961. This curriculum underwent modifications and adaptations to include philosophy and languages. Later, with the introduction of bilingualism policies and the national bilingualism plans, it was modified to include two new programs: English-French and Spanish in foreign languages. This is very important because it shows that it was initially a program designed for teacher training, but with a very different focus than the documents previously seen, as it currently has a different

curriculum.

To demonstrate this, let's look at the curriculum, which is divided as follows: The foundational component addresses the topics of linguistics, literary studies, education, pedagogy, research, and the foundational electives. (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2015). Then we have the disciplinary or professional training component, which is composed of foreign language training, education, pedagogy, research, and elective courses in linguistics, culture, etc. And finally, we have the elective component, which refers to courses offered outside the scope of the program, so they can be quite diverse. The curriculum is divided as follows: 12 subjects for the foundation component, 23 subjects for the disciplinary or professional component, and 10 subjects for the elective component.

Now, regarding the evaluation processes, the National University has a dedicated entity, the Program Advisory Committee, which is responsible for conducting self-evaluation processes and proposing actions to update and reflect on curricular policies within the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. (UNAL, 2015) It is important to clarify that this syllabus has been reviewed and updated five times since its creation until 2013.

### **Pattern of bilingual development, linguistic and metalinguistic skills: 2nd and 5th grades in a pilot bilingual educational institution in Quindío**

In the article by Galindo and Botero (2016), although the skill of syntactic awareness is not directly mentioned, metalinguistic skills, of which syntactic awareness is a part, are mentioned. This research is of a non-experimental nature and was conducted with the following sample from the department of Quindío: 52 subjects in fifth grade, 41 subjects in second grade; their participation was voluntary.

Within the procedure and methodology, the aim was to initially assess or diagnose the students' level of metalinguistic skills. Therefore, surveys were administered to help determine sociocultural factors, followed by language exposure tests. The idea was to compare levels of linguistic proficiency and their ability to manipulate the language.

It was found that, although there was indeed a difference in the way students took the tests, without making distinctions about the types of sentences and analysis performed, there was a developmental difference between fifth-grade and second-grade students. However, the study suggests that these reasons may be due to the developmental nature of age and grade. This does not reflect significant progress in skills. On the other hand, when it comes to grammatical judgments, it is evident that fifth-grade students have a superiority in their native language over second-grade students. However, when switching to English as a second language, this does not occur in the same way. Therefore, continued exposure to the same language may be a factor (Galindo, 2009). These results are relevant because they help to explore skills such as syntactic awareness and how they work. Although English as a foreign language is discussed in the classroom, it is important to consider whether it truly works or if students are merely developing through exposure to the language.

### **Beyond Words: The Role of Cognitive and Metalinguistic Skills in the Spelling**

#### **Performance of Children and Adolescents**

In the research article by Serna, Quinto, and Cruz (2025), the authors explore how metalinguistic skills affect spelling ability. They use a sample of 72 students from Medellín, ages 9 to 15. To achieve this, they propose the following two hypotheses: auditory memory and processing speed drive phonological awareness, which regulates spelling, or the three concepts mentioned above, that is, cognitive skills work to drive spelling.

To reach conclusions, tools such as the Wechsler scale, the metalinguistic skills subtest, and the speed of thinking subtest are used. They were then divided into two age groups, 9 to 12 and 13 to 16 years old. The article concludes that there is indeed a relationship between metalinguistic skills and processing speed and spelling performance (Serna, Quinto, Cruz, 2025), since it establishes that, between the ages of 9 and 12, spelling constitutes one of the metalinguistic abilities that most significantly fosters orthographic development. Here, different skills are integrated, such as syntactic awareness, phonological awareness, etc., since it demonstrates that the evolution of listening abilities is directly linked to the development of writing skills.

On the other hand, between the ages of 13 and 16, it was found that thinking speed and word count take precedence in spelling, however, phonological awareness in this case may help to further enhance word recognition, syntactic awareness, etc. (Serna, Quinto, Cruz, 2025). This study is important for the analysis because it helps to understand the benefits that the exploration of these metalinguistic skills can bring within the teaching of English.

## **CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

### **Analysis method**

In this research, the Grounded Theory analysis method created by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used. This is based on making deductive inferences based on the data and information provided and it is used to develop a hypothesis or theory about the phenomenon being investigated. This analysis method works from the researcher's own experience as it starts with the reality or information provided, and then the researcher produces their interpretation from their empirical reality. In this sense, from this research,

the collected data was the starting point and the researcher's experience then was used to interpret the selected documents, thus recognizing the empirical reality. However, it must be kept in mind that the details, relationships, and connections generated between the concepts and categories must also be based on the researcher's experience, which is why it is essential to ensure that the results of the selected literature are adapted to the issues developed in the document, thus avoiding possible biases from preconceptions about the literature (Páramo, 2015).

To carry out the literature analysis, the following stages were proposed: purposive sampling, which aims to collect data that provide clues about possible categories and relationships between documents (Francis et al., 2019). Then comes the Initial coding, which is based on the association of concepts, relationships and differences between the selected literature in order to introduce criteria for the analysis. After this, an advancing coding is done, which helps to propose a direct line to connect the concepts and categories previously raised; This moment is very important since it helps to connect theory and literature in a linear way, explaining the relationships. Finally, the Ground Theory, which is the conformation of the total analysis, which relates the entire interpretation of the particular phenomenon to develop its understanding. In other words, the conformation of the previous elements—purposive sampling, generating/collecting data, initial coding, and advanced coding—are the line that explains the phenomenon through Grounded Theory.

### **Categories of analysis**

Below are the categories established for the analysis of the selected literature:

**Table 2** *Categories for the analysis of Syllabus and curriculums*

CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS		
Research Objective #1	Research Objective #2	Research Objective #3
To comprehend the integration of syntactic awareness into the TEFL programs of higher education in Colombia	-To examine the historical development of syntactic awareness in TEFL-oriented curriculum programs in public and private institutions in Colombia.	-To Propose a more appropriate integration of syntactic awareness in the development of TEFL programs
<b>Category # 1</b>	<b>Category # 2</b>	<b>Category # 3</b>
Fields of knowledge and training components	Context of the formation of the program	Innovative proposals for the training of foreign language teachers
<b>Subcategory #1</b>	<b>Subcategory #1</b>	<b>Subcategory #1</b>
Understanding the CEFR	Theoretical and historical foundations of syllabuses and curriculum	Didactics and new training for language teachers
<b>Subcategory #2</b>	<b>Subcategory #2</b>	<b>Subcategory #2</b>
Understanding of the linguistic foundation (syntactic awareness)	Objectives of the academic program and its contribution to the Colombian community	Solving community problems in the future
<b>Subcategory #3</b>	<b>Subcategory #3</b>	<b>Subcategory #3</b>
integration of linguistics into the teaching process	Research in TEFL programs addresses the needs	Reproduction and production of knowledge to reality: Implications for language research

### **Category #1 Fields of knowledge and training components**

This first category refers to the fields of knowledge and the training plan designed for future foreign languages teachers. It seeks to understand how these fields are organized, what is intended to be taught, and which skills pre-service foreign language teachers are expected to develop. The purpose is to contrast this with what is stated by the MEN in the Resolution 18583 of 2017, which establishes that undergraduate teaching programs nationwide must include the following components: General Foundations, Specific and Disciplinary Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, and Didactics of the Disciplines.

#### **Subcategory #1 Understanding the CEFR**

The understanding and application of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) within the foreign language syllabus which must comply with what was stated by the MEN in Resolution 18583 of 2017, clarifies that students of any academic program for a bachelor's degree in foreign or second languages must aim to certify the language level of their teachers in training at a minimum level of B2. Although this is somewhat ambiguous, as it allows flexibility in the topics or approaches that may

guide the training of future foreign language teachers, the main requirement is that they achieve the expected language level. The CEFR for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Council of Europe, 1971) clarifies that the proposed language levels are intended as guidelines rather than mandatory standards, as they should be adapted and modified according to specific needs. Now, the following quotations responded to the interpretation of CEFR and type of syllabus proposed by Chanie (2013).

The Department of Linguistics and Languages proposes three levels in accordance with the document prepared in 2004 by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), proposed as the reference framework by the Ministry of National Education. The proposed levels are described below and complemented by the Department's perspective. Basic User, Independent User, and Proficient User  
[Syllabus #17: Las habilidades comunicativas generales y la suficiencia en las lenguas inglesa y francesa. P. 30 Lines 29-33]

To complete the internship, students must demonstrate a proficiency level equivalent to C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The curriculum then makes the necessary arrangements with the host institution to ensure an optimal internship experience.  
[Syllabus #20: Micro currículo de Comunicación y cultura. P. 30 Lines 19-25]

The foundation of this micro-curriculum is to understand the communicative and cultural processes of the language and its society. This will be achieved through learning and using the language through its different communicative skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), progressing according to the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It also aims to recognize language use skills based on specific cultural aspects.  
[Syllabus #18: Micro currículo de Comunicación y cultura. P. 48 Lines 1-6]

The module component Taller Expresión Oral is for bachelor's undergraduate students. It aims to enable learners to achieve goals in the C1 level, following scales of the CEFR  
[Syllabus #14: Introduction of module component. P. 152 Lines 1-3]

After conducting a thorough analysis of the intentions expressed in the syllabi regarding the CEFR levels, it could be observed that, in general terms, the curricula in disciplinary areas follow the guidelines established by the MEN in Resolution 18583

(2017). This resolution states that students enrolled in a foreign language teaching program must achieve at least a C1 proficiency level. Furthermore, all programs are directly aligned with the CEFR framework; none adopt alternative approaches to foreign language learning. It is also evident that the curricula include various courses designed to support the development of foreign language competence. The following section presents some courses dedicated to this purpose within the curricula.

ENGLISH I, ENGLISH II, ENGLISH III, ENGLISH IV, ENGLISH V, ENGLISH VI, ENGLISH VII: ENGLISH CONVERSATION, SPECIFIC DISCIPLINARY ELECTIVE COURSE, ENGLISH COMPOSITION (ELECTIVE), SPECIFIC DISCIPLINARY ELECTIVE COURSE,  
[Curriculum #13: Malla Curricular P.1]

INTRO, PRE-INTERMEDIATE, INTERMEDIATE, UPPER INTERMEDIATE I, UPPER INTERMEDIATE II, ADVANCED ENGLISH I, ADVANCED ENGLISH II  
[Curriculum #9: Plan de estudios P.1-2]

Breakthrough English, Pre-Intermediate English, Phonetics and Phonology, Intermediate English, Morphology and Syntax, Upper-Intermediate English, Advanced English, Literature in English Language, Language Assessment and Testing  
[Curriculum #5: Plan de estudios P.1]

As evidenced in the previous excerpts, curricula are generally composed of a sequence of courses that are taken progressively, semester by semester to develop language competencies from levels A1, A2, B1, and B2, up to C1. Interestingly, although not all, most curricula include pedagogical practice as one of the disciplinary components for the development of foreign language competence.

This inclusion can be interpreted as an effort to integrate research and practice within the disciplinary field, emphasizing the use of language in real communicative contexts to foster meaningful competence. This approach is positive, as Roth et al., (1996) argue that the goal is not merely to produce empty grammatical structures but rather to

reflect upon the language itself. Therefore, these subjects within the disciplinary field may help pre-service teachers become aware of their language proficiency level and encourage reflection on their linguistic abilities.

On the other hand, it was evident that one of the common shortcomings found in the syllabi—when contrasted with the theoretical perspectives from the Colombian context—relates to what Chanie (2013) pointed out. The author explained that the main issue lies in the fact that the competence levels established by the CEFR are not properly adapted or defined within the Colombian context. Furthermore, institutions do not take into account what the Council of Europe (1997) emphasized regarding the contextual adaptation of these frameworks. Consequently, this leads to the persistent problem of importing foreign educational policies that do not necessarily align with the Colombian educational reality or its communities.

There are specific cases such as the Pedagogical UPTC and the University of Nariño, both of which clearly state in their syllabi the intended curricular content in relation to the CEFR. They explicitly specify that their programs aim to prepare students to take international proficiency exams such as TOEFL and IELTS. Furthermore, these institutions describe in detail the skills expected at each CEFR level, which allows for a clearer understanding of students' current language proficiency and the specific areas in which they need improvement throughout the academic program.

B1: Can understand the main points of clear standard language texts on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school or leisure situations.

[Syllabus #17: Desarrollo de la Competencia Comunicativa en Lengua Extranjera P.76 Lines [19-22]

B2: Can understand the main ideas of complex texts on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical texts within their field of expertise.

[Syllabus #17: Desarrollo de la Competencia Comunicativa en Lengua Extranjera P.76 Lines [32-35]

The graduate in Modern Languages, with emphasis on English, is able to interpret, speak, read and write in English by developing standards corresponding to levels A1 and A2, according to the common framework of reference.

[Syllabus #18: Resultados de aprendizaje articulados en el plan de estudios P.76 Lines [16-21]

## **Subcategory #2 Understanding of the linguistic foundation (syntactic awareness)**

This category is understood as the development or emphasis within linguistics, or the linguistic competencies developed within the curriculum. In this sense, the aim is to identify whether there is any emphasis or foundation from which to develop linguistic awareness in future teachers in training, based on the levels proposed by Nunan (1991) as cited in Seifoori, Z. (2016) which are "awareness-raising, involvement, intervention, creation, and transcendence." (p.13).

By analyzing the syllabi and curricular documents used as input, it was possible to identify that these materials address or redirect the concepts and understandings related to syntactic awareness and metalinguistic skills primarily within linguistics-related courses, that is, subjects dedicated to the analysis of language elements. This distinction is important, as it differentiates subjects designed for English language learning from those aimed at reflecting on the structural and functional aspects of language. Here there are several examples that illustrate this differentiation.

In the curriculum of the Bachelor's Program in Modern Languages with an emphasis on English, languages will be studied from the syntactic, morphological, lexical, semantic, phonetic, phonological, and pragmatic perspectives, in three lines of specialization, which the student can select based on their training interests. Thus, students can specialize either in ELEX (Spanish as a foreign language), in a second foreign language (French, Portuguese, German, Italian, Mandarin), or in Indigenous Languages of Colombia.

[Syllabus #18. P. 9 Lines 29-35]

Linguistics: This group of subjects seeks to consolidate students' knowledge of linguistic theory and native language, essential tools for studying a foreign language and for acquiring the discipline's metalanguage.

[Syllabus #20: P. 10, 11, Lines 15-16, 1-2]

Metalinguistic awareness and psychological reality. Writing systems. The influence of the writing system on cognition. The lexicon.

[Syllabus #15: Contenido sintético. P. 183, Lines 8-10]

The previous excerpts share a common point of convergence: the syllabi emphasize the core component of foreign language teacher education, asserting that the study of language itself is the most essential focus. They present language as an object of study and reflection that strengthens the relationship between one's mother tongue and the foreign language. In this sense, the syllabi highlight the importance of addressing language through different levels of linguistic analysis: syntactic, morphological, phonological, lexical, and pragmatic.

This idea aligns with what Roth et al., (1996) proposed, as they argued that metalinguistic skills reflect an individual's ability to manipulate and understand language. Research in this field has also demonstrated this relationship, as shown in the following examples:

The proportion of grade 5 (70.34%) would indicate possible impairments in the development of the ability to evaluate the grammaticality of sentences and, likewise, possible limitations in the handling of written language, especially considering that metalinguistic skills mature with age and school use of language

[Article #1: Perspectiva socio discursiva del lenguaje. P. 327, 328, Lines , 1]

The findings in the 9- to 12-year-old group show that spelling is the metalinguistic skill most strongly related to orthographic performance. These results could suggest, in an evolutionary sense, that in the early stages of learning to write, the correct use of the orthographic system is closely related to the development of phonological awareness, an approach that would be consistent with that proposed by

Goswami (cited by Matute and Guajardo, 2012).

[Article #2: Perspectiva socio discursiva del lenguaje. P. 13, Lines 6-12]

Research based on the concept of syntactic awareness has also recognized it as a relevant skill for demonstrating one's proficiency in linguistic aspects such as syntax, phonetics, semantics, and morphology. In other words, syntactic awareness reflects the ability to analyze and understand the structure and functioning of language.

Additionally, similarities and differences can be found between the research findings and the content of the syllabi. For instance, the syllabi highlight the transfer of syntactic awareness from the learning of the mother tongue to foreign languages, as it serves as the foundation for linguistic reflection. Therefore, they include training in multiple languages to enhance analytical and comparative skills. Conversely, research has shown that the development of metalinguistic abilities positively influences the learning of a second language and simultaneously strengthens the mother tongue.

Now, to see the agreement, the following subjects apparently fit with these grammatical analyses included within the curriculums:

Lenguaje y cognición, Niveles de análisis de las lenguas I, Niveles de análisis de las lenguas II, fonética y fonología del inglés, pragmática, Applied Linguistics & ELT  
[Curriculum #10: Plan de estudios. P. 1]

Fonética y Morfología, Sintaxis y Semántica, Semiótica y Pragmática, Teoría Literaria  
[Curriculum #6: Plan de estudios. P. 1]

Lingüística General, Morfosintaxis Española I, Sociolingüística, Historia de la Lengua Inglesa,  
[Curriculum #20: Agrupación: formación en lingüística. P. 1]

As evidenced in the previous curricula, it is first observed that the number of courses focused on linguistic foundations is considerably lower than those devoted to direct foreign language learning. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by

Betancourt (2023), which indicated that undergraduate programs in foreign language teaching typically allocate only 10% of their total credits to linguistic competencies, in contrast to other curricular components. Therefore, the same pattern is repeated in these cases. However, a progressive and linear process can be observed, in which students gradually engage in analytical practices that correspond to the stages proposed by Galambos (1990): detection, correction, and explanation. In the curricula, this progression is reflected in the sequencing of courses: students first study general linguistics, where they acquire foundational knowledge; later, they move on to diagnostic and applied linguistics, where they are expected to develop the ability to explain and interpret linguistic analyses.

Following the curriculum analysis, two possible causes can be identified for the low proficiency levels in foreign language competencies among pre-service teachers. The first is that insufficient time is allocated to courses that foster linguistic analysis. The second aligns with what Gonzales (2009) suggested: even when programs include components of foreign language instruction, extended course hours, or interdisciplinary subjects involving the target language, these do not necessarily promote the development of linguistic skills as they primarily support a communicative approach. As a result, the issue of teachers demonstrating low language proficiency persists. In other words, course credits may be disproportionately allocated to electives or language didactics, which expose students to the language without encouraging critical reflection on its structure and use.

For example, there are also syllabi, such as those from the UNAD and the Universidad de Nariño, that do not explicitly address metalinguistics or metalinguistic elements. Their treatment of syntactic or meta-syntactic competencies does not hold significant relevance within the syllabus. Instead, linguistics is approached from an applied

perspective, aiming to strengthen other competencies such as pedagogical, psychosocial, and cultural skills, among others. For instance:

From this competency, the goal is for students and future English teachers to understand the series of linguistic, psychological, cultural, pedagogical, and social knowledge that allows them to develop the ability to communicate in a foreign language in a functional and interactive way.

[Syllabus #18: State of the art. P. 15 Lines 21-24]

This issue was already discussed in Chapter II by Tunmer et al., (1988), who explained that the tasks assigned to students often do not require active language control, but rather involve mechanical repetition aimed at learning the language. As a result, it remains uncertain whether students are actually developing syntactic awareness or reflecting on their learning process.

Additionally, it is important to note that although most syllabi and core curricula do not include the linguistic components previously mentioned, elective courses do exist. These electives are intended to reinforce or complement the main academic training and often offer subjects focused on the specific learning of the language. However, they are not included in the present analysis because they should not be treated as complementary courses; on the contrary, they ought to be mandatory subjects within disciplinary training.

A similar situation can be observed among pre-service teachers, who often lack formal instruction or dedicated spaces to reflect on their own language use. As a result, they may not be fully aware of whether they are using the language correctly and effectively across different forms and contexts.

### **Subcategory #3 integration of linguistics into the teaching process**

This subcategory attempts to demonstrate the level of integration of linguistics into teaching processes; that is, how higher education institutions have understood the didactics

of linguistics and how they have introduced it. The aim is to demonstrate what (Cain, 2007) proposes: Teachers must demonstrate a command of linguistics, its manipulation and deep understanding to create strategies. The idea is to establish clear expectations about what linguistics knowledge future teachers in training should acquire within their teaching.

Implementa y desarrolla las didácticas propias para la enseñanza del español a hablantes de otras lenguas • Elige y adapta los saberes de otras áreas del conocimiento para desarrollar una acertada labor docente, apoyándose en herramientas artísticas, tecnológicas y administrativas.

[Syllabus #15: Tabla de competencias genéricas. P. 13 Lines 1-85]

Las consideraciones anteriores muestran que la visión pedagógico- didáctica (formativa), no puede ni debe reducirse a una simple transmisión de conocimiento, mediante métodos rigurosos. Dicha visión debe contemplar la investigación, como un componente ineludible de la preparación profesional, la misma que ha de potenciar la formación de unos individuos que aprenden; pero que también investigan los problemas inherentes a su propio proceso de aprendizaje.

[Syllabus #17: Una Nueva Visión Pedagógico- Didáctica. P. 102 Lines 15-20]

In terms of didactics, the syllabi generally share the same discourse: the foreign language teacher is not solely limited to linguistic competence but must also integrate other areas of knowledge such as pedagogy, sociology, literature, anthropology, and psychology. Most of the reviewed examples reflect this interdisciplinary convergence. However, this approach is not incidental. It responds to educational policies such as Decree 5012 by the MEN (2009), which establishes quality standards and guidelines for teacher education programs. This decree emphasizes that teachers must receive comprehensive training that allows them to respond to contextual needs and effectively address classroom situations.

In this regard, we agree with the MEN (2017) as for teacher education should be more complementary, going beyond disciplinary knowledge to include its appropriate application in real classroom contexts. Nevertheless, it is not feasible for a curriculum to be

composed exclusively of courses dedicated to teaching methods, since, as was observed in Subcategory 1, a solid command of the target language must first be ensured. This tension within curricula has led to a noticeable shift, which becomes evident when comparing didactic courses across different programs.

Comunicación oral y escrita de español I, 65122 Fundamentos de sociología, Comunicación oral y escrita del español II, Teoría literaria y taller de literatura I, Comunicación oral y escrita del inglés II, Comunicación oral y escrita del inglés III, Psicología educativa, Comunicación oral y escrita del inglés III, Metodología de la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras, Literatura Norteamericana, Práctica Docente II, Práctica Docente  
[Curriculum #2: Malla Curricular. P. 1]

Estudios gramaticales del discurso, Experiencias lectoescritoras en la universidad, Lectura crítica, Teoría y perspectivas de análisis literario, Escritura académica, Alfabetización inicial, Tendencias contemporáneas en la investigación educativa, Didácticas de las lenguas extranjeras (P), Horizontes discursivos de la literatura española, Didácticas de la lengua propia (P), American literatures: The expanding canon, Praxis pedagógico investigativa: Implementación, Multimodality and digital resources, Praxis docente I (P), Praxis docente II (P). [Curriculum #1: Malla Curricular. P. 1]

After reviewing the courses offered in response to educational regulations such as Act 30 of 1992 and Act 1188 of 2008, as well as complying with established quality standards, it becomes evident that the curricula have indeed shifted their focus from purely linguistic disciplines to applied linguistics, as discussed at the beginning of this subcategory. In this regard, this evolution can be clearly observed in the curriculum of Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. In its earlier version, the program offered approximately 13 didactic courses, whereas the current curriculum includes around 20 courses dedicated to language didactics.

Moreover, research-related subjects have been incorporated, as the syllabi emphasizes research to apply theoretical knowledge learned in class. However, even after reviewing these programs, there remains some ambiguity concerning how to approach

foreign language didactics or how to teach the language itself. Within the provided descriptions, the existence of applied linguistics is clarified as the integration of all this knowledge mobilized through pedagogy. For example:

The field of specific knowledge is translated through four core areas: Education and Technology, Applied Linguistics, Pedagogy and Didactics, and Communication and Culture.  
[Syllabus #13: Microcurrículo Investigación. P. 3-6]

However, these descriptions set multiple questions regarding what is actually understood by language didactics. The syllabi merely state that it involves an integration of pedagogy, communication, and interculturality. Other concepts are also evident within the syllabi to achieve this transversality of knowledge, such as pedagogical interdisciplinarity.

Pedagogical interdisciplinarity: From pedagogical knowledge as the core of each program, specific knowledge is intertwined, as well as other knowledge necessary for the training of future graduates.  
[Syllabus #19: P. 39 Lines 4-6]

Designs, develops, and applies teaching tools and strategies to creatively facilitate and solve problems related to the teaching, learning, and assessment of languages.  
[Syllabus #20. P. 27 Lines 25-30]

The syllabi are very ambiguous in their description of how linguistics is taught in the courses; they simply fail to clearly state the methods and strategies used to help future teachers-in-training learn to use linguistics in their classes. La Universidad Nacional is the only one that proposes elements such as interactions, macro-skills, and autonomous processes to help foster the integration of linguistics into the teaching process.

On the other hand, there are other aspects such as cultural and intercultural knowledge. Other syllabi differ in that there is no direct integration or connection of linguistics to the classroom in the courses. Instead, they are mainstreamed through learning about teaching. That is, they expect research or practices to help strengthen the entire process of integrating linguistics and pedagogy. For example:

Student characteristics and interests, and educational policies and trends, especially linguistic ones, integrate cultural elements such as knowledge, values, customs, beliefs, habits, subjectivity, otherness, identity, wisdom, power, and discourse, among others, with more practical aspects of formal educational work such as teaching, learning, methodology, didactics, evaluation, organization, and planning.

[Syllabus #18: Aspectos curriculares. P. 36 Lines 23-28]

Research: This grouping seeks to develop competencies that allow for inquiry into different areas related to foreign language learning or to linguistics, pedagogy, literature, and culture, among others.

[Syllabus #20: Recursos físicos y de apoyo a la docencia. P. 39 Lines 26-29]

What is evident is that all the syllabi adhere to the research process to support the exploration of linguistics within the teaching process. However, for instance, in the first version of the Universidad Distrital program, the distinction between didactics and language learning was clearly separated. This separation could be one of the main factors affecting students' language proficiency, as they lack the foundational skills to begin developing their foreign language abilities and do not know yet how to manipulate the language in order to integrate it into the learning process. Consequently, pre-service teachers may find it difficult to transmit this type of knowledge effectively.

## **Category #2: Context of the program's training**

This category outlines the foundational context from which academic programs originate, providing the basis for contextualizing and constructing their curricula. As has already been stated by Gonzales (2009) it is useless to address problems from the general perspectives we have on the phenomena; the reasons must be examined, and in this case, it is the inadequate training given to foreign language teachers. Also, this section draws on the context outlined by Quiroz-Serna et al., (2025), who established that applicants to bachelor's programs in foreign languages have demonstrated low proficiency in spelling,

writing, and punctuation. According to their findings, these weaknesses stem from underdeveloped competencies in linguistics, communication, and cognition.

### **Subcategory #1 Theoretical and historical foundations of syllabuses and curriculum**

This category revealed two main findings. First, within the historical formulations presented in the syllabi, all of them adhere to the educational policies evidenced in the previous subcategories. However, each program has implemented its own particular approach to addressing problems based on its historical background. Most of them emphasize that teacher education, through research, should serve as a means to respond to the issues faced by the population. In other words, educational practices are presented as the foundation through which the syllabus allows future teachers to engage with Colombian communities, learn about their problems, and become familiar with educational regulations.

Additionally, when referring to the historical process of the syllabi in terms of whether they aim to solve the issues present in Colombian society, the documents are quite ambiguous. That is, it is not clear whether the purpose of training foreign language teachers is due to a shortage of teachers or the need for teachers with particular and diverse perspectives. This lack of clarity suggests that the historical foundation of the programs relies mainly on educational policies and the approval of curricula by the MEN (2017).

For his part, Roberts (1998, pp. 103-106) considers the following elements: a) knowledge of the subject to be taught, b) knowledge about language pedagogy (didactics), c) knowledge of pedagogy in general, d) knowledge about curriculum, e) knowledge of the teaching context and “procedural” or process knowledge.

[Syllabus #15: Elementos esenciales en la formación de docentes. P. 18 Lines 30-34]

The foregoing considerations demonstrate that the pedagogical-didactic (formative) vision cannot and should not be reduced to a simple transmission of knowledge through rigorous methods. This vision must include research as an essential component of professional development, one that fosters the training of individuals who not only learn but also investigate the problems inherent in their own learning process.

Very few documents, such as that of the Institución Universitaria Colegio Mayor del Cauca, provide a contextualized explanation of the linguistic and educational problems in Colombia and focus their foreign language teacher training on addressing these issues. In contrast, most of the other syllabi merely update their programs in accordance with regulatory requirements related to teacher competencies. The issue here, as stated by López and Bonilla (2021), is that there must be an articulation between the educational proposal and the local context; otherwise, we risk repeating the mistake of continuously applying foreign strategies that are not adapted to our own reality.

To train professionals with degrees in English as a foreign language with disciplinary, humanistic, scientific (through educational research and innovation), and technological training, committed to social, economic, political, and cultural development, and guarantors of quality educational services in Colombia.

[Syllabus #13: P. 6 Lines 25-28]

The curriculum has undergone five major self-assessment processes involving students, alumni, faculty, administrators, and management: the first took place in 2001 and 2002, the second in 2005, the third in 2007 for accreditation purposes, and the fourth and fifth in 2011 and 2013 for accreditation renewal. These five processes have allowed for in-depth reflection on the program, identification of strengths and weaknesses, and have enabled proposals for improvement plans, which are developed within the framework of the University's Global Development Plan.

[Syllabus #20: P. 26 Lines 28-35]

By reviewing all syllabi, it can also be stated that there is a lack of explicit references to the contextual problems surrounding the training of foreign language teachers, with the exception of the syllabus from Universidad del Valle, which explicitly addresses this issue. In other words, the documents do not clearly justify the need for teacher education in this field. Most of them primarily focus on the internalization of the English language and on viewing language as a sociocultural phenomenon that requires acquisition

and understanding within its social context. They clearly focus on the renewal of programs that have been developed over several years, as in the case of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, which is currently in its fifth program revision. However, some institutions directly address the specific problems and needs of the Colombian community in offering bachelor's degree programs in foreign languages, as illustrated in the following example:

In this regard, several strategies have been established aimed at professional development, with training plans for language teachers, seeking to strengthen teaching and learning skills. Despite these efforts, by 2015, the need to increase the number of English language teachers specifically required for primary and secondary education became evident.

[Syllabus #15: P. 18, 19 Lines 21-23, 1-2]

There are other examples, such as the Universidad del Valle, which specifies that its proposal for language training in both English and indigenous languages arises from the importance of promoting and preserving Colombia's native languages. This approach seeks to foster reflection on metalinguistics, "allowing students to approach language as an object of study. This training simultaneously opens the door to metalinguistic reflection, which is of particular importance in the study of languages" (Universidad del Valle, 2020, p. 23). In this sense, it becomes evident that the program's orientation is not necessarily based on a specific national need.

Furthermore, these programs fully comply with current legal provisions, such as Act 30 of 1992, Act 1188 of 2008, Decree 5012 of 2009, Resolution No. 6663 of August 2, 2010, the Quality Guidelines for Bachelor's Degrees in Education (MEN, May 5, 2014), and Resolution 18583 of 2017, all issued by the MEN. These regulations define and establish the foundations for basic, primary, and higher education in Colombia. They also serve as a framework for curricular diversification, as in the case of Universidad de Nariño, which includes training in indigenous languages within its academic structure. Among the

similarities found in the aspirations of their future teachers is the constant search for an investigation into or treatment of language as an object of study: "To provide sociocultural, educational, and research training that enables the analysis of environmental problems and their commitment to solving them." (Universidad de Nariño, p. 37, 2017). However, the goal was to find a profile that would be more suited to solve specific problems in Colombia, as teachers trained to raise language standards in the country. However, the only thing found closest was the ability to reflect on their environment (Universidad del Valle, 2020).

In conclusion, although this category is made explicit within the curricula, it directly addresses commitments that go more towards the transformation of realities or research into language. Not in a disciplinary manner, but rather in terms of didactics and its teaching. However, few syllabi make a connection with the historical problems affecting Colombian context and population.

### **Subcategory # 2 Objectives of the academic program and its contribution to the Colombian community**

This section seeks to highlight how future foreign language teachers are expected to contribute to society. The goal is to explore, through a comparative analysis, the pedagogical strategies proposed within these programs to promote the bilingual education envisioned for Colombia, as suggested by Galindo and Botero (2016). In most syllabi, the common proposal is always to train a graduate in a foreign language so that they can contribute to innovation within culture and society as a mediating entity, as clarified in the following excerpts:

To train a graduate in foreign languages with an emphasis on English and French, who is an autonomous and creative professional, who can teach these two languages in basic secondary and secondary

education, who is a linguistic and cultural mediator with a social vision of languages and cultures, who is familiar with the educational reality of our country and who carries out their academic activity with critical awareness and ethical commitment.

[Syllabus #11: P. 39 Lines 24-38]

To train foreign language teachers who are able to reflect on aspects of the language, its pedagogy, its culture, and who can promote change through research and daily work as educators.

[Syllabus #20: State of the art. P. 7 Lines 1-3]

It can be observed that the analyzed syllabi demonstrate their contribution to Colombian society by aiming to train teachers who respond to the country's needs. Although this statement remains somewhat ambiguous, it can be interpreted that these programs seek to prepare teachers capable of addressing the challenges present in their specific contexts. This aligns with the educational policies that define the competencies teachers must develop, as established by Act 1188 of 2008. However, as previously discussed, all the syllabi—except for that of the Institución Universitaria Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca—fail to explore this issue in depth. These competencies, nevertheless, can be identified within their curricula and the subjects offered, particularly through the pedagogical components.

On the other hand, a comparison of the syllabi revealed that the vast majority aim to develop sociocultural competencies that promote multilingual and intercultural understanding, demonstrating progress towards the goal of bilingual education. The purpose is to foster respect for linguistic diversity and to develop the ability to communicate in multiple languages within specific social and cultural contexts (MEN, 2017).

Our Bachelor's degree program ensures that future teachers develop disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, enabling them to adequately train for teaching and learning processes, research, peaceful conflict resolution, appropriation and pedagogical use of new technologies, interculturality, and awareness of the environment with a critical and analytical understanding of the events occurring within it.

[Syllabus #15: Contenidos curriculares. P. 23, Lines 23-27]

The professional practice of teaching English and French as foreign languages is relevant to contemporary society, as they are qualified to teach English and French to promote cultural diversity, multilingualism, intercultural awareness, democracy, and equity in their environment.

[Syllabus #11: Aspectos contextuales. P. 2, Lines 9-12]

Although teaching work is oriented towards the contribution of the country's educational institutions, as indicated by the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, one of the main benefits of teacher training in language is to help research the improvement of those competencies that encompass the discipline, such as writing, reading, listening, etc. For example, most research within the field of language degrees focuses on the didactics of the discipline, as in the following examples.

Ultimately, the goal is to train professionals with organizational skills and competencies that allow them not only to actively participate in institutional educational projects, but also to contribute to the design of development projects in foreign languages at all levels.

[Syllabus #11: 14 Lines 1-4]

Competencias comunicativas, lengua materna, didáctica, didactics of English, methodology in foreign language teaching, teaching english to children, adolescents and adults, teacher development, integral pedagogical practice, technology in foreign language teaching

[Curriculum #13: Malla curricular P. 1]

According to the previous excerpts, it is evident that the curricula show a strong emphasis on research in language didactics or on subjects specifically related to language teaching methodologies. This focus may be shifting or biasing linguistic research towards didactic approaches, thereby reducing attention to other linguistic dimensions that could enrich teacher education programs (MEN, 2017). This not only enables the implementation of new strategies that are not only based on didactics, but also the exploration of linguistics, metalinguistics, and all the skills deployed to aid understanding of the language phenomenon, as explained by Caín (2007).

In this sense, there should be curricula that place greater emphasis on linguistics or grammar-related courses in order to avoid what Roth et al. (1996) refers to as grammar-empty productions, which do not necessarily reflect progress in language competence. In other words, it is possible that, due to bilingualism policies, Colombia has transitioned towards a more lexical and didactic curriculum, leaving aside the linguistic depth required for comprehensive language mastery.

### **Subcategory # 3 Research in TEFL programs addresses the needs**

As López and Bonilla (2021) previously emphasized, it is essential to employ methodologies, research approaches, and innovations that are native to the national context, rather than replicating foreign models that may not align with Colombia's educational realities. In this sense, the data presented in the documents reveals that graduates are expected to become future teachers who conduct research in areas such as language, interculturality, and pedagogical training, with the goal of critically examining their professional practice. The academic programs aim to prepare teachers who are actively engaged in research in order to contribute meaningfully to their communities, as clarified in the following examples:

Graduates will possess strong communicative competence in a foreign language, research and intercultural skills, and training in its pedagogy. These competencies will enable them to be teachers, users, and analysts of the foreign language. They will also be able to understand and value their own culture and foreign cultures, integrate a research-oriented and reflective approach into their professional practice, and lead initiatives in their field.

[Syllabus #20: Perfil del aspirante y del egresado. P. 7 Lines 16-20]

In the first macro strategy, the relationship between the trainer or guide with the teacher apprentice is directly related to how the graduate will develop their work.

[Syllabus #15: Fundamentación Teórica en la Formación de Docentes en Español e Inglés . P. 25  
Lines 25- 26]

After analyzing the syllabi, it can be stated that they are oriented towards formative research aimed at understanding social contexts. A common denominator among the research objectives is the intention to address and provide solutions to social issues. Therefore, it can be concluded that, although the programs attempt to extend research towards social contexts and social responsibility, the focus is not necessarily directed towards a specific topic. Research is commonly conceived as a comprehensive process of inquiry, rather than something limited to a single topic. However, it was also found that certain syllabi, such as that of the Universidad del Valle, present a variation characterized by a more pragmatic approach, emphasizing the regional demand for language teachers. This contrasts with other programs that focus on developing formal research projects aligned with labor market needs.

Students have the opportunity to participate in the School's research groups, or to join the Research Seedbeds program, or to develop degree projects framed within the projects of the professors of these groups: Applied Linguistics Research Team (EILA), Bilingualism and Bilingual Education Research Group, Textuality and Cognition Research Group (GITECLE), Amerindian and Afro-American Linguistics Studies Group (GELAA), Reading Writing and Thinking Research Group and Translation and Terminology Research Group (TRADUTERM).

[Syllabus #11: Preparación y ejecución del Trabajo de Grado: P. 55 Lines 21-29]

Thus, research on bilingual education in the public sector in Colombia is still in an exploratory and descriptive stage. Empirical models exist that describe, among other aspects, the policies and practices of teaching and learning foreign and second languages, the contextual influence on the development of different types of bilingual and foreign language programs, and, finally, methodological aspects that influence the development of bilingual processes.

[Article #2: Introducción: P. 315 Lines 15-22]

By examining the previous excerpts, it becomes evident that the documents coincide in highlighting students' opportunities to participate in research groups which explore areas related to applied linguistics, bilingual education, and other fields. In this sense, the syllabi

demonstrate a clear orientation towards diverse branches of research that effectively integrate pedagogical theory with practice. However, as Article #2 suggests, these research initiatives are not yet fully consolidated, since bilingual education in the Colombian context is still in a developmental stage. This situation may explain, as Charnie (2013) points out, why programs tend to rely on external models and frameworks to design strategies suitable for the local context. For example:

English and French Assistants: Every year, English and French assistants arrive from Anglophone and Francophone countries through international cooperation agreements between the Colombian government, Fulbright, and the French government, which select university professionals with sensitivities and training in foreign languages to strengthen the training processes of graduates in foreign languages.

[Article #11: Estrategias pedagógicas y metodológicas: P. 66 Lines 30-34]

Conversation clubs are informal settings that allow for interaction with the language through activities such as forums, films, and more. They are aimed at undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty, staff, and people from outside the university. They are led by international teaching assistants from the programs who dedicate two hours of their weekly workload to these activities.

[Syllabus #20: Actividades que favorecen la formación integral por Área: P. 28 Lines 8-12]

The programs share a common feature in their research focus: the intention to strengthen foreign language competencies by relying on external references and models to design their methodologies. For instance, the practice of bringing native language assistants to promote bilingual activities reflects the fragile bilingual culture that, as mentioned in Article #2, still characterizes the Colombian context. This raises an important question: Is it possible to promote a bilingual environment without depending on native speakers of the target language?

The research projects developed within these programs clearly contribute to this goal, as they encourage students to immerse themselves in foreign language research environments. This approach represents a more autonomous and reflective perspective,

similar to what Wenden (2002) describes as language awareness. As she argues, merely living with a language does not necessarily imply being aware of it. Research, therefore, plays a crucial role in fostering greater reflection and critical awareness about language use and learning.

On the other hand, there are research processes that truly go far beyond mere research projects in didactics, which become vital for teacher training. For example, the Universidad del Valle says it includes its own students as objects of study; exploring their own practices helps to review and understand the phenomena they must address.

The implementation of research processes in the classrooms of the Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Languages program includes a variety of actions, ranging from formal training activities within classroom research seminars to projects carried out by teachers that involve students as objects of study or as participants in the inquiry process.

[Syllabus #11: Investigación en el aula. [P. 72, Lines 9-14]

### **Category #3 Innovative proposals for the training of foreign language teachers**

The following category aimed to examine, within the syllabi, the distinctive features offered to future language teachers in training to support the development of their professional profile. In this regard, the subcategories considered included the lines of innovation and the additional dimensions incorporated to contribute to the creation of a comprehensive curriculum, as noted by Charnie (2013).

#### **Subcategory #1 Didactics and new training for language teachers**

Within the didactic approaches and proposals observed in the reviewed syllabi, it was evident that there was an emphasis on Spanish as a foreign language, which was theoretically transferred later to the learning of other foreign languages. Although most curricula include languages such as French, English, German, and indigenous languages, it

is important to note that some programs have made the effort to incorporate elements that respond to the specific needs of the population, such as sign language. In contrast, earlier curricula did not include this type of subject, unlike the more recent ones. For example:

Comunicación oral y escrita de español I, Comunicación oral y escrita del español II, Curso básico de gramática inglesa II, Comunicación oral y escrita del español III, Comunicación oral y escrita del inglés II, Comunicación oral y escrita del inglés II [Curriculum #2: Malla Curricular. [P. 1,]

Desarrollo Comunicativo en Lengua Materna, Narración y Mundos Posibles, , Exposición y Representación del Mundo, Argumentación, [Curriculum #3: plan de estudios créditos. [P. 1,]

After reviewing the curricula as examples, a clear pattern emerged regarding the evolution of didactic courses. Previously, for instance, the curriculum of the Universidad Distrital included didactic subjects focused solely on the mother tongue and foreign languages, which did not promote any particular comprehensive competency. In contrast, the current curricula are structured differently. For example, in the curricula of the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional and Universidad La Gran Colombia, courses are offered in areas such as sociolinguistics, psychology, personal development components, and transversal competencies. These represent new contributions aimed at training teachers more holistically. This evolution aligns with the theory of public education policies described by Gonzales (2009), who noted that, due to new regulations—such as Resolution 18583 of 2017 and Decree 2012 of 2009—programs have developed a vision more oriented towards creating comprehensive competencies that effectively prepare teachers for classroom performance.

This, it is evident that there are programs that address the levels of syntactic awareness described by Nunan (1991). Clearly, there has been a shift from viewing language primarily as a skill to emphasizing its strategic use as a tool that promotes deeper understanding and reflection. In this sense, the curricular proposals for training future

language teachers are grounded in a reflective approach that integrates two complementary dimensions. The cognitive dimension emphasizes the learners' reflective engagement with their own learning processes, allowing them to analyze and construct knowledge based on personal experience. The social dimension, in turn, situates this reflection within the educational context, particularly the classroom, which serves as a space where graduates of foreign languages practice and apply their professional skills

In conclusion, it can be stated that social factors play a significant role in shaping the design of a syllabus. Although most programs follow a similar structure in terms of disciplinary, pedagogical, language teaching, and complementary components, each syllabus incorporates specific features to address particular needs. These may include training in Spanish as a foreign language, instruction in indigenous languages, modifications to the curriculum through the micro-curriculum, or adjustments in modality to better serve the target population. In other words, if a future teacher is expected to teach Spanish in non-Spanish-speaking communities, the program ensures that they are adequately prepared to operate effectively in that context.

### **Subcategory # 2 Solving community problems in the future**

Across the reviewed syllabi and the curricula, a recurring concern is the identification and assessment of students' foreign language proficiency levels. Given the challenge of accurately determining these levels, many programs, implement semester-long evaluations and specific benchmarks to guide learning objectives. More broadly, the curricula and syllabi analyzed also demonstrate diverse approaches to structuring teacher education programs. While all share a focus on disciplinary, pedagogical, and language-teaching components, they vary in features such as the inclusion of Spanish as a foreign

language, bilingual or indigenous language training, curriculum flexibility, and the modality of delivery (in-person or virtual).

This overview highlights the efforts of Colombian universities to standardize competencies in language teaching while simultaneously adapting to contextual needs and program-specific goals. Such adaptations allow future teachers to develop the skills necessary to operate effectively in different educational environments, from local classrooms to multicultural and multilingual settings.

In order to achieve a good level of English among students and future graduates of the Bachelor's degree in English as a Foreign Language, a series of exams are proposed to allow both the Bachelor's degree program and the students to progress in their learning process and mastery of English.

[Syllabus #13: Exámenes para visualizar dominio de lengua inglesa. [P. 59 Lines 6-9]

Not all the syllabi proposes a structured progression of English proficiency assessments and courses to guide the training of future language teachers. In the case of UNAD, initially, the KET is administered at the program entry level, followed by the PET for learners at the A2 stage. Advanced students then undertake the FCE and CAE examinations, with operational proficiency in English assessed through TOEFL or IELTS at the C1 level. This sequence is designed as an interpretative framework to facilitate the proper placement of incoming students and to ensure systematic development of language competencies

Such a structured approach aims to address issues previously identified in teacher evaluation processes, as highlighted in the Colombia Very Well report (2015–2025), which noted significant challenges due to incomplete or insufficient records of English teacher proficiency. Additionally, a recurring concern identified in the syllabi analysis is the lack of clarity regarding classroom language instruction, including questions of what content to

teach and how to teach it effectively. This gap suggests that, while proficiency levels are well-defined, the curriculum does not always provide sufficient guidance on instructional strategies or classroom application (Valencia, 2025).

On the other hand, it is evident then that the dynamics of practice and research are conceived as a primary field of exploration in which future teachers learn to apply their knowledge. Confronting authentic or significant problems compels teachers to engage critically with the challenges they face, promoting reflective thinking and problem-solving skills that are essential for effective teaching. By interacting with real contexts, preservice teachers develop both cognitive and social competencies, as they learn not only what to teach but also how to adapt their teaching to the needs of diverse learners.

In conclusion, the syllabi reviewed consistently propose strategies to address the challenges present in educational environments. Although these strategies are not always explicitly stated, they are implicit in the design of the curricula. Examples include the assessment of preservice teachers' language proficiency through standardized tests and the integration of practical experiences that allow them to experiment with teaching methodologies. Such approaches foster a learning environment in which theoretical knowledge and practical application are intertwined, preparing future teachers to respond creatively and effectively to real-world educational problems.

### **Subcategory # 3 Reproduction and production of knowledge to reality: Implications for language research**

Across the analyzed documents, commonalities emerged in the nature and purpose of the research conducted. A recurring finding is that research activities are designed not only to generate knowledge but also to reinforce pedagogical understanding, helping

preservice teachers reflect on how to teach and how to implement effective instructional practices. This pattern illustrates that, regardless of the specific institution or curriculum, research is consistently integrated as a tool to support both theoretical and practical aspects of teacher training.

The main purpose of research training is to provide students with strategies to enrich and value their pedagogical work and to engage in ongoing reflection on their practices.

[Syllabus #20: [P. 32 Lines 1-3]

Undoubtedly, many of the advances occurring around the world in some way reflect the work that begins in classrooms. Therefore, research emerges as an alternative, which, among other things, should contribute to improving learning environments and civic coexistence

[Syllabus #16:P. 32 Lines 4-7]

However, research is not used solely to reinforce pedagogical work. To fully understand the phenomenon of language, it is necessary not only to examine how it is taught but also to conduct investigations within the disciplines themselves. For instance, the study by Galindo and Botero (2016) explored the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and student outcomes. Their findings revealed a clear connection between low spelling proficiency and a limited level of metalinguistic awareness, highlighting the importance of investigating language phenomena both theoretically and in practice.

The results also show a significant relationship between spelling performance and the cognitive ability of processing speed and the metalinguistic ability of phonological awareness.

[Article #2:Conclusiones [P. 15 Lines 22-24]

Furthermore, it is evident that the distinction between conscious and unconscious thought, which underlies metalinguistic skills, has been addressed in Colombian research. In this regard, Tunmer (1991) states that the development of metalinguistic skills is influenced by two factors: the general change in the child's cognitive abilities during early childhood and one of the Piagetian stages that corresponds to the emergence of operational thinking. This distinction reflects the observation that, at times, students actively reflect on

language, while at other times this awareness develops implicitly. When related to the curricula and syllabi reviewed, this concept is manifested in several ways. Many programs incorporate activities, assessments, and research projects that encourage pre-service teachers to engage in reflective practice, such as language proficiency tests, observation of classroom dynamics, and the design of teaching interventions. These elements provide structured opportunities for future teachers to become aware of their own metalinguistic processes, thereby fostering both conscious and unconscious engagement with language. In this way, the curricula translate theoretical insights from research into practical strategies that guide teacher formation.

Finally, the concept of metacognition has been applied in various fields, including memory, attention, learning, and language. Metalinguistic skills are a subdomain of metacognition, defined as the language user's ability to, first, treat language as an object and, second, reflect on the particularities of its components in order to manipulate them, regardless of their meaning. Furthermore, the cognitive operations of reflection and manipulation are deliberate, although it is difficult to detect when the language user performs them intentionally.

[Article #1: Habilidades metalingüísticas. [P. 318, Lines 1-11]

In this sense, research on syntactic awareness and metalinguistic skills is crucial because, as Quiroz-Serna et al.,z (2025) demonstrated, metalinguistic awareness significantly enhances writing, composition, and punctuation skills. Similarly, Galindo and Botero (2016), highlighted that low metalinguistic awareness correlates with difficulties in linguistic performance, underscoring the need to integrate these skills in educational programs. For example:

Para finalizar, teniendo en cuenta que los resultados evidencian una superioridad del grado 5° sobre el grado 2° en todas las pruebas excepto en aquellas en L2 que están relacionadas con el juicio a oraciones agramaticales y asemánticas (operación metalingüística de control), y con el juicio a oraciones agramaticales y semánticas (operación metalingüística de análisis),

However, despite their importance, syntactic awareness and metalinguistic skills remain mainly underexplored in the Colombian context. Gaviria and Ramírez Espinosa (2024) point out that, although teachers are exposed to complex social realities, their role in educational decision-making is limited. Consequently, many curricula and syllabi for English as a foreign language provide minimal opportunities for developing these skills. In conclusion, while research exists demonstrating the benefits of metalinguistic awareness, it is still limited, and its integration into teacher training programs is almost negligible, with few courses explicitly designed to foster the development of these critical language competencies.

#### **CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

In order to answer the question and approach the main objective in which this state-of-the-art study laid its foundations, three specific objectives were proposed.

In addressing the first objective, the data revealed that syntactic awareness is not explicitly treated as a key concept within the competencies that pre-service foreign language teachers are expected to develop. Instead, syllabi tend to emphasize metalinguistic skills, of which syntactic awareness forms a part, rather than focusing on the concept itself. For this reason, this study traced evidence of syntactic awareness through its implicit presence across different syllabi.

In this regard, the integration of metalinguistic skills within syllabi and curricula is mainly reflected in linguistics-related courses. These subjects foster an understanding of language structures and, consequently, contribute to the development of metalinguistic

awareness. However, a challenge emerges: university curricula in Colombia are no longer primarily linguistic in nature but have been reorganized around the specific competencies that foreign language teachers are expected to acquire. This shift results from the emphasis introduced by the Ministry of Education through Resolution 18583 of 2017, which redefined the competencies required in undergraduate foreign language teaching programs. Consequently, the importance of linguistics-based courses has diminished in favor of those focused on language didactics.

However, it is important to highlight the use of courses classified as electives. Through these elective offerings, programs intend for students to enroll in them to develop and complement their linguistic training. Nevertheless, it must be clarified that these subjects do not belong to the core of the disciplinary line. As previously mentioned, they should, in fact, be mandatory. Extracurricular training is another method that syllabi rely on to help strengthen students' language proficiency.

In terms of the second objective, which explored the historical development of syntactic awareness, several key findings were identified. First, the design of syllabi in higher education institutions has been shaped by national needs, specifically, the demand for qualified English teachers to address the shortage highlighted in the Colombia Very Well (2015) policy. Additionally, the Institución Universitaria Colegio Mayor del Cauca (2021) reported that beyond simply training English teachers, it is essential to ensure that teachers achieve the required language proficiency level (between B2 and C1) to close the gap represented by the 48% of foreign language graduates who do not currently meet these standards. Second, the historical evolution of TEFL syllabi shows that they have incorporated diverse strategies to promote foreign language proficiency. Some programs

include courses in Spanish as a foreign language to support the transfer of linguistic and metalinguistic competencies from the native to the target language, aligning with Gombert's (1992) postulates on the functions of metalinguistic awareness. However, there is little evidence that programs explicitly evaluate whether teacher candidates develop the ability to manipulate language forms, which would demonstrate their linguistic competence. To address this, universities have implemented complementary measures such as foreign language proficiency exams and micro-curricular courses designed to strengthen language skills. In addition, the CEFR proficiency levels have been adjusted to better reflect the Colombian educational context.

In response to the third objective, the proposed integration of syntactic awareness into TEFL program development involves three major considerations derived from the state-of-the-art analysis. Firstly, modifications to the CEFR are necessary. While the CEFR remains a valuable benchmark for assessing foreign language proficiency, its competency descriptors do not fully align with the linguistic realities of Colombian higher education. For instance, Quiroz-Serna, et al., (2025) highlighted that incoming students in foreign language teaching programs often lack adequate proficiency in basic native language skills such as reading and writing, which limits their success in learning a foreign language. Therefore, universities should adapt to the CEFR to more accurately categorize students' proficiency levels. Secondly, syllabi must be contextual. While it is true that some syllabi adapted the curriculum to understand Colombian needs, not many clarified the context from which they originated or justified the program's relevance to that context. Most focused on the general idea of the globalization of language and the need to learn English because we need to connect Colombians with the world. However, before connecting them, the national

problems must be solved, since many graduates can be trained, but that does not cover the gap in language proficiency expected for the public and private sectors. Thirdly, foreign language research must aim to be more aware of the needs of the Colombian population. In other words, foreign language research cannot be expected to be based solely on classroom experience. Since most programs aim to ensure that future teachers-in-training learn to teach directly through their practice and research, it is true that empirical experience helps strengthen knowledge. However, it is evident that there is no clear connection between what is being learned in linguistics and research. Even though teachers-in-training receive courses in foreign language didactics, they do not know how to approach teaching in the classroom (Lopez, Bonilla, 2021).

Finally, the adaptation of the CEFR, the context, or relevance with which a TEFL program is offered, must be taken into account, and research should be oriented towards foreign language teaching and not prioritizing it on newly learning to teach in a foreign language. These elements are necessary to help incorporate syntactic awareness and metalinguistic skills into the curriculum, since if we want teachers who innovate in the educational field, they must have a command of the language to be able to create tools that address their perspectives on understanding the language.

### **Implications**

Foreign language teaching training in Colombia is growing steadily, even reaching the famous bilingual education system in some sectors, which is still in its infancy in Bogotá because the necessary environment for its implementation does not exist yet. However, training future foreign language teachers who can achieve a foreign language

proficiency level that meets the required standards will help gradually close the gap in language proficiency in schools and universities.

In this sense, syntactic awareness is an element that has not been widely explored within the Colombian undergraduate sphere. There are various studies on syntactic and metalinguistic awareness in postgraduate work, which reflect the limited research conducted on disciplinary concepts in initial teacher training. Most focus on didactic elements and innovations in foreign language teaching without having in mind the specifics of what is needed. Hence, how can you investigate whether or not a teaching method is useful if you do not have the competence in either your native or foreign language to make the teaching method work as a strategy and progress?

### **Limitations of the study**

Research on university syllabi presented numerous challenges when it came to development. Within this state of the art, the main problem was the acquisition of input documents because universities have privacy concerns regarding the content taught in each one. Therefore, when attempts were made to obtain syllabi, not all universities were open to providing the analyzed content or the program's educational projects. Therefore, this kind of research must be conducted with an administrative process -which pre-service teachers may not access to- in order to request the documents.

Also, due to the limited research on linguistic concepts in Colombia at the undergraduate level, it was difficult to find relevant information for the research. As previously stated, most documents discuss metalinguistic abilities and do not explore specific skills such as syntactic awareness, phonetic awareness, or pragmatic awareness.

Although these are important skills, as they determine whether a person has the ability to reflect on the elements of language, they are not used or mentioned directly; it seems as though their existence is almost nonexistent within syllabi.

### **Further Research**

This research raises further questions about TEFL syllabi in Colombia. Since not all documentation could be accessed to, it would be pertinent to ask:

At what specific point did syllabi and curricula begin to shift towards the intercultural competencies reflected in the current syllabuses?

Furthermore, it would be pertinent to investigate the results currently generated by the shift from subjects focused on linguistics to language didactics. It would also be pertinent to consider what the future needs of the Colombian population might be, since many of the strategies implemented by national bilingualism plans have involved bringing in native English speakers to increase the level of foreign language proficiency. With this in mind, could a native English speaker in Colombian universities create the same strategies that a non-native English speaker uses to share their knowledge with their students? This could be an interesting path to follow as these are metalinguistic skills that are developed then learning foreign languages.

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