

Instructional Design and English Learning Standards

DESCRIBING TWO TEACHERS' INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FOR
LANGUAGE TEACHING AND ITS RELATION TO COLOMBIAN STANDARDS
FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

DIEGO ALEJANDRO VELÁSQUEZ MARTINEZ
FRANCISCO JAVIER HOLGUIN CARDONA

UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA
FACULTAD DE BELLAS ARTES Y HUMANIDADES
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DIEGO VELASQUEZ
FRANCISCO HOLGUIN

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Asesor:
Profesor: Frank Giraldo

UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA
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RESUMEN

Este proyecto de investigación tuvo como objetivos la descripción del modelo metodológico que dos profesores de inglés de un colegio público de Pereira utilizan en las clases de inglés que orientan. Un segundo objetivo fue asociar ese modelo metodológico con los estándares presentes en el documento *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer*.

Los resultados que nuestro proyecto arrojó fueron que las sesiones son predominantemente concentradas en objetivos relacionados con temas gramaticales, y los objetivos del currículo manejado por el colegio son principalmente comunicativos. Por lo tanto, los estudiantes desarrollan mayormente la competencia lingüística mejor que la competencia pragmática y la sociolingüística. Esto fue evidenciado a través de las observaciones a las sesiones de inglés en el colegio.

A través de entrevistas, y el currículo manejado por el colegio, no hay relación entre lo que mencionan los profesores, lo que hacen, y lo que esperan hacer basados en el currículo. Además, no hay relación entre el diseño de instrucción para el grado asignado y los estándares de inglés Colombianos según el nivel del grado.

ABSTRACT

Our research project's main objectives were two. First, we wanted to describe the instructional design implemented by two teachers at a public high school in Pereira, Risaralda, Colombia. And second, it was our desire to be able to associate such instructional design to the language learning standards established by the Colombian Ministry of National Education in the document *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer*.

The findings in our project tell us that the lessons were predominantly concentrated on objectives dealing with grammar topics, and the objectives from the high school's curriculum are principally communicative. Therefore, learners develop mostly the linguistic competence rather than the pragmatic and sociolinguistic ones. This was evidenced through the observations to English language sessions in the high school.

Through interviews, and the curriculum managed by the high school, there is no relation between what the teachers mention, what they do and what they are expected to do based on the language curriculum. Besides, there is no relation between the instructional design for the grade assigned and the standards for learning English in Colombia according to the grade's level.

DEDICATION

We would like to dedicate this, first to God for guiding us to the right path; second to our families to give us support throughout the career; third to our friends to cheer us up during this process, and fourth, but not the least, to our great advisor Frank Giraldo to help us for the sake of this project.

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To all of the Licenciatura's teachers for being part of our growing as English teachers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through our research project, which we describe fully in this document, we wish to present a study conducted at a public high school in Pereira, Risaralda, Colombia.

Institutional, academic and research oriented reasons were arguments for our study. Informing the field of language teaching of what is happening at the classroom level in relation to the Colombian standards for learning English and informing language teaching programs in Colombia became major reasons to do a research study of this kind. What is more, since the participant teachers in our research study wanted to know about their own teaching from an outsider perspective, we felt our project could help them do so.

The two-fold purpose of this study was to describe the instructional characteristics of two Colombian teachers of English and the relation these characteristics had with language learning standards in this country. We designed two research questions for our project:

1. What is the instructional design implemented by two teachers at a public high school in Pereira?
2. In what ways does the instructional design relate to the Colombian Standards for learning English?

Theory taken from constructs such as approaches and method design in language teaching and communicative competence were highly relevant to conduct our inquiry.

We followed a qualitative research paradigm in a case study. The study was carried out with two English teachers from a public high school in Pereira, Risaralda, Colombia. We used three data collection instruments: Classroom observations, interviews, and the language curriculum document of the school.

The findings in our study show the field that in the state schools, language teaching and language learning should be reinforced and more carefully articulated in order to achieve what is required by Ministry of National Education (MEN for its acronym in Spanish – *Ministerio Educación Nacional*).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 2006, the Ministry of National Education in Colombia (to which we will refer as MEN¹) published a document titled *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer*². This document has adopted and adapted the language learning standards established in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (Council of Europe, 2001). By doing so, the teaching and learning of English in Colombia has taken an approach to language, which, based on the standards established in the aforementioned document, conceives language as not only structure but also as function and interaction (see Richards and Rodgers, 1999 and Brown, 2001). Learners are expected to develop the English language for communicative purposes, for example, *describing themselves and other people, conversing with other people, writing short stories*, among others.

The document sets out the Colombian context for learning, explaining that one of the aims of the project is to introduce Colombian citizens to global trends of communication. The document then gives arguments as to why learn English in Colombia, explains how the standards have been divided into different levels, and finally, defines the construct of communicative competence, relevant for the whole project of learning English in Colombia. The last part of the document presents the lists of standards according to grade groups and levels, all of which are grades 1 to 3, beginner level, 4 to 5, basic level 1, 6 to 7, basic level 2, 8 to 9, pre-intermediate level 1, and 10 to 11, pre-intermediate level 2. The standards are divided into language skills, the first of them being listening, followed by reading, writing, monologues (speaking), and conversation (talking to and with others).

If we are to look at the standards more closely, we can conclude that the traditional view of language as structure, typical of methods such as the

¹ MEN: Ministerio de Educación Nacional

² Our translation: Basic standards for foreign languages: English. Educating in foreign languages: The challenge! What we need to know and know how to do.

grammar translation method, the audiolingual method, and situational language teaching, is only a part of the standards. As we have briefly commented elsewhere, language is also function in which structural elements (grammar, pronunciation, syntax, etc) are used communicatively. The standards below have been taken from the document to be used as examples of language as function; translations follow each standard:

1. *Nombro algunas cosas que puedo hacer y que no puedo hacer.*

I state some things I can do and some things I cannot do. (Grades 1 to 3)

2. *Sustento mis opiniones, planes y proyectos.*

I give arguments for my opinions, plans and projects. (Grades 10 to 11)

As can be noticed in the standards above, grammar has a function for the communication of personal meaning: *can* and *cannot* to express ability or lack of it in # 1 and language chunks such as *I believe*, *I will do it because*, etc and future tenses (going to and will) in # 2 to express opinions, plans, and projects with their corresponding arguments and/or reasons for said actions.

From an interactional perspective of language, we can observe the following two standards:

1. *Respondo a preguntas sobre personas, objetos y lugares de mi entorno.*

I respond to questions about people, objects and places of my surroundings. (Grades 1 to 3).

2. *Participo espontáneamente en conversaciones sobre temas de mi interés utilizando un lenguaje claro y sencillo.*

I participate spontaneously in conversations which are about topics of my interest, using language which is clear and simple.

We can therefore conclude that, according to the standards established by MEN, the English language should be used as a means of communicating information about oneself and others, talking to and with others about relevant topics.

The blended conception of language, in language approaches such as structure, as function, and as interaction, demands language teachers to adopt such approaches and take them to language learning events planned by themselves. Language learning should not be focused only on grammatical patterns and vocabulary items. Students in Colombian schools and high schools are expected to learn how to do things with language, and not only know about language. Language teachers are needed to perform a much more holistic role in teaching English, seeing this language as a means of expressing thought and as a medium of communication and interaction with others. Such features of language, then, require the teacher to plan varied activities so that students develop communicative competence, which has, since the 1970s become the focus of language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.66)³. All teachers in Colombian schools and high schools are expected to implement listening activities so students are exposed to spoken English and understand it, reading activities so students can interact with written texts and comprehend what they tell us, writing activities to communicate through the written mode, speaking activities so they can express themselves orally, and conversation activities so students can interact with others.

Given this instructional picture for learning English, the present research project is intended to observe the different teaching practices which two teachers at a public high school develop and compare them to what they say they do as well as to what is written in both the document called El Reto and the language curriculum (Brown, 1995) stated by the school. We will interview the two teachers, we will observe them, and we will analyze written documents with two purposes in mind:

1. To define what instructional design, or method design, (Richards and Rodgers, 1999) the teachers use and
2. To establish how the procedures in the instructional design used by the teachers relate to the standards for learning English in Colombia.

³ This concept of communicative competence will be defined in the relevant terms definitions chapter

The results of our study can inform our field of what happens in a micro-community in relation to language teaching and learning in Colombia, but, since it is a case study, the findings most likely are not replicable in other contexts. Our findings can serve as a point of reference for further study in teacher education courses in language teaching programs in Colombia, for example in the Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira; more specifically, the students in the practicum courses can benefit from our findings. Finally, the findings can also tell us what approach to language the teachers in our study seem to have, what communicative competence(s) seem to be the major focus in their lessons, and what standards are mostly targeted in the class observations we carried out. The teachers in the school where we conducted our research can also benefit from our findings given the fact that they were always willing to help us and eager to know what results the project could shed. Therefore, their teaching practices can be strengthened and further analyzed thanks to what we can tell them based on our findings.

All in all, the study seeks to describe two teachers' practices involving language teaching in a public high school.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

Describing what happened at the classroom level, the teachers' conceptions of what they do and the policies established in the school's language curriculum and national policies were fundamental for our study.

Once the descriptions were made, drawing connections between what happens in class, what teachers say and official documents produced our findings conclusions for the study.

We sought to know the instructional design of two English teachers and how what they did in class and said held a relationship with the standards for learning English in Colombia.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3. What is the instructional design implemented by two teachers at a public high school in Pereira?
4. In what ways does the instructional design relate to the Colombian Standards for learning English?

4.1 OBJECTIVES

General objective

To report, through observations, interviews and a language curriculum, the instructional designs used by two teachers, and how their instructional designs relate to the Colombian Standards for learning English.

Specific objectives

- Determine the instructional design carried out by two English teachers in their sessions.
- Find out the instructional design's relation to the established Colombia Standards for learning English.

5. RELEVANT TERMS DEFINITIONS

For our theoretical framework, which will guide our analysis of data and help us draw our findings, we based our research on the following terms: objectives, instructional design and its components, approach to language and approach to language learning, standards for learning English in Colombia, and communicative competence.

1. Instructional Design

The instructional design, also called method design (Richards and Rodgers, 2001), is the framework through which teachers take the planned learning and teaching actions to a lesson. It usually is an intended set of actions or unconscious behavior because many times teachers represent in actions what they do not seem to be able to express in theoretical orientations (Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) define design as

The level of method analysis in which we consider (a) what the objectives of a method are; (b) how language content is selected and organized within the method, that is, the syllabus model the method incorporates; (c) the types of learning tasks and teaching activities the method advocates; (d) the role of the learners; (e) the roles of teachers; and (f) the role of instructional materials (p. 24).

1.1 Objectives

Brown (1995) defines objectives as the expected learning outcomes in a given school. They come from the learners' needs, from textbooks, and from decisions made by teachers. Ideally, objectives should first and foremost come from a careful analysis of students' needs (Brown, 1995). Depending on the type of method teachers follow, objectives can be either communicative (as in task based language learning), grammatical (as in the audiolingual method) or vocabulary (as in the lexical approach). Other objectives, as stated by Richards

and Rodgers (2001) can reflect emphasis on oral skills rather than reading and writing ones. According to these authors, it all depends on the method you follow. Brown (2001) states objectives as “what you want students to learn from the lesson (p. 150)” and gives some examples of objectives:

- Students will learn about the passive voice
- Students will practice some listening exercises.

In the existing theory, *objectives*, *aims*, and *goals* are used interchangeably and it seems like a matter of user’s choice. What is clear, though, is that *objectives* are represented by things students will know, do, or know how to do with language.

In our specific study, we focused our inquiry in three types of objectives. **Communicative**, which are objectives by which students learn the language for communication purposes; for example, *exchanging information with others*, *apologizing*, and *describing people, things, and animals*; **grammar**, which are objectives reflecting the students’ study of grammatical items in class; for example *passive voice structure* and *past simple tense*; and **vocabulary**, which is about studying words or categories of words within a lesson: countries, adjectives, verbs related to jobs.

1.2 Language selection and organization: Syllabus

A syllabus is a document which states the learning objectives for a specific language course. In such document, one can find the objectives for the course, the methodology which will be used, and the teacher and students responsibilities for the course. Other syllabuses may include the materials to be used, the selection of bibliography, and evaluation procedures. Again, it seems like the choice of what to include in the syllabus depends on the users’ choices: teachers and students. Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue that there has been a product-oriented view of syllabus because they reflect structural content to be learned by students. They say that “the term *syllabus* has been used to refer to

the form in which linguistic content is specified in a course or method” (page 25). Mohseni (2008) defines this concept in the following way:

a language teaching syllabus involves the combination of subject matter (what to teach) and linguistic matter (how to teach). It actually performs as a guide for both teacher and learner by providing some goals to be accomplished.

Ur (2003) defines a syllabus as a list which would include the items below. The author argues that syllabuses are comprehensive because all items to be taught are included.

- Content items: words, structures, topics.
- Process items: tasks, methods
- Explicit objectives
- A time schedule
- A particular approach or methodology

Common in these definitions are objectives and content. In our study, the syllabus we investigated was in fact a language curriculum (Brown, 1995) because the syllabus was part of a more comprehensive document in which the English teachers of the school included the learning objectives for all grades in the institution, and template to organize how to take those objectives to accomplishment. Based on the description of the language curriculum document at the school we studied, we agree with Giraldo’s (2009) definition of syllabus:

In short, one can think of curriculum and syllabus as two entities, the latter coming from the former. The immediate product of a curriculum design process is the syllabus. As a result, syllabus is the most practical application of a curriculum process (p. 30).

1.3 Types of learning and teaching activities

In order to allow learners to interact with the target language they are developing, teachers can use activities which reflect different methods for learning language. Depending on the needs of the lesson, teachers can implement communicative and/or grammatical skills. There can be activities whose focus is the development of language skills, either reading, writing, speaking, or listening. Among the many possible types of activities, Richards and Rodgers (2001) give us examples of activities which can take place in a language classroom:

- Dialogue, oral chorus drilling and pattern practice (found in *Audiolingualism* and the *direct method*)
- Problem-solving (found in *task-based learning*)
- Information gaps (found in *Communicative Language Teaching*)
- Improvisations (found in *content based teaching*) (p. 27).

1.4 The roles of the learners

In the language classroom, students are expected to perform different roles for the development of specific language related competences. Such roles differ depending on the activity and the teacher's purpose for the lesson at hand. Parrott (1993) lists some possible learners roles, among which are:

Sponge: student listens and learns from teacher explanations

Researcher: student works on his/her own to find out language patterns, for example.

Negotiator: student interacts with peers to find out a solution for something

Obeyer: student follows teacher's directions

Explorer: student is independent and does learning supportive actions with little teacher guidance

Experimenter: student tries out with language resources at hand

Struggler: student tries to understand new language patterns

Path-follower: student imitates teacher's pronunciation

Initiator: student interacts with others and initiates conversation, for example.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) describe performance of learners as contribution in:

The types of activities the learners' carry out, the degree of control learners have over the content of learning, the patterns of learner groupings adopted, the degree to which learners influence the learning of others, and the view of the learner as processor, performer, initiator, problem solver (pp. 27-28).

In the observations we conducted, we could observe similar learners roles in class. We draw from Parrott's (1991) and Richards and Rodgers' (2001) learners types to describe what we saw.

1.5 The roles of the teachers

Just as learners, teachers have different roles also depending on the language and students' needs presented in lessons. Parrott (1991) defines five teachers' roles with corresponding functions.

Diagnostician: finds out the needs and difficulties students are having with the lesson or the language.

Planner: maps out action plans for learning, correction, assessment, etc.

Manager: controls pacing of lesson, activities, behavior, etc.

Provider: Gives learners input, materials, and instructions.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue that the teachers' roles and learners' roles can be associated with an approach to language. For example, if a teacher's approach to language were language as structure, then that teacher's role would be to provide students with grammatical patterns, correct any mistakes in such patterns, and plan activities to drill those patterns. The authors also explain how the roles may vary depending on:

(a) the types of functions teachers are expected to fulfill, whether that of practice director, counselor, or model, for example; (b) the degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place; (c) the degree to which the teacher is responsible for determining the content of what is taught; and (d) the interactional patterns that develop between teachers and learners (p. 28).

As we did with the learners roles, we also based our analysis on Parrott's (1991) and Richards and Rodgers' (2001) theoretical contributions. We drew our findings from the information we collected in the observations we conducted and the interviews we administered.

1.6 The role of instructional materials

Materials have traditionally been used to aid in language learning. For example, books are used to support or guide the learning of languages, pictures are used to elicit language, present new vocabulary and/or practice it. Video and audio recordings are used to expose students to listening exercises. Just as the learners and teachers roles, materials will depend on several factors, among which are the content of the syllabus, the roles the teacher and learners perform, and even the approach to language and to language learning teachers employ in class. To this regard, Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain that materials are related to their goals (present and/or practice content), their form (textbook and audiovisuals), and the abilities of teachers (proficiency in the language and experience teaching it).

1.7 Procedures

A method is most practically made into classroom activities once they are divided into different steps, all aiming at the objectives which have been set out for any given lesson. Such steps have been called by Richards and Rodgers (2001) as procedures. In their words, procedures are "the actual moment-to-moment techniques, practices, and behaviors that operate in teaching a language according to a particular method" (p. 31). Brown (2001) uses a different term, "techniques", to refer to activities related to a method and to an

approach. Yet again, these two words have been used interchangeably by theoreticians. One thing that can be inferred is that, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), an activity is divided into procedures. For example, a grammar practice activity can consist of activation of grammar item through pictures (procedure one), examples given by the teacher and written by students (procedure two), controlled practice of grammar item (procedure three) and more communicative use grammar item (procedure four). Richards and Rodgers (2001) conclude by saying that “essentially, then, procedure focuses on the way a method handles the presentation, practice and feedback phases of teaching (p. 31)”.

These last three moments presented by the authors can also be called the PPP model (Presentation, Practice, and Production), mostly used for the study of grammar. See for example how the PPP model reflects the example procedures we have described in the previous paragraph. Harmer (1998) says that the PPP is a teaching model which has greatly influenced language teaching practice.

2. Approach to language and approach to language learning

Traditionally, and depending of the theoreticians’ perceptions, language has been viewed as a system of rules and as a system for communication. Such views have also reflected the practice of language teaching. A view of language as a system of rules is aligned with practices which honor grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary as pivotal in language learning. A more communicative view conceives language as a way to express meanings, ideas, fears, etc and as a way to interact with other human beings. Whong (2011) writes about two views of language: the structuralist view and the functionalist view. The former conceives language as a system formed by rules and patters. The latter views language as studying the role of those rules and patters when communicating with others.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), an approach to language can be divided into three views: language as structure, language as function, and language as interaction. Language as structure, as we have already covered,

refers to studying a language in its system, its mechanics, namely grammar, vocabulary, word formation, pronunciation, verb patterns, among others. Richards and Rodgers (2001) define the structural view as “the view that language is a system of structurally related elements for the coding of meaning (p. 20)”. The second view, language as function, conceives language as system that goes beyond structure and onto meaning and communication. Grammatical, phonological, and lexical items in a language actually serve a function in real life. Richards and Rodgers (2001) have defined this view saying that “language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning” (p. 21). The last view is that of language as interaction. Such view explains that language is a means through which humans interact with each other, using the language system and its functions to do so. Language is by nature a societal construct and as such, interaction plays a role in the development of language (Lightbown and Spada, 1999). Richards and Rodgers (2001) say that the interactional view “sees language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transaction of individuals”. They explain that language serves a more authentic view as it is a social transaction.

In our study we identified the approach to language the teachers seemed to attach to. To reach our conclusions, we observed what happened in class, following the instructional model we have elsewhere described. But we also analyzed the school’s language curriculum to see if the approach to language in such document aligns with the classroom practices implemented by the teachers. In the interviews, we could infer an approach which the teachers said to follow.

In any classroom situation, advocating any given method, teachers decide upon conditions which should help students learn the target language in a more successful way. Whatever the approach to language teachers support, be it structure, function, or interaction, it is taken to successful practice if some conditions are met. For example, in communicative language teaching, a condition for language learning is that students use language to actually learn something about themselves. Grammar is not the focus of a communicative lesson; the struggle to communicate and express ideas in the target language is

a condition for language learning; this is another condition. Learners interact with each other meaningfully and authentically, as they would do in the real world, without the assistance of a teacher. These conditions are referred to as an approach to language learning, which, Richards and Rodgers (2001) conclude:

With respect to language learning, we are concerned with an account of the central processes of learning and an account of the conditions believed to promote successful language learning (p. 24).

In our study, we identified those actions happening in class which could aid in language learning. We understood that many decisions the teachers made in the lesson they thought were meant to help students cope with language learning tasks, and as such, we considered them to be actions to help them not only do the tasks but also learn English.

3. Standards for learning English in Colombia

The Merriam–Webster online dictionary (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>) includes several definitions for the word standard, two of which are applicable to our study:

- something established by authority, custom, or general consent as a model or example
- something set up and established by authority as a rule for the measure of quantity, weight, extent, value, or quality

In education, standards reflect general guidelines for learning. They refer to actions which are expected to be carried out at the classroom level. Since the standards for learning English in Colombia are officially stated by MEN, all public and private schools and high schools are supposed to follow them. The standards are used in all syllabuses for language learning courses in this country.

Officially speaking, Colombia’s Minister of Education, Cecilia María Vélez White (2006), said that standards are “clear and public criteria which allow us to

establish what are the basic levels of quality that children in all regions in Colombia are entitled to” (p. 3 of language learning standards document; see beginning of next paragraph).⁴ According to Vélez, the standards are informative due to the fact that they inform the community at large what children are expected to know and know how to do once they attain the standards for the different language learning in Colombia.

In the document *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer*, the language learning standards have been organized into five different levels of language proficiency aimed to the different grades in the Colombia educational system for elementary and high school:

- Grades first to third: Beginner (A 1)
- Grades fourth and fifth: Basic 1 (A 2.1)
- Grades sixth and seventh: Basic 2 (A 2.2)
- Grades eighth and ninth: Pre-intermediate 1 (B 1.1)
- Grades tenth and eleventh: Pre-intermediate 2 (B1.2)

These different levels have been adopted and adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, and assessment (Council of Europe, 2001).

Each grade has a number of standards specified, and they have been organized according to language skills: listening, reading, writing, monologues (speaking), and conversation (talking with others). The table below is an example of how the standards are organized for grades first to third:

⁴ Originally in Spanish in the document *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer*. “*criterios claros y públicos que permiten establecer cuáles son los niveles básicos de calidad a los que tienen derecho los niños y niñas de todas las regiones de Colombia*”.



Escucha		Lectura	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconozco cuando me hablan en inglés y reacciono de manera verbal y no verbal. 2, 3 Entiendo cuando me saludan y se despiden de mí. 2, 3 Sigo instrucciones relacionadas con actividades de clase y recreativas propuestas por mi profesor. 1, 2 Comprendo canciones, rimas y rondas infantiles, y lo demuestro con gestos y movimientos. 2, 3 Demuestro comprensión de preguntas sencillas sobre mí, mi familia y mi entorno. 1 Comprendo descripciones cortas y sencillas de objetos y lugares conocidos. 2 Identifico a las personas que participan en una conversación. 3 Sigo la secuencia de un cuento corto apoyado en imágenes. 1, 2 Entiendo la idea general de una historia contada por mi profesor cuando se apoya en movimientos, gestos y cambios de voz. 2, 3 Reconozco que hay otras personas como yo que se comunican en inglés. 3 Comprendo secuencias relacionadas con hábitos y rutinas. 2 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifico palabras relacionadas entre sí sobre temas que me son familiares. 1, 2 Reconozco palabras y frases cortas en inglés en libros, objetos, juguetes, propagandas y lugares de mi escuela. 3 Relaciono ilustraciones con oraciones simples. 1 Reconozco y sigo instrucciones sencillas, si están ilustradas. 1, 2 Puedo predecir una historia a partir del título, las ilustraciones y las palabras clave. 1, 2 Sigo la secuencia de una historia sencilla. 1, 2 Utilizo diagramas para organizar la información de cuentos cortos leídos en clase. 1, 2 Disfruto la lectura como una actividad de experimento que me ayuda a descubrir el mundo. 	

Escritura	Monólogos	Conversación
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copio y transcribo palabras que comprendo y que uso con frecuencia en el salón de clase. 1 Escrivo el nombre de lugares y elementos que reconozco en una ilustración. 1 Respondo brevemente a las preguntas "¿qué, quién, cuándo y dónde", si se refieren a mi familia, mis amigos o mi colegio. 1 Escrivo información personal en formatos sencillos. 1, 2 Escrivo mensajes de invitación y felicitación usando formatos sencillos. 1, 2 Demuestro conocimiento de las estructuras básicas del inglés. 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recito y canto rimas, poemas y trabalenguas que comprendo, con ritmo y entonación adecuados. 1, 3 Expreso mis sentimientos y estados de ánimo. 1, 2 Menciono lo que me gusta y lo que no me gusta. 1, 2 Describo lo que estoy haciendo. 2 Nombro algunas cosas que puedo hacer y que no puedo hacer. 1, 2 Describo lo que hacen algunas miembros de mi comunidad. 2 Uso gestos y movimientos corporales para hacerme entender mejor. 2, 3 Describo algunas características de mí mismo, de otras personas, de animales, de lugares y del clima. 1, 2 Participo en representaciones cortas; memorito y comprendo los parlamentos. 1, 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondo a saludos y a despedidas. 2 Respondo a preguntas sobre cómo me siento. 2 Uso expresiones cotidianas para expresar mis necesidades inmediatas en el aula. 1, 2 Utilizo el lenguaje no verbal cuando no puedo responder verbalmente a preguntas sobre mis preferencias. Por ejemplo, asintiendo o negando con la cabeza. 2, 3 Expreso e indico necesidades personales básicas relacionadas con el aula. 2, 3 Respondo a preguntas sobre personas, objetos y lugares de mi entorno. 2 Hago que me repitan el mensaje cuando no lo comprendo. Participo activamente en juegos de palabras y rondas. 1, 3 Refuerzo con gestos lo que digo para hacerme entender. 3

The standards for learning English in Colombia were paramount in our research study in the view of the fact that we used them to articulate what happened in the observations we conducted to what we can observe in the language curriculum document and to what we can observe in the official document. We associated classroom procedures, language curriculum, and the official standards in order to determine which standards were most addressed in the lessons.

Underlying the standards, there is a theoretical concept which has gained considerable attention in the language teaching literature, starting with communicative language teaching in the 70's but conceptually permeating the whole history of language teaching; such concept is what we know as **Communicative Competence**.

All in all, Communicative Competence is the group of language related skills which humans perform when they are using language either for study or communication. Communicative competence has been divided into several sub-competence. Chomsky (cited, among many others, in Bingham and Skehan, P. 2002; Kamiya, 2006; Kasper and Rose, 2001; Molina, 2011; Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Sauvignon, 1993, 2002; Tarone and Yule, 1991; Celce-Murcia, 2007) was the first theoretician to use the term competence to refer to the ability of humans to develop what he called linguistic competence: the linguistic knowledge possessed by native speakers of a language.

Complementing Chomsky, Hymes (cited, among many others, in Celce-Murcia, 2007; and Molina, 2011) came up with the concept of communicative competence, arguing that apart from formal knowledge of the rules of language humans need sociolinguistic knowledge (using rules according to social contexts).

Canale and Swain (1980, cited in Celce-Murcia, 2007) added strategic competence to the picture, which refers to the ability of repairing communication breakdowns by using different language resources (mimicking, defining, using

synonyms). These authors called grammatical competence what Chomsky called linguistic competence.

In 1983, Canale (cited in Celce-Murcia, 2007) included discourse competence, which, according to Celce-Murcia (2007), refers to the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures, and utterances to achieve a unified spoken message (p. 46).”

The Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001) divides **Communicative Competence** into three major competences: Linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence. First of all, **Linguistic Competence** refers to the language user’s knowledge of the linguistic system represented in grammar, vocabulary, phonology, spelling, syntax, and semantics. Second of all, **Pragmatic Competence** has been divided into two competences: functional competence and discourse competence. The former refers to using structures of the system for the actual realizations of such structures in communicative encounters (see approach to *language as function*). The latter refers to connecting ideas coherently. Finally, **Sociolinguistic Competence** is the social dimension of language use (Council of Europe, 2001); language learners come to know register and dialect differences, expressions of folk wisdom, interaction patterns, etc.

In the standards for learning English in Colombia, each standard adheres to one or more of these sub-competences in communicative competence. For example:

*Copio y transcribo palabras que comprendo y que uso con frecuencia en el salón de clase.*⁵

In this previous standard, students are asked to develop their linguistic competence because they are focused on the spelling of commonly used

⁵ Translation: I copy and transcribe words which I understand and use frequently in the classroom.

words. The next example refers to the the pragmatic competence, specifically to functional competence:

Describo lo que me gusta y lo que no me gusta.

I describe what I like and what I don't like.

Even though students need grammar and vocabulary to do this, the focus of the standard is the expression of likes and dislikes (therefore, the function of such grammar and vocabualry), something which we do in real life with language. Sociolinguistic competence can be evidenced in the following standard:

Demuestro que reconozco elementos de la cultura extranjera y los relaciono con mi cultura.

I demonstrate that I recognize elements of the foreign cultura and I relate them to my culture.

In this standard, students are expected to use language for a different purpose than that traditionally aimed at. In this case, students show they know about the foreign culture which is represented by English language, in the case of this study.

In the findings of our study, we can suggest that one of the three competences is the one mostly targeted by teachers and students in the classes we observed. Also, we analyzed communicative competence (from the linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic points of view) as presented in the language curriculum in comparison with the classes we observed.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

An extensive look on the available literature on teaching practices in language education in the Colombian context led us to gather information from five research studies which are relevant to our project. The first study reports the methodology of twelve English teachers from Medellín, Colombia, teaching elementary grades; the second study explores the methodology used by English teachers in seventeen public schools and seven private schools in Cali. The study was done in elementary and high school; the third study describes the didactic sequences in classes taught by six English teachers of a language institute at Universidad de la Salle in Bogotá, Colombia. The fourth study describes the pedagogical practices of ten English teachers at a language institute of a private University in Ibagué, Tolima, Colombia. Finally, the last research study we cite here explored the teacher beliefs and classroom actions around the concept of communicative competence. In the existing literature of the main language teaching journals in Colombia, as of January 2012, there are not any published studies exploring the relationship between classroom practices and the standards for learning English established by MEN in Colombia.

In the ethnographic study conducted by Cadavid, McNulty, and Quinchía (2004) six questions guided their inquiry, here reproduced at length:

- How have schools assumed this educational mission?
- Who are the public elementary EFL school teachers in Medellín?
- Which methodological practices do these teachers use to teach English?
- How do the teachers understand their own practices?
- What methodological principles do they report as forming their teaching practices?
- Is there a relationship between the teachers' practices and principles, and the government's curricular guidelines concerning early foreign language instruction?

The study was conducted in seven public elementary schools in Medellín. The participants of the aforementioned study were twelve teachers of English. The data collection methods used in this study were interviews and classroom observations, which were guided by the following elements: “the class activities, the materials in class, the teacher and student roles, and the grouping arrangements (p. 39)”. In total, each teacher was observed three times and interviewed after the observations took place.

Given the fact that Cadavid et al's (2004) study was an ongoing one, they had preliminary findings. One of the findings characterized the teachers' education and work experience. The second finding, which is of most relevance to our study, regarded the activities, materials, and teacher and student roles. For the class observations, the researchers focused on presentation, practice, memorization, comprehension, application, affective (warm ups, games songs), feedback, strategy, assessment, and organizational activities. The researchers found the need to include other items in their observation format, which are giving instructions, praising, assigning homework, peer correction, building sentences, and translation as a strategy for presentation. They comment that these are not activities as such but are recurrent actions in the classes they observed.

The researchers found that activities in class are mostly organizational (for instance, giving instructions and controlling discipline), presentational (as in presenting the topics for the lesson) and affective (for example, warm-ups). The aforementioned activities are carried out mostly in Spanish, which is a reason to think that the students are not much exposed to the English language. English was used for presentation and vocabulary revision. As for presentation activities, they usually happened in the middle of the class and consisted of the use of flashcards for presenting vocabulary, accompanied by translations into Spanish. No practice or application activities followed the presentation of the flashcards. The researchers conclude by saying that translation seemed to be a very important strategy for presenting, explaining content, and checking comprehension. The researchers close the finding about activities saying that reading and writing activities barely took place in the classes they observed.

What did take place were activities focused on these skills: grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

In terms of materials, the researchers express that the teachers had access to televisions, VCRs, and tape recorders. However, the teachers did not have any audio or video tapes to be used with said materials. Worksheets and paper products were available to teachers, but in many schools, flashcards, posters, and books were insufficient. Based on this scenario, the teachers had to use the board, classroom realia and flashcards made by teachers. The materials were used for the presentation of isolated (only the word) vocabulary items. Listening to recorded material was not present even though some schools had resources such as cd players. And finally, in some schools, a textbook became the core of the lesson since teachers followed the proposed sequence as stated in the book.

The teacher roles identified by the researchers were model, class organizer, and controller. In the case of the children, they repeated vocabulary after the teacher, which was done individually or chorally, answered questions and responded to instructions, and worked individually on their notebooks, booklets, or worksheets. For grouping and interaction, work was done mostly at the whole-group and individual work levels. Little pair and group work took place.

The researcher concludes the paper by saying that the teachers in the schools they observed were working under difficult conditions, saying that by studying these contexts as starting point, they can give suggestions for improvement. They say that the English being taught in the schools was mainly focused on grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. The activities fall under the category of presentation and checking of vocabulary done through translation into Spanish. Since the teachers had a low proficiency in the language, exposure to English was very limited. The authors suggest actions for improving the teachers' language proficiency, growth in pedagogical practices and resources, and accompaniment in strategies for teacher and student roles. The researchers argue that teachers and students' needs should be honored for decision-making processes at the level of language policies. They say that the teachers' voices,

coming from reflective practices, must be heard. They conclude by saying that teachers need to become more knowledgeable of our reality in Colombian classrooms.

Hernández and Faustino (2006) carried out a research study which was guided by an ethnographic design. In the article, no research questions were stated. Their study was conducted with the help of 44 pre-service teachers enrolled in the classroom research courses the researchers were in charge of teaching. These students had theoretical bases for the field work they were about to start. The students did between two and five classroom observations per institution (in total, there were seventeen public schools and seven private ones). They used an observation format to conduct the classroom observations. Also, a survey was used to find out students' perceptions of the methodology used by the teachers. Teachers and school administrators were interviewed.

The findings in Hernández and Faustino's study were divided into two board categories: Characterization of the language class and students' opinions of teaching and learning of the foreign language. In this literature review, we focus our attention on the findings of the former category given its high relevance to our study.

The researchers devised a matrix for analyzing the information they collected in the study. Such matrix was divided into eleven categories, which are: basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), complementary skills (pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary), interaction patterns, languages used in class, types of teacher correction, groupings, materials, types of tasks, assessment procedures, classroom stimuli, and foreign language culture.

Complementary skills (pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary): There was a greater emphasis on these skills as opposed to emphasis on basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The major emphasis was on grammar study through explanations and further practice of grammar items. Vocabulary study through memorization follows the work on grammar. There is

a small frequency on pronunciation work, being grammar the major focus of the lessons.

Basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing): speaking and listening activities were more frequent than reading and writing ones. Listening exercises were about recognizing sounds and comprehending commands and short dialogues. As for speaking, the students did guided dialogues, talked about their personal information and performed oral presentations about grammar topics. Reading is the least present skill. According to the data collected, there were only two times when reading was used in class: general understanding of a text, and understanding of main ideas.

Interaction patterns: The most noticeable interaction patterns were: teacher asking students, and students asking the teacher for clarification about grammar topics.

Languages used in class: L1 (the students' native language) and L2 (the foreign language) were used by the teacher interchangeably to present a topic and translate that information into L1. This process of code switching took place while the teacher gave instructions, setting up class work, and asked personal questions to students. L1 was used to call students' attention, grammar explanations, extra-class information, and others. The students used L1 to answer teacher's questions. Teachers and students barely interacted with each other in L2.

Types of teacher correction: The teachers mainly corrected the students' pronunciation, but there was grammar correction by means of grammatical clarifications.

Groupings: Cooperative groups were evidenced in pair and group work, being the latter the most used in the observed classes.

Materials: In a hierarchical order, the materials used were: boards, textbooks, dictionary, photocopies, charts, literary texts, CD players, maps, movies, songs,

bilingual rooms (labs), and video-projectors. In comparison with others, the board was by far the most used material.

Types of tasks: First and foremost, teachers implemented grammar tasks in class, followed by translation tasks; and finally, there were communicative tasks in which students were asked to give personal information and perform dialogues.

Assessment procedures: Memorization of dialogues was the most frequently used procedure, followed by grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension tasks. In this category, the authors say, grammar and pronunciation dominate.

Classroom stimuli: Teachers encouraged their students by praising, applauding, using positive grades. Phrases such as *much better* and *You are improving* were used to praise students.

Foreign language culture: Aspects in this category included knowledge of geographical facts in English and French speaking countries, symbols and icons of these languages, costumes and famous characters of these cultures.

In the interviews conducted with teachers, the researchers came up with the following information regarding some of the categories explained above. According to what the teachers said in the interviews, students do listening and reading comprehension activities which are complemented by grammar, pronunciation, translation activities and games. The teachers also said that the materials they used the most were boards, photocopies or course book, imagery, videos, and labs: Audiovisual room and bilingual classroom as the teachers call these spaces. The teachers said they could not use these resources successfully because of the number of students per group, the low number of hours for the English class, and the bad physical state of the aforementioned materials. As for the use of the foreign language, the teachers said it was becoming more difficult to work on this aspect given the students negative attitudes: reluctance, laziness, misbehavior, fear of looking foolish in front of others, and lack of commitment.

Hernández and Faustino (2006) put forward the following conclusions:

- Complementary skills activities took place more often than basic skills activities. Grammar is the core of the classroom events.
- Listening and speaking dominated over writing.
- Translation was a constant practice in the classrooms observed. It was used to check comprehension and as extra work for students.
- Reading is the least developed skill in class.
- As for classroom interaction, the IRF (Initiation, Response, and Feedback) was of frequent use. In primary, the students were the ones who initiated the interaction, which was the opposite in the case of the observations done in the high school level.
- The native language was the one mostly used in classes, uses of which were explaining, clarifying, exemplifying, and translating. The foreign language was used for short exchanges such as instructions, commands, dialogues, questions and saying hello and goodbye.
- The most frequently corrected element is pronunciation. In depth explanation of grammar items is used as correction, too.
- Teaching the culture of the foreign languages and stimulating students are seen as positive practices in class.

Álvarez (2007) conducted a research study to find out the didactic sequences of six language teachers of the Language Department at Universidad de La Salle in Bogotá, Colombia. The research questions which guided the author's inquiry were:

1. What are the didactic sequences of the English teachers in the Languages Department at Universidad de La Salle?

2. Which didactic sequence stands out in the teaching practices of the English teachers in the Languages Department at Universidad de La Salle?⁶

Álvarez's was a qualitative study in the framework of a descriptive-interpretative case study because of the specific phenomenon under scrutiny: didactic sequences. The researcher's role was non-participant observer. The six participants in the study were teachers from different semesters in the teaching program at Universidad de La Salle; two of them taught in first semester, other two taught in third semester, and the remaining two taught in fifth semester. Three data collection methods were used in the study: Open classroom observations, structured classroom observations (with format) and teacher interviews.

The preliminary findings in Álvarez's (2007) research article tell us that in didactic sequences, there may not be fixed schedules for classroom procedures and warn us that, sometimes, students are the ones who shape the didactic sequence in a given moment. The researcher concludes by saying that it is both the teacher and the students who decide what the didactic sequence looks like. Another finding related more explicitly to what the teacher's didactic sequences were was the fact that the teachers at the teaching program used a model of Presentation, Practice, and Production. The activities which happened during these three phases included activities about factual content, concepts, and procedures and attitudes. In the different activities in the class observed, the researcher noticed an emphasis on micro-skills: vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, which we have presented as complementary skills in Hernández and Faustino's (2006) research study above. Another finding in Álvarez study tells us that the textbook was an important element for the teachers at Universidad de La Salle. The teachers expressed that they considered the text important because it determined the sequence of topics. With no intention to be axiomatic,

⁶ In the article, the questions are originally written in Spanish: 1. ¿Cuáles son las secuencias didácticas de los profesores de inglés del Departamento de Lenguas de la Universidad de la Universidad de La Salle? 2. ¿Cuál secuencia didáctica sobresale en las prácticas de enseñanza de los profesores de inglés del Departamento de Lenguas de la Universidad de la Universidad de La Salle?

in the last finding presented the researcher says that the classes were divided into language skills work, with major emphasis on any of the four skills.

Posada and Patiño (2007) conducted a qualitative research study which described and analyzed the pedagogical practices of ten teachers at a language institute of a private University in Ibagué, Tolima, Colombia. The data collection instruments employed by the authors were three: questionnaires to collect data about the teachers' "methodology, activities and resources employed by the teachers in class (p. 131).", the field notes described what happened in class in relation to knowledge and teacher and student actions; finally, the interviews served the purpose of giving information which was not collected through the other two instruments. The researchers were non-participant observers; the number of observations is not stated.

Posada and Patiño (2007) found that five out of ten teachers used the Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) model, already mentioned by us in Hernández and Faustino (2006) and Álvarez (2007) studies. In Posada and Patiño's study, the teachers contextualized the new language item, then the students practiced by creating sentences, and lastly, the students talked about their own lives and those of others. The author infers that in the model used by the teachers, there was a structural approach to language because of the study of language structures. Another finding shows that the teachers coupled this PPP model with the structure presented in the book, which reinforced the view of language as structure. Based on the data collected, another finding presents one teacher using a communicative model. The researcher supports this finding by giving evidence of the teacher's use of the target language all the time in class, implementation of information-gap activities, and the role of organizer of resources as well as being a resource. Regarding groupings in class, the teachers said they used group work and pair work since they considered them to be important practices in their methodology on the grounds that they allow stronger and weaker students work together and benefit from each other. As for reviewing practices, the teachers used games to do so.

There are some conclusions in Posada and Patiño's (2007) study. First, apparently, the institute where the study was conducted lacked a clear methodology. Two, the majority of teachers followed the PPP model, others used communicative lessons, and cooperative learning activities; one last group relied heavily on what the textbook proposed, a textbook which showed evidence of a structural view of language.

The last study we cite in our literature review is that carried out by González (2008). This was a qualitative case study which observed two English teachers at a Foreign Language Department of National University in Bogotá, Colombia. Two data collection instruments were used in the study: interviews and observation sheets. During the interviews, the researcher asked about the teachers' beliefs on communicative competence. The observation sheets were used to see the relationship between the teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. The observations occurred before the implementation of the interviews. One of the participants was observed nine times and the other was observed two times, both in two-hour sessions. The research questions which shaped González study were two: How do English teachers understand the concept of communicative competence? and What do their teaching practices tell us about their understanding of communicative competence?

In this study's findings, in regard to the first question, González shows us that the teachers viewed communicative competence as a macro concept, explaining that its development goes beyond language. To the teachers, communicative competence includes grammar, lexis, functional aspects and the four language skills. The teachers considered communicative competence as functional because they expressed that language structures have uses. Finally, the teachers said that not all language teachers include the whole components of what they described communicative competence to have. As for the second research question, the researcher says that the teachers did their teaching practice based on communicative competence because they planned the lessons based on students' needs and preferences. As results of the same question, the researcher states that teachers associated communicative competence with classroom atmosphere and organization as well as the use of

extra materials. To the teachers, communicative competence implies thinking about students and their interaction in the language class.

The five research studies we have summarized here will be supportive in the discussion of findings we collected through our own research study. We will draw upon the findings on pedagogical sequences, to which we refer as instructional design, to compare and contrast what we found in the literature with what we found in our study. As for communicative competence, since this concept is paramount in the standards for learning English in Colombia, we will discuss how the last study, by Gonzalez, can also be compared and contrasted to what we found in the specific context we studied.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1 Type of study

This research is a qualitative descriptive/comparative case study. According to Jacob (1988), qualitative research is a scientific approach in which the researcher becomes a building block of the whole investigation. Qualitative research seeks to provide understanding of human experiences, perceptions, motivations, intentions, behaviors and variables in the contextual setting in which they are found. Our research focused on the behaviors which took place during the observed classes in the school. We also focused our inquiry on what the teachers told us in the interview we conducted with each one; the interviews explored the teachers' perceptions and intentions regarding the teaching of English in their specific context.

Drawing up from Bell (1999), "a case study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth. (p.10)" The researcher identifies a number of features and shows how they affect the implementation of systems and influence the way an organization functions. In our study, the analysis of the data collected through observations, interviews, and documents had a close relation to the teaching of English reflecting, or not, a system adopted by the teachers, school, and MEN.

With reference to Henrichsen (1997), "descriptive research may focus on individual subjects and go into great depth and detail in describing them (p. 6)". In other words, descriptive research describes data and features about a population, an individual, an issue or a phenomenon being under study in a natural environment. We consider that the classrooms we observed were natural environments because they were spaces in which teachers and students interacted in activities with which they are already familiarized: English language teaching and learning.

7.2 Context

The contextual setting of this research study took place in a public high school in Pereira, Risaralda, Colombia. The school is located five minutes away from Pereira's downtown and surrounded by neighborhoods. It is quite close to Pereira's bus terminal.

The classrooms which we observed were the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth, one group per grade. In each classroom, there was an average of thirty students. The classrooms were big enough to accommodate this number of learners and had no major physical inconveniences.

7.3 Participants

We interviewed and observed two English language teachers from the school. One of them, whom we called Peter, at the time the research study was conducted, was in charge of teaching grades sixth and seventh. Peter has ten years of experience teaching English. He is a graduate from the languages program at Universidad de Caldas, Manizales, Colombia.

The other teacher, whom we called John, was in charge of teaching eighth and ninth grades. John has five years experience as a language teacher. He holds a bachelors degree in the teaching of modern languages as well as a Masters in English Didactics.

We also wanted to include the teacher in charge of tenth and eleventh grades, but because of logistics issues, it was not possible to observe him as we needed in our research project.

7.4 Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods used in this study were three. First, we administered two interviews, one per teacher. Second, we conducted two

classroom observations per teacher. Finally, we analyzed the school's English language curriculum.

Interviews

As Wallace (2004) explains, "interviews involve eliciting something from informants: usually factual information about themselves and their teaching situation, or attitudes/opinions on some issue (p. 47). The interviews were used to find out about the teachers' instructional designs and how the standards were part of their practices.

Observations emphasis

We conducted two observations per teacher. We decided to use two as we wanted to know in depth about the instructional characteristics of each teacher, and also, because we wanted to collect enough evidence which could help us answer the second research question, which has to do with the relationship between classroom practices and the standards for learning English in Colombia. According to Freeman (1998), observations offer a clear report about the teacher or student behavior mainly in the learning scenario, group structures and cooperative work (p. 209).

We used an observation format which included items present in an instructional design. The first part of the format was to fill in the language related aims for each lesson. There were three columns: communicative, grammar, and vocabulary. Depending on what happened in class and which we could infer, we filled in the corresponding columns.

The second part included elements of the method design explained by Richards and Rodgers (1999): Classroom procedures and activities, learner's roles, teacher's roles, and the use of materials.

The third part of the observation drew the theory about approach to language and approach to language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 1999). Based on

what we observed in class, we classified which approach to language the lesson addressed and we devised the conditions for language learning, which we wrote under the heading: approach to language learning.

The fourth part of the instrument was divided into three columns and explored the concept of communicative competence as evidenced in classroom procedures. The three columns were: linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence, all of which align with the way communicative competence is stated in the standards for learning English in Colombia.

Parts one to four of the observation format gave us information to answer our first research question. Part four gave us information to our second research question.

The fifth and final part of our observation instrument was divided into three columns. In the first column, we included evidence taken from the procedures and activities we observed. In the second column, we stated the standards for learning English which mostly reflected what we observed in class. In the last column, we explained why we made such procedure-standard choice.

Language curriculum document

The last data collection instrument we employed was the language curriculum at school. This document presents general and specific humanistic and language-related aims. Also, the document contains standards for learning English in Colombia the way they are stated in the document *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer*. The document was divided into four levels of language proficiency: A1, A2, B1, and B2 (Council of Europe, 2001). Following the presentation of the standards, there was a general planning for each level so that the standards could be approached in class sessions.

7.5 Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the data we collected from our research study, we used a theory-driven approach. We used a matrix to analyze the data which included information from the two class observations, the teacher interview and the language curriculum document of the school. Theory guided our analysis on the grounds that:

1. We grouped similar procedures, learner roles, teacher roles, and materials; the theory for this was taken from Richards and Rodgers (2001).
2. We analysed the approach to language and the approach to language learning inferred from the three data collection instruments; the theory for this was taken from Richards and Rodgers (2001).
3. We described communicative competence as evidenced in the three data collection instruments; the theory for this was taken from the Council of Europe (2001), Sauvignon (2001) and the document *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer* (MEN, 2006).
4. We associated procedures and activities to language learning standards stated in the document above; the theory was taken from MEN (2006).

Namey, Guest, Thairu, and Johnson (2007) explain that:

a theory-driven approach is guided by specific ideas or hypotheses the researcher wants to assess. The researcher may still closely read the data prior to analysis, but his or her analysis categories have been determined a priori, without consideration of the data. Theory-driven approaches tend to be more structured, and for this reason may be considered more reliable, in the sense that the same results are likely, regardless of the coder (pp. 138.139).

We now reproduce in full the columns and lines of the matrix we used for the analysis of data. As it can be seen, the matrix for data analysis has the same organization the observation format does. As it can be evidenced in the observation format, it was theory that guided our analysis.

Lesson's Objectives				
Teacher	Data	Communicative	Grammar	Vocabulary
# 1	Obs. # 1			
	Obs. # 2			
	Interview			
	Lang. Curriculum			

Under *Communicative*, we wrote those objectives which reflected the way we use language in real life, examples of which are offering someone something, requesting information, describing processes, etc.; in other words, the functional and interactional views of language. Under *Grammar*, we included grammatical items treated in each lesson; and under *Vocabulary*, we included words which were studied in the lesson. In each of these three columns, we included data from the three instruments: observations, interviews, and language curriculum document.

Teacher	Data	Procedures and activities	Learner's roles	Teacher roles	Materials and their use
# 1	Obs. # 1				
	Obs # 2				
	Interv iew				
	Lang. Curric ulum				

This table was treated similarly to the previous one, getting information from all three data collection instruments. However, this time, the information reflected

the teachers' instructional design in terms of procedures, learner's roles, teacher roles and materials and their use.

Communicative Competence				
Teacher	Data Collection	Linguistic Competence	Pragmatic Competence	Sociolinguistic Competence
Teacher # 1	Observation # 1			
	Observation # 2			
	Interview			
	Lang. Curriculum			

In this table, we organized information regarding the treatment of communicative competences as evidenced in the information generated by the three data collection instruments. We grouped information about the three subcompetences in the table: linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic.

Once we collected and grouped all the information generated by the three instruments and looked for patterns, we drew the findings in this research project, findings which we categorized as:

1. Types of Objectives for Lessons
2. Teachers' Instructional Design
 - 2.1 Procedures and activities used
 - 2.2 The roles the learners performed
 - 2.3 The roles the teachers performed
 - 2.4 The materials implemented and their use
3. Communicative Competence
 - 3.1 Linguistic competence
 - 3.2 Pragmatic competence
 - 3.3 Sociolinguistic competence
4. Approaches to Language and Language Learning

5. Relationship between Instructional Design and Standards for Learning English in Colombia.

8. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

We need to warn readers of this research document that the findings in our study **suggest** the instructional characteristics of two teachers in a public school in Pereira, Risaralda, Colombia. In no way do the findings actually give definitive answers to what is the day-to-day process of teaching and learning English in the school. What the findings do suggest are some instructional tendencies we evidenced in our study and how those tendencies were aligned (or not) with the standards for learning English in Colombia.

We conclude that in order for researchers to really describe what happens at the language teaching practice level, an ethnographic case study is required. With a kind of study like that, researchers would be able to observe the instructional characteristics during a more extended period of time, which in turn would lead them to reach much more comprehensive findings.

The approach to organizing our findings is divided into five parts. First, we state the title of the findings. Second, we give a short introduction of what the findings are. Third, we explain them. Fourth, we discuss them in the light of our literature review and our relevant terms definitions. Finally, we list down the evidence taken from the data collection methods to support our findings.

1. About the learning objectives in the lessons

From the data we collected from the classroom observations, the lessons were mostly focused on objectives dealing with grammar topics. The objectives from the school's curriculum are predominantly communicative.

In our research study, we concentrated our analysis on three types of objectives: **communicative** (students learn the language for communication purposes); **grammar** (students' study of grammatical items); and **vocabulary** (studying lexical items and categories of words a lesson contains). We noticed that in all classes, the classroom activities aimed at developing grammatical

competences over communicative and vocabulary ones. However, there was some minor attention to communicative and vocabulary sections.

Evidence for grammatical orientation:

Observation #1 Teacher # 1 Procedure # 2

Ss review the topic they studied the previous class (prepositions of place) by copying the items that the teacher writes on the board. Prepositions are written in L2.

Observation # 2, Teacher # 1, Procedure # 2

T. writes the lexical items (a, an, some, any, there is, there are) on the board. Items are written in L2. T. checks Ss prior knowledge by asking questions in L1 (“¿qué significa esto?, ¿para que se utilizan?”) and he immediately gives the answer in L1 “¿que se utilizan para las que...? “las cantidades”

Observation # 1, Teacher # 2, Procedure # 3

Switching to L2, T. starts eliciting information about the future form WILL: “*First of all, I would like to know about future activities*”. T. asks a S. a question where the S. has to answer with WILL: “*For example, Mr. Willy. What will you do tomorrow?*” Without obtaining an answer, T. writes the question on the board, and in this way a S., Duberney, gives an answer using L1, which the T. translates to L2: “*You will play soccer tomorrow.*”

Observation # 2, Teacher # 2, Procedure # 5

Teacher explains that the process is in active voice and Ss have to change it into passive voice.

T. writes a sentence on the board as a model:

“*The fisherman takes out the worms from the ground.*” “*The worms are taken out from the ground.*”

Evidence for language curriculum:

-Comprender información sencilla dentro de un área conocida, como la que aparece en productos y señales, y en manuales o informes sencillos sobre asuntos cotidianos.

Translation

-To understand simple information from a familiar topic such as products and signs, instructions or simple information about ordinary events.

-Rellenar formularios y escribir cartas breves y sencillas o tarjetas relacionadas con información personal

Translation

- To fill in forms and write short letters or cards related to personal information.

-Expresar opiniones o peticiones sencillas en un contexto conocido

Translation

- To express simple opinions o requests in a familiar context.

Our finding in the area of learning objectives in the lessons relates to those in Hernández and Faustino (2006), and Alvarez (2007) studies. Our data presented above is similar to Hernández and Faustino (2006), and Alvarez (2007) finding in the sense that grammar was the fundamental topic in the sessions observed since teachers emphasized in this complementary skill or micro-skill (Hernández and Faustino, 2006). Also, during the observed sessions there were no activities with a communicative purpose. However, there were some classroom procedures which denoted real use of language ⁷, but there was no emphasis on them.

2. About instructional design

After observing the procedures from the teachers in two different sessions, it was noticeable that most of the activities are *grammar oriented* and the roles that most of the students performed were *active listeners* and *respondents*. In relation to the materials used in the lessons, we can conclude that they were limited to the board and photocopies.

2.1 Procedures and activities used

These are two observations made to teachers 1 and 2 about the lesson procedures and activities used. The teachers used gap filling and matching

⁷ We understand the real use of language as language functions

activities in order for the students to review the topics that were treated in the last session.

Evidence

Observation # 1, Teacher # 2

T. tells Ss. about the exercises they are going to find (matching, filling gaps) in the worksheet related to future activities.

T. writes a sentence on the board as a model: "The fisherman takes out the worms from the ground." "The worms are taken out from the ground."

2.2 The roles the learners performed

Through the different observations and the interviews conducted to each teacher, we deduced the following roles that students performed:

Evidence:

Active listeners Evidence:

Observation # 1, Teacher # 1

T. asks Ss. to organize the classroom and keep discipline. After this T. asks Ss to take out their notebooks. (They listen to Ts' instructions)

Observation # 2, Teacher # 1

T. asks Ss. to organize the classroom and keep discipline. After this T. asks Ss to take out their notebooks. This procedure is done in L1. (They listen to Ts' instructions and respond to his commands).

Respondents Evidence:

Observation # 1, Teacher # 2

a S. gives an answer using L1, which the T. translates to L2: "You will play soccer tomorrow."

Interview, question 2.4, Teacher # 1

[...Que sean participativos...]

Interview, question 2.4, Teacher # 2

[...que sean activos, que produzcan...]

Comparing the evidence with the learners' roles presented by Parrott (1991), we found out that they coincide with the ones noticed during the conducted observations:

Observations	Parrotts (1991)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They listen to Ts' instructions and respond to his commands.</i> • <i>Follow T's instructions</i> • <i>Interpreters of input</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sponge: student listens and learns from teacher explanations.</i> • <i>Obeyer: student follows teacher's directions.</i> • <i>Struggler: student tries to understand new language patterns.</i>

2.3 The materials implemented and their use

After observing two teachers in two different sessions, we could notice which was the most common material and its use. The board as a way to model samples for students to do it better and the worksheets for the learners to practice and review the input given.

Observation # 1, Teacher # 1

Students use the handout they got as a reference for later exercise

Observation # 2, Teacher # 2

T. contextualizes Ss with the lesson (describing processes). T. hands out the worksheets they used the previous class.

Observation # 1, Teacher # 1

The teacher writes on the board. Prepositions are written in L2.

Observation # 1, Teacher # 2

Ss. work on the worksheets (Gap-filling and matching activities about the future form WILL.) while the T. monitors their work.

Observation # 2, Teacher # 1

T. asks Ss to take a look at the photocopy and look for a reference box called “countable nouns”

Observation # 2, Teacher # 2

T. gives the Ss. an example solving exercise A from the worksheet.

As reported by Hernández and Faustino (2006), and it was evidenced in our study, the board is the primary material in class since teachers use it as a source to provide models, draw, give instructions and explain. Our findings relates to those from the researcher’s findings in the sense that we could observe in the sessions that both teachers use the board and the handout as the main source of instruction, explanation, and development of topics.

3. About communicative competence and its relation to the procedures and the language curriculum

The data collected through the observations led us to suggest that both teachers planned activities for learners to develop linguistic competence first and foremost. There was some work on pragmatic competence and none on sociolinguistic competence.

3.1 Linguistic competence

This is the competence to which most of the classroom procedures adhered. Major emphasis was given to grammar items. The second most developed linguistic competence is that of vocabulary. However, practices on this

complementary skill were not profound because of the greater attention to grammar.

We could infer from the data indirect work on syntax, specifically when the teacher provided students with sample sentences. Even though the teachers never explained how to form sentences explicitly, students were exposed to such syntactic structures.

Evidence:

Observation # 1, Teacher # 1, Procedure # 2

Students review the topic they studied the previous class (prepositions of place) by copying the items the teacher writes on the board: in front of, across from, next to.

Observation # 2, Teacher # 1, Procedure # 2

The teacher asks for the use of quantifiers. In L1 (Spanish) students give answers about the function of each item.

“a y an significan un una y van antes de una vocal.”

Observation # 1, Teacher # 2, Procedure # 1

Teacher tells students about the exercises they are going to find (matching, filling in gaps) in the worksheet related to future activities. The students are expected to fill in the gaps with will or won't.

Observation # 2, Teacher # 2 Procedure # 5

Students change sentences from active to passive voice.

In the language curriculum document, the linguistic competence consists of one standard for the A2 proficiency level and three standards for the B1 proficiency level:

Level: A2

Standard: *Describo con frases cortas personas, lugares, objetos o hechos relacionados con temas y situaciones que me son familiares.*

Translation: I describe people, places, objects, and events related to topics and situations which are familiar to me.

Level: B1

Standard: *Escribo narraciones sobre experiencias personales y hechos a mi alrededor.*

Translation: I write narratives about personal experiences and events surrounding me.

Standard: *Uso planes representados en mapas o diagramas para desarrollar mis escritos.*

Translation: I use plans represented in maps or diagrams to develop my written products.

Standard: *Edito mis escritos en clase, teniendo en cuenta reglas de ortografía, adecuación del vocabulario y estructuras gramaticales.*

Translation: I edit my written products in class, taking into account punctuation rules, vocabulary adjustment, and grammatical structures.

3.2 Pragmatic competence

Since teachers provided students with sample sentences, there was some cohesion, which is part of the pragmatic competence. However, there were no data to conclude that sentential cohesion was a focus of the lessons. In the functional aspect of the pragmatic competence, we found out four language functions: *offering something (food), making predictions, talking about the future, and describing procedures*. In one of the observations, there was an activity in which students needed to make sense of a written text. This reading exercise is more related to *discourse competence*, which is the second sub-competence under *pragmatic competence*.

Evidence:

Observation # 2, Teacher # 1, Procedure # 4

The teacher reads a sentence on the copy (would you like some milk?) and explains the use of would to offer food.

“Cada vez que ustedes encuentren este would you like, es porque están ofreciendo algo.”

Observation # 1, Teacher # 2, Procedure # 3

The teacher asks a student a question where the student has to answer with WILL. For example: “Mr. Willy, what will you do tomorrow? Without obtaining an answer, the teacher writes the question on the board, and in this way, a student gives an answer using L1 (Spanish), which the teacher translates into L2 (English).

S: Voy a jugar fútbol mañana

T: You will play soccer tomorrow.

Observation # 2, Teacher # 2 Procedure # 3

The teacher tells students to organize the sentences in a reading in a logical order. The reading is about the making of porcelain and cheese.

In the school’s language curriculum, there is one standard for pragmatic competence in level A2 and three standards in level B1.

Level: A2

Standard: *Describo con oraciones simples a una persona, lugar u objeto que me son familiares aunque, si lo requiero, me apoyo en apuntes o en mi profesor.*

Translation: I describe, with simple sentences, a person, a place, and an object which are familiar to me, even though I find support in my notes and in my teacher, if necessary.

Level: B1

Standard: *Identifico iniciación, nudo y desenlace en una narración.*

Translation: I identify the beginning, middle, and end in a narrative.

Standard: *Reconozco el propósito de una descripción en textos narrativos de mediana extensión.*

Translation: I recognize the purpose of a description in narrative texts of medium length.

Standard: *Identifico puntos a favor y en contra en un texto argumentativo sobre temas con los que estoy familiarizado.*

Translation: I identify reasons against and in favor of an argumentative text about topics with which I am familiar.

3.3 Sociolinguistic competence

In the four lessons we observed, this competence was never addressed in the lessons. Again, we cannot conclude from the four observations that teachers do not address sociolinguistic competence in the classes they teach.

Even though during the observations we conducted there were no activities meant for students to develop their sociolinguistic competence, the school's language curriculum does include one standard for this competence in level A2 and B1.

Evidence:

Level: A2

Standard: *Inicio, mantengo y cierro una conversación sencilla sobre un tema conocido.*

Translation: I initiate, sustain, and close a simple conversation about a familiar topic to me.

From the results of our data analysis, we could notice similar results to Gonzalez's (2008) findings. In the author's study, for the teachers, communicative competence includes grammar, lexis, functional aspects and the four language skills. The teachers perceived communicative competence as functional because they expressed that language structures have uses. This correlates to what we found because the two teachers state that they are based on communicative approach even though they mainly gave students grammar explanation and exercises supporting that this is part of the communicative competence. Furthermore, in relation to some conclusions in Posada and Patiño's study (2007), the institute where the study was conducted lacked a clear methodology. Comparing this to our project we found out similar facts in the sessions observed. For example, there was no coherence to what the school curriculum proposed, what teachers say they did and what was observed in class, since they said they oriented the lessons in a communicative way but the instructional design set grammar objectives over communicative ones.

In contrast to Hernandez and Faustino's (2006) study, in which teachers did not go deeply into the pragmatic competence, we noticed in our study a minor emphasis on this competence since students were exposed to some functions we do in real life like offering things, planning and following sequences presented in a reading.

In relation to the sociolinguistic competences, there was no evidence in our study and the studies conducted by Hernandez & Faustino (2006), Alvarez (2007).

4. About the approaches to language and language learning

Having analyzed the data taken from class observations, interviews and the curriculum, we can suggest that there is no relation between what the teachers say, what they do and what they are expected to do according to the language curriculum. The language curriculum is a combination of the three approaches to language (structure, function, interaction). In the interview the teachers say they use the communicative approach, which we can associate to the functional and interactional uses of language.

The language curriculum for level A2 and B1 is divided into in three competences: linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic. These competences can be associated to the three approaches to language. First of all, in the language curriculum, the linguistic competence is mentioned; this competence can be related to the view of language as *structure*. The pragmatic competence, which is also stated in the language curriculum, can be related to the view of language as *function*; the sociolinguistic competence can be associated to the view of language as an *interaction*.

In the language curriculum document A2	Approach
Competencia lingüística: Describo con frases cortas personas, lugares, objetos o hechos relacionados con temas y situaciones que me son familiares	Structure: In the linguistic competence the students are expected to use grammatical patterns to describe. There seems to be a misunderstanding because the standard is more related to a functional use of language which is to describe
Competencia Pragmática: Describo con oraciones simples a una persona, lugar u objeto que me son familiares aunque, si lo requiero, me apoyo en apuntes o en mi profesor	Function: the standard relates to something we do with language in real life: describe It is communicative rather than expressing meaning to language.
Competencia Sociolingüística: Inicio, mantengo y cierro una conversación sencilla sobre un tema conocido.	Interaction: We can infer that the students are expected, according to the curriculum, to have activities that allow them to interact.

<p>In the language curriculum document B1</p>	<p>Approach</p>
<p>Competencia lingüística:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Escribo narraciones sobre experiencias personales y hechos a mi alrededor. 1, 2 -Uso planes representados en mapas o diagramas para desarrollar mis escritos -Edito mis escritos en clase, teniendo en cuenta reglas de ortografía, adecuación del vocabulario y estructuras gramaticales 	<p>Structure:</p> <p>In the linguistic competence the students are expected to use grammatical patterns and vocabulary adjustment to produce writings.</p>
<p>Competencia Pragmática:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identifico iniciación, nudo y desenlace en una narración. - Reconozco el propósito de una descripción en textos narrativos de mediana extensión. - Identifico puntos a favor y en contra en un texto argumentativo sobre temas con los que estoy familiarizado 	<p>Function:</p> <p>The standard relates to a discourse competence: understanding texts.</p>
<p>Competencia Sociolingüística</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Muestro una actitud respetuosa y tolerante al escuchar a otros. - Monitoreo la toma de turnos entre los participantes en discusiones sobre 	<p>Interaction:</p> <p>Language as interaction can be evidenced in the standards:</p> <p>“I display a respectful and tolerant attitude when listening to others”.</p>

temas preparados con anterioridad.	“I monitor participants in turn taking in discussions about previously prepared topics”.
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Evidence:

Observation # 2, Teacher # 1, Procedure # 2

T. explains with grammar terms “A se utiliza para sustantivos singulares, no más, por ejemplo... An Apple”

Observation # 1, Teacher # 1, Procedure # 2

T. starts writing on the board the prepositions of place.

Observation # 2, Teacher # 1, Procedure # 2-5

Explanation of grammar items (quantifiers) and fill-in the gap exercises

Observation # 1, Teacher # 2, Procedure # 3-4

The focus of the lesson was the Ss review of the structure and use of “WILL”

Observation # 2, Teacher # 2, Procedure # 5

The focus of the lesson is the use and function of passive voice.

Our findings in relation to approaches to language and language learning align with those in Cadavid, MacNulty and Quinchía’s (2004), Hernández and Faustino’s (2006) and González’s (2008) studies in the sense that they coincide that the major emphasis was on grammar study during the lessons and

further practice of grammar items. What teachers in our study said in the interviews is that they use the communicative approach in their sessions, contrary to what was noticeable in the observations. Their approach to language evidence in the lessons was *structural* as also deduced from the participants' in the authors cited in this present discussion.

5. About the relation between instructional design and the standards for learning English in Colombia

After reflecting on the data collected through the observations, it led us to suggest that the standards used in the grades observed are different from the proposed in the document “*El Reto*” for the same grades. The standards selected by the teachers observed belong to lower grade groups than the ones the teachers are orienting. There are two standards which are targeted the most, and these standards are general, not specific standards in the document “*El Reto*” and frequently used by the teachers. These standards are presented in bold on the table below.

On the next table we contrast and compare the observations, the Colombian standards for learning English and the language curriculum from the school. These similarities and differences are presented in four columns where the first three of four are the evidence to discuss. The last one is for explanations made by the researchers.

Evidence from observed lesson	Colombian standards for learning English	Language curriculum	Explanations
Teacher # 1 Observation #1 6th grade Procedure # 2 Copying sentences from the board	“Copio y transcribo palabras que comprendo y que uso con frecuencia en el salón de clase”. (Estándar de grado 1 a 3 básica primaria)	Structure: <i>Uso apropiado de vocabulario y gramática</i> , under heading: Monologues. Function: <i>Describo en términos sencillos aspectos</i>	All the work the Ss did was to transcribe the sentences written on the board; the words in the sentences may be of frequent use in

		<p><i>de mi pasado y de mi entorno, así como cuestiones relacionadas con mis necesidades inmediatas.</i> This language learning standard is found in the general competences for grades 6th and 7th.</p> <p>Interaction: <i>Inicio, mantengo y cierro una conversación sencilla sobre un tema conocido.</i> This standard is located under the heading sociolinguistic competence.</p>	classroom.
<p>Teacher # 1 Observation #2 7th grade</p> <p>Procedure # 2 Ss give answer about the function of each item in L1. “A y An significan un, una y van antes de una vocal”</p> <p>Ss. look at the reference box, they follow the teacher’s explanation from the copy mentioned on the procedure # 3. Next example is about uncountable nouns. Example (milk) “There is ___ milk”</p>	<p>“Uso adecuadamente estructuras y patrones gramaticales de uso frecuente.” (Estándar de grado 4 – 5 básica primaria)</p>		This standard was addressed because Ss manipulated the grammar items which were the focus of the lesson.
<p>Teacher # 2 Observation #1 8th grade</p> <p>Procedure # 3: Switching to L2, T. starts eliciting information about the structure and use of WILL (filling the gap exercises)</p>	<p>“Uso adecuadamente estructuras y patrones gramaticales de uso frecuente”. (estándar de grado 4 a 5 básica primaria)</p> <p>Translation: I use accurately grammar structures and patterns of frequent use.</p>	No planned procedures are listed in language curriculum document.	In the aforementioned procedure, the teacher elicits information about the future form WILL to complete the exercise and the Ss provide the answer in L1, this is noticeable in the mentioned standards.

<p>Procedure # 3: T. writes the question on the board, and in this way a S., Duberney, gives an answer using L1, which the T. translates to L2</p>	<p><i>“Recurro frecuentemente a mi lengua materna para demostrar comprensión sobre lo que leo o me dicen” (estándar de grado 1 a 3 básica primaria)</i></p> <p>Translation: I frequently use my native language to demonstrate comprehension about what I read or what I am told.</p>	<p>Same as above</p>	<p>When Ss work together use L1</p>
<p>Teacher # 2 Observation #2 9th grade</p> <p>procedure #3 T. tells Ss to organize the sentences in a reading in a logical order. The reading is about the making of porcelain and cheese.</p>	<p><i>“Comprendo textos literarios, académicos y de interés general, escritos con un lenguaje sencillo”. (estándar del grado 6 a 7 básica secundaria)</i></p> <p><i>“Identifico relaciones de significado expresadas en textos que me son familiares”. (estándar del grado 8 a 9 básica secundaria)</i></p>	<p>Same as above</p>	<p>In the aforementioned procedure, the teacher elicits information about the topic they were working previous class to complete the exercise.</p>

The term communicative competence is described as having three sub competences, which are linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic competence according to Council of Europe (2001). Canale and Swain (1980) add “strategic competence” and Canale (1983) included “pragmatic competence”. In conclusion, linguistic competence has remained throughout the literature of language learning in the past 30 years. However, linguistic competence is but one of those needed for communication in a language. The standards for learning English in Colombia and the language curriculum we studied agree with communicative competence being more than linguistic. However, what we observed in class was the development first and foremost of linguistic competences at the grammatical and lexical levels. Thus, our findings disagree with what theory has long proposed: understanding language as more than a rule-governed system.

9. RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

After completing our research study, we can now come up with some suggestions at the instructional level. We warn readers, however, that such suggestions should not be considered as if they were proven solutions for educational phenomena. We base them on what we found in a particular context. Also, taking our research experience as a point of reference, we want to recommend ways of improving research in our area of interest and expanding knowledge of the particular research focus we set out to study.

Research Implications

After carrying out this research, we consider that an ethnographic research should be conducted. With this kind of research, researchers would be able to identify the instructional characteristics throughout an extended period of time which in essence would lead them to attain rather highly reliable findings.

Considering that our data revealed results from a state school, this research project should be applied in a different context, for example in private schools and considering, if conditions are met, a bigger number of schools and teachers. Research should be done on the analysis of (dis)similarities between the instructional design and the language curriculum in learning scenarios. As a result, such studies could corroborate our descriptions concerning both elements in different contexts.

Instructional implications

First of all, English language teachers should be updated about activities which help students to improve their communicative competence and focus their sessions on the development not only of the linguistic competence, but also the pragmatic and the sociolinguistic ones, which are included in communicative competence.

Second, high schools' stakeholders and teachers should be aware of what they expose in the language curriculum and evaluate whether it is implemented by teachers in their instructional designs.

Since the Colombian educational context has a language policy for the teaching and learning of English, teachers of this language are expected to orient their pedagogical practices towards such policy.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The types of objectives in the lessons are mostly focused on objectives related to grammar topics, and the objectives the high school's curriculum settled are mainly communicative. As a way of conclusion, learners improve merely the linguistic competence instead of the pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences.

Another aspect that was noticed in the collection of data is that the instructional design developed for each teacher in their correspondent course, does not seem to have connection with the standards for learning English in Colombia according to the course level it manages because what happens in class relates with other standards.

During sessions, we could notice that students are active listeners, respondents, and they follow teachers' instructions.

In terms of the curriculum managed by the high school, and the data collected from the observed lessons, there does not seem to be an association between what the teachers comment, what they prepare and what they are expected to do considering what is established in the language curriculum.

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APPENDIX 1

PREGUNTAS ENTREVISTA

1. ¿Qué nos puede comentar sobre el diseño de los objetivos de los cursos asignados?
 - ¿Esos diseños se hacen en conjunto con los otros profesores? ¿varían cada año?
 - ¿En qué se basan para el diseño?
 - ¿Manejan un modelo de silabo o currículo?

2. ¿Qué nos puede comentar acerca de la planeación de las clases de inglés que usted dicta?
 - ¿Sigue las mismas secuencias didácticas o procedimientos entre grupos?
 - ¿Cuál es la secuencia de sus clases? ¿Cuántas actividades maneja por sesión?
 - ¿Las actividades que usted prepara para los estudiantes concuerdan con el nivel de inglés? ¿Cómo puede evidenciar eso?
 - ¿Qué espera de sus estudiantes en clase y si eso se ve reflejado en las clases? ¿Si no, por qué?
 - ¿Cuáles son los materiales que usa en clase y la función de los mismos? ¿Tiene usted en cuenta el nivel de inglés de los estudiantes a la hora de seleccionar o diseñar el material de trabajo? ¿A qué materiales tiene usted acceso en la institución?
 - ¿Cuál es su forma de evaluación? ¿la evaluación hace parte de la sesión de clase o cada cuanto se realiza? ¿Cómo evidencia el conocimiento de los estudiantes de forma diferente a la evaluación escrita?

3. ¿Cuál es su papel como profesor dentro de la clase?

4. ¿Se basa en alguna teoría sobre la enseñanza del inglés en el desarrollo de su clase?
 - ¿Cómo decide usted la técnica de trabajo para una actividad? (Grupal/ individual)

5. ¿Qué nos puede comentar sobre el PNB en las clases que orienta?

APPENDIX 2

Observation Format

School:

Date:

Teacher code:

Group and grade:

Time:

Lesson's Objectives		
Communicative	Grammar	Vocabulary

	Procedures and activities	Learners' roles	Teacher's roles	Materials and their use
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Communicative Competence		
Linguistic Competence	Pragmatic Competence	Sociolinguistic Competence

Approach to Language	Approach to Language Learning

Evidence from observed lesson	Colombian standards for learning English	Explanations