

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' (COHORT 9) LIVED EXPERIENCES RELATED
TO ENGLISH NATIVE ASSISTANT'S SUPPORT IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
TEACHING EDUCATION PROGRAM AT UCO

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to evidence students' voices through their lived experiences related to native English assistants in a private university in Colombia. research journals, semi-structured interviews and surveys. One of the problems we faced when developing the project was the disposition of students to participate in the interviews and surveys proposed to gather information. During the analysis of the findings, it was evidenced the discontent that students had with the performance of the English native assistants inside the classroom. Although students thought that the strategy of bringing assistants to the classroom is good, it is notorious that those assistants should have previous knowledge about pedagogy in order to be clearer when supporting a class. To conclude, it was necessary to evidence students' voices as a tool to have an overall view about how the process have been carrying out until this moment. In order to do so, the project was conducted using systematization of experiences, additionally, three data collection methods were used to evidence students' voices:

Key words: Students' experiences, English native assistants, pedagogical knowledge, culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the purpose of supporting this project with previous literature, we included three different studies related to the specific objectives of our study. Although those studies do not respond specifically to the specific objectives, they are related to the role of language assistants (hereinafter LA), the relevance of having native and non-native assistants speaking teachers, and students' perceptions towards the teaching behavior of native and non-native English speaking teachers. Which are keywords in this research project.

The first study was conducted by Walkinshaw and Hoang, (2014) in two public universities in Vietnam. The project was implemented with two participant groups of 100 students. The first group was composed by 50 students: 38 females and 12 males. All respondents were third year English majors between the ages of 20 and 24, with upper intermediate English language competence. The second group was composed by 50 Japanese females from a university of Japan.

The objective of this study was to shed light on the belief that having a native English speaker teacher is innately better than having a non-native English speaker

teacher. Moreover, the authors compare the benefits that both native and non-native English speaker teachers have through students' perceptions.

In order to carry out the research project, the authors used a questionnaire with 5 questions related to participants' opinions. The questions were directed to obtain answers about students' opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of having a native and non-native English language teachers, and finally there was a space to add extra information. Participants were asked to answer the questions in English as they were advanced level in English, and researchers did not pay attention to students' mistakes because the questions were not related to English level, but to obtain information about students' opinions. Otherwise, researchers did not take into account the answers that were unclear and difficult to understand.

The results of this study were divided in four categories that express students' perceptions about having native and non-native English language teachers. The four categories were called: Teachers as pronunciation models, student-teacher cultural similarities and differences, explaining complex language, and learning from both types of teachers.

In the first category, participants expressed an advantage of having a native English language teacher. Participants linked the native teacher with a model to follow in terms of pronunciation, intonation and fluency when producing the language. This improvement could be accomplished by imitating native teachers' gestures or anything that could be learnt through the process of imitation. In the

second category, the discussion was about cultural exchanges between students and native English language teachers. Participants thought that communication could be difficult and misunderstandings could appear. In addition, participants evidenced a lack of confidence when asking for a favor or expressing a doubt, they prefer to ask for favors or doubts to a non-native English language teacher, because they tend to be more comprehensive and they understand the context more than a native English language teacher. To sum up, the context plays a very important role in terms of communication and the relationship between students and teachers.

In the third category, participants stated that non-native English language teachers are better to explain complex subject such as grammar. This result places non-native English speakers in a better position in relation to native speakers, as native speakers' explanations could be more confusing or difficult to understand, while non-native speakers can reproduce their knowledge easier and understandable. Finally, the fourth category explained the necessity of both native and non-native speaker at the moment of learning a language. Participants pointed out that students with low level of English should study with a non-native speaker because they can use more comprehensible language and also to explain better grammatical topics. On the other hand, students with a higher level of English should learn from a native in order to improve their pronunciation and to improve their ability to understand. In short, this category wanted to evidence the necessity of having both kind of teachers, and none of them are the best between them because both have their own advantages and abilities.

The previous study helped us realize some important issues to keep in mind at the moment of implementing our project. Although the research project had to do with students' perceptions about native and non-native English language teachers, there were some things like: culture, grammar, confidence, etc. That are not explicit in the project but they are still very important for the development of the project. Hence, we should be aware about all those facts that could appear in the implementation of our study, because we cannot ignore relevant information just because it does not appear explicitly in our objectives.

The second study was implemented by Brown (2013). He aims to elicit students' attitudes and perceptions towards the teaching behavior of native and non-native English speaking teachers. In consequence, the researcher wanted to know why certain characteristics of both native and non-native English speaking teachers are felt to be more prestigious than others.

The participants of this study were 178 students from an upper-secondary school in Sweden. These included nine, 1st year; four, 2nd year; and two, 3rd year upper secondary school classes; totaling 15 classes in all. It is also important to mention that the percentage of women is higher than men (71 males and 107 females), and the survey used was available in Swedish and English, as 50 of the students felt more comfortable answering in English.

This study was carried out through the implementation of a questionnaire that included some close questions to look for characteristics of both native and

non-native English speaking teachers based on students' perceptions. Every question had 5 different answers, students could agree or disagree but in a scale from 1 to 5, however the first questions were about generalities of their teachers, for instance: what country is your English teachers from? Or your English teacher is a Native English speaking teacher (NEST), Non-native English speaking teacher (NNEST) not sure. And the other questions are related to the development of the teacher inside the classroom, as revealed by the question number 5: Corrects errors consistently.

This study could gather some interesting information about students' perceptions towards native and non-native English speaking teachers. In a first stage, participants believed that their English teachers were proficient speakers of the language. Nevertheless, students see native teachers as the model of English speaker because there could be a similar process in comparison to L1 acquisition, it means that students can associate L2 learning with L1 acquisition by having a model to follow in terms of speaking. Then, results showed some perceptions regarding teachers' attitude towards teaching. Something to highlight in this finding is the interest that non-native teachers have in learners' opinions, participants were more likely to respond positively to NNEST rather than NEST. Additionally, the results showed that NNESTs tend to be more traditional when teaching compared to NEST. Otherwise, the opinions were split with a 42% for the ones who thought that NNEST used more traditional ways of teaching, while 40% of participants agreed with NEST.

Finally, this study will contribute to ours, as this project focused its attention on students' perceptions towards native and non-native teachers inside the classroom.

Though this project had a quantitative approach, the phenomena that the author was analyzing is similar to ours. Because we want to evidence students' lived experiences regarding English teaching assistants. Thereupon, we could notice the importance of knowing students' voices to have a notion about how a process is being carried out.

Along the third study made by Buckingham (2017) it was evidenced the interest to define the role of the language assistants inside a bilingual classroom; the author studied the main aspects of three programs carried out in Spain. Those programs were publicly funded in bilingual contexts, the BEDA program run by Federación Española de Religiosos de Enseñanza-Titulares de Centros Católicos (FERE-CECA), and the UCETAM Bicultural-Bilingual and Bicultural programs. This study had its focus on young native people who were from different English contexts and spent at least one academic year in a school to support the students' English learning process, giving an English model to students and teachers from those institutions; this program was directed to primary school in which 1900 native assistants worked to support the learning process inside the classroom.

Buckingham (2017) obtained from the questionnaires applied to those assistant teachers, that students were perceiving them as a help and as a tool that could help them with their learning processes in terms of speaking and listening

skills inside those institutions, the most common verb used by those assistants was “to assist”, because they were in charge of giving to the teachers an extra help to carry out the learning task, so they understood their functions as a help for teachers and a tool for students and for their learning exercise. Consequently, at the end of this process, language assistants (LA), and teachers reported some differences on their perceptions about the methodology and there was a variation in the percent presented by LA and teachers. The main difference was that LA reported that there is an influence when students have an English model in the classroom.

By the way, this work can be considered a very important point of reference for our project because of the perceptions not only from students but also from assistants inside the program; assistants perceptions can be taken into account because it is very important to know if they have a clear idea about what they main task is inside the classroom.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Learning a foreign language is a remarkable necessity in terms of cognitive tasks or communication in different languages, many opportunities could be given only knowing a foreign language. According to Brown (2013), thanks to globalization, it emerged a necessity of communication among countries with different languages. This necessity has become English into a bridge which purpose is to communicate with people from many countries with a common language, this

process is also known as: English as a lingua franca. Consequently, the ministry of national education (MEN) along with Fulbright program have decided to introduce a group of people in the classes to support the process of learning English. These group of people received the name of English teaching assistants (ETA), whose purpose in the classroom is to support English teachers to improve students' English level. Thereupon, Colombia has bet to become a bilingual country. In consequence the MEN has implemented some strategies to reach the objectives proposed by the government, for example: "Colombia Bilingue" which is a proposal that along with Fulbright and ICETEX, has included the ETA, so as to improve English level in some universities of the country. ICETEX (n.d) is an institution created by the government of Colombia, and its purpose is to help people with education credits and scholarships for some students with remarkable academic development. In addition to this, ICETEX has made some agreements with other institutions like: British council, France embassy, Fulbright, etc. In order to promote exchanges of language assistants. Therefore, the strategy of implementing ETAs have been implementing in 26 universities around the country from 2015, one of the universities that welcomed this program is: Universidad católica de oriente (UCO). This issue is really important as this university is the core of our study. It is important to mention that the number of universities benefited by this program have varied in relation to the year 2015, and the number of students benefited by the strategy has varied as well, this information is evident in the following chart:

	2015	2016	2017
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Assistants from United states for teaching English	30	50	18
Students from the undergraduate degree in languages or language centers	26.250	43.750	15.750
English teachers	150	250	90
Focused places	13	19	11
Institutions of higher education benefitted	26	40	14

Retrieved from: <http://aprende.colombiaaprende.edu.co/es/node/86690>

On the other hand, even though this project aims to evidence pre-service teachers' experiences regarding ETA inside the classroom, the boundaries reside in the amount of information that we might collect from students. In fact, as the program has had a large trajectory, it is really difficult to gather all students' experiences since the time the program was created. The group chosen for this project should be students' higher semester, because if we take a group from the semester 5 or even lower semesters we might find the problem that some students have not attended classes with native assistants. Consequently, this research project will be focused on the cohort 9 only, because all students of this cohort have had a considerable trajectory in the program. Additionally, it is more probable that students from this cohort have worked with any EAT, and we can make sure that students have attended at least one class with the presence of an assistant. The purpose of collecting this information is to create a database that will contribute to the program in foreign languages, because we consider that it is important to know students' voices so as to have an overall view towards the strategy of including ETAs inside

the classroom. To sum up, as it was mentioned previously, this study might contribute to the database of the program or even create one in the case of a nonexistence of one. Also, this project will work as a base to continue exploring students' experiences for future researchers; whereas there are many cohorts coming and it became even more important to evaluate the process through students' lived experiences.

CONTEXT

This research project will be developed in a private institution located in the urban area of the municipality of Rionegro in the Eastern region of Antioquia. The institution is a private university which offers an undergraduate degree in foreign language its dependence is the faculty education. Additionally, the group that will be analyzed is the cohort 9 of the program in foreign languages, and the criteria to choose the participants will be voluntary. In order to obtain the necessary information, 10 participants will be interviewed, it is necessary to remark that we chose the students from the cohort 9 because they are the ones who have spent more time in the program and they have had the opportunity to work with native assistants at least once. To end up, it is also important to mention that this cohort is currently working with a native assistant, for that reason they will have a good range of information to provide us.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are cohort 9 students' lived experiences through the language learning support of English teaching assistant in a foreign language program?

JUSTIFICATION

This project aims to obtain pre-service teachers' lived experiences through the language learning support given by ETAs in the classroom. Besides, the results obtained might be used by students to check how the process with ETA is being developed, and also it might be used by the licenciatura students to have an overall view about the strategy implemented, and this project will help us understand the way in which students perceive ETAs inside the classroom.

In terms of contributions to the field of English language teaching and learning, the results of this project will permit the analysis of the strategy of implementing ETAs inside the classroom. Otherwise, this project do not want to show subjective information, but to evidence the lived experiences so as to take them into consideration for future interventions and/or changes. In addition, the results will function as self-evaluation for students and the language center could take this into account to be aware of students' necessities.

Secondly, the implementation of this project will contribute to this context because the UCO has adopted the strategy of implementing ETA inside the

classroom in order to improve English level in the undergraduate degree in foreign languages. Hence, it becomes necessary to know how the process is being carried out to the light of students' experiences.

To sum up, this project will help us, as future teachers, to be aware of the processes in which we are involved. Specifically, this study gives students a space to express their experiences, which could be translated as a space to expose feelings regarding the implementation. Finally, our profession demands to be more critical when adopting new ideas to improve our language in general and this project will allow us to find ways to show how things are going and do some changes if necessary.

Research objective.

To systematize the experiences Pre-service teachers have with the support given by the English native assistants in a foreign language teaching education program at Universidad Católica de Oriente.

Specific objectives.

To analyze students' points of view about their processes related to the English native assistants.

To classify students' experiences about the teaching strategies within the integrated English course and the classes taught in English by the English native assistants.

To identify the strengths and areas to improve in the process related to the pre-service teachers' experiences learning.

CONCEPTUAL REFERENCES.

According to the purpose of our research which is based on the experiences students have about the strategies used by English assistants into the classes taught in English, and taking into account the previous statements, we found it is necessary to give a definition to these key concepts: Experience, pre-service teacher, learning and systematization. Therefore these concepts will help us clarify the line of our research project.

Pre-service teacher

according to the IGI global dictionary, a pre-service teacher is a student in a teacher education program, who is about to start their practice, but does not yet teach independently; we can also understand this term as the previous stage of a teaching practice in a real context.

Systematization:

Systematization is understood as the way in which any information, finding or situation is organized for a better comprehension of the subject itself. Jara (2012) defines systematization as the way in which we understand why the process is being

carried out in a specific way and also interpret all the findings after a previous inquiry; in the same way, Jara (1994) mentioned that in the field of the popular education, it is important to use the term not only as systematization, but also as systematization of experiences, because this is the way in which we obtain learning, more than obtaining information to organize.

Experience:

Jara (1994) explained experience as the situations that have taken place on the implementation of a project or the process in which a person lives certain situations which turn into a new knowledge, being positive and negative as well. Therefore, those facts are the product of an interaction among actors involved in the process which generates new learnings. Moreover, Jara (2012) also defined experience as a vital process in constant change, combining a bunch of objective and subjective dimensions in a socio-historical reality. Besides, De Souza (1997) explains that human beings, as unconcluded animals, try to appropriate experiences, through the creation and transformation of culture, to give explanations of what happen to him and also as a manner to differentiate from animals.

Culture.

Tylor (1871) defined culture, in an ethnography meaning, as the whole complex that involves knowledge, beliefs, art, laws, moral, customs and everything related to any attitude and habit already acquired by human beings as members of a society. Furthermore, Harris (1981) emphasized on the idea of culture as socially acquired modes of thinking, feeling and acting of the members of a specific society. Both authors explained the term “culture” as all those accumulated knowledge that have been passing generation by generation becoming a learning for future interaction; finally, learning can be understood as a social construct that pass through generations to become a social relationship between individuals from the same culture.

METHODOLOGY.

Along this section, it will be described the methodology used for carrying out what we wanted to achieve. In this part there will be presented some important aspects that we have to keep in mind at the moment of collecting information, selecting those participants we want to work with and some aspects like the way in which we will analyze all the information obtained from this process.

Type of Research:

This research paper was based on qualitative research, as we are trying to understand social phenomena based on students' experiences regarding the process with native assistants. According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research is an interrogative process based on different aspects of a culture. During this process, the researcher builds a complex environment in which he or she analyzes different discourses and versions given by the participants of the process, and this process is carried out in a natural context. Besides, Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2) suggested that qualitative researchers focused their attention in a natural environment, it means that the objects of study should be studied on their own context in order to interpret the phenomena already presented.

The current research project aims to analyze Pre-service teachers' (cohort 9) lived experiences related to the support that English native assistants have offered in the foreign language teaching program in the UCO. The objective of this project is to describe in detail the experiences that pre-services teachers have had with English native assistants, this means that pre-service teachers will have the opportunity to express their different experiences. We considered helpful to take into account the different experiences of pre-service teachers in the degree, because in this way we might have a stocktaking about the process with native assistants. Also, the information that could be taken from the project will be useful for students and the language center to analyze the process. However, we do not pretend to have the most accurate information, but we could provide enough information to obtain an overall view based on pre-service teachers' lived experiences.

In this case, a qualitative research helped us to understand all the characteristics and the specific situations found into this subject, a qualitative research involves all the strategies we have in mind to cover our purpose, because this type of research takes into account all participants beliefs and perceptions by listening to them. Sandín (2003) defines qualitative research as a systematic activity oriented to comprehend in a deeper way all the educational and social phenomena, and the transformation of educative sceneries through the development of a series of knowledge. So that is why a kind of research like this gives a lot of instruments necessary for a data collection in which we will listen to other perspectives about a common subject.

Systematization:

We decided to carry out our project based on systematization (in this case we want to systematize experiences). Thanks to this method, we can collect information through participants, or in other words, students. Having the information from those who are involved in the process is pertinent for us to understand the process and have an overall view of the process.

Jara (1994) explains systematization as a critic interpretation of one or more experiences that widely explained can give more information at the moment of interpret them. Then, the process of systematization inside our research is a very important tool at the moment of obtaining and organizing the relevant information inside our study. Moreover, Mejía (2008) affirms that in systematization, the

knowledge should be explicit in order to construct more knowledge. This concept means that through a reflection of empirical facts, those facts should become into experience but this process only could be carried out by people who have lived those experiences. To sum up, we decided to apply systematization because of the relation between students, assistants and researchers. It is necessary to listen to what people have to say in order to construct more knowledge through the analysis of data and the interaction of people experiences.

Participants and ethical considerations

In order to define the adequate participants, we considered that it was important to think about the last semester students because of the number of classes they had with native assistants along their processes. The first aspect is the connection pre-service teachers have with the Universidad Catolica del Oriente, An urban context in which they have lived their experiences in the English program; another aspect is the specific semester, this semester was chosen for the reason of their wide experiences with assistants, they have lived different experiences with English native assistant through the program and they faced some situations for a long time and it is perfect to consider their experiences and suggestions about the process in which they acquired some skills. Furthermore, the participants have been chosen because the richness of the information that could be provided by the lived experiences they would share with us.

At the moment of carrying out the interviews, questionnaires and journal which is focus our research, we took into account the use of methods to protect the identity and the information provided by the participants and keep the confidence of the data required to develop our research, the information given by the participants was used only with educational purposes and they will be previously informed before the analysis of the information. Additionally, we created some consent forms if necessary, everything with the purpose of creating a relaxing environment at the moment of obtaining students lived experiences.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS.

As it was mentioned before, the project was based on the qualitative approach, there were selected qualitative instruments to gather the appropriate information of the target population, which allows us to experiment the different perspectives and achieved objectives established for the research.

For this reason, the methods to collect data which were selected in this research were 10 interviews, 10 questionnaires and 4 observations with the chart for the journal, because the main interest is to know what they think and listen to all their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews.

To gather information from the pre/service teachers (cohort 9) lived experiences with English native assistants we considered that one of the most suitable methods are interviews. As Mcnamara (1999) mentioned, interviews are the way in which we can understand what the interviewees are trying to say, what they can produce to come out with different perspectives making the interviews be more understandable to study. Additionally Boyce & Neale (2006) suggest that interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of responders to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation.

Survey research:

According to Check and Schutt (2012), survey research is the collection of information from individuals and their responses. This study is mostly used to identify human behaviors and preferences of its participants, it can be formed as numerical items and the main usages of this instrument is focused to obtain opinions for programs or different products; these surveys can contain open-ended or multiple answer questions and are commonly used to identify those characteristics inside a group of individuals, and allows the researcher to know how to proceed, in terms of social preferences, at the moment of analyzing the data.

Research Journal:

According to Marlow (2010), a journal is a method to collect data through the process of recording moments, thoughts, and experiences in a written way. This method is mostly used for interpretative studies, hence it allows the researcher to express a personal opinion when it is required. Hence, in order to validate the information given by participants during the interviews and surveys, the information obtained will be compared with the researchers' comments based on the journal.

As it was clarified previously, this study is focused on a qualitative way in which we were able to gather information in a more detailed way, because the participants' voices played an interesting role where they are able to express several kinds of feelings and emotions that allow us to understand in a deeper way what they are aiming to talk.

ANALYSIS ROUTE.

In order to analyze the results, this study used grounded theory with the purpose of organizing the information through categories so as to classify the emerged results, and posteriorly analyze the findings. We decided to use this methodology because of the characteristics that it propose for the analysis of data, Bryant (2002) stated that grounded theory is based on the meaning that humans give to social interactions; those meanings are built and modified by some characters through interpretations and social experiences. Additionally, grounded theory has to

do with the empirical reality seen from interpretations made by people immersed in a common project of observations, Sudabby (2006). Therefore, after having gathered the results, they were categorized into four big categories over the analysis of the patterns and finally the findings were interpreted so as to come up with a conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As it was stated during the development of this research paper, the aim of this project is to systematize students' experiences regarding English native assistants. In order to do so, we categorized students' experiences through four main categories: Students' view regarding English native assistants, assistants' contributions to the process, relationship between students and assistants, and students' feedback to the process. As a result, we explain the information gathered below.

Students' view regarding English native assistants

This category explains the way in which students have perceived the assistants during their presence inside the classes.

The role of the assistants: In overall, participants' tended to define the role of the assistants with a bunch of terms that are synonyms among them. When participants were asked about the role of the assistants, they mostly used these words: Support, backup, assist, facilitate, and culture. These terms allowed us to

think that students perceive assistants as those people who are in the classroom to support the process of learning English, this was stated by the participant “C”, who affirms that assistants are there not only to support teachers, but also the process with students: “I believe that assistants give us a lot to our learning process, they are a real support for both teachers and students” (Interview participant C, Question 1; April 11, 2019). Further, the participant “H” added that: “assistants are those people who assist or support students in the process of learning a language” (Interview participant H, question 1; April 23, 2019).

The importance of native assistants: Through the analysis of this sub-category, students responded positively to the question about the importance of having a native assistant in the classroom. However, in spite of considering assistants as a good source to improve English, students thought that it is not a negative point if they (assistants) are not inside the classroom. In other words, students did not think that the presence of the assistants are fundamental to the process of learning the language, it depends mainly on the objective of the class. This perception became evident in the response of the participant A: “I would say that is very fruitful, nevertheless I consider that if there is not an assistant, there would not be any difficulty” (Interview participant A; Question number two, April 11, 2019).

Students’ comfortability with assistants: Students’ were very positive when responding to the question: do you feel comfortable with the presence of the native assistant? The positive answers were supported with an 80% of favorability against a 20% of unconformity (Survey question #5). This result allowed us to think that

students do not feel any pressure when interacting with assistants, this is very important in terms of participation in the classes. This issue was evident in the last classes of the semester, after talking with the teacher over the classes with the assistants, students tended to be more participative and they practiced more English during the classes (Research journal, 16/05/2019).

Students' approval regarding the strategy: This subcategory threw us a particular result. It was curious because 50% of students did not approve the strategy of having an assistant inside the classroom, but they were not against it, they barely responded with "perhaps". On the other hand, 30% of participants were positive in their answers; while 20% of participants exposed their negative answer respectively (Survey question # 6). Those participants who approve the strategy think that it is important to have an assistant inside the class, because of the connection with a different culture (Interview participant D; question number three, April 11, 2019) by the contrary, those participants who exposed their negative answers, think that it would be the same situation or even better if there is an English teacher carrying out the process and finally some of them expressed that it does not matter the person in charge of it, the most important thing is the own learning process.

Students' preferences with the presence of native assistants: Less than the half of participants were neutral when they were asked about their preferences with the presence of a native assistant. With the 40% of the answers, participants thought that it is the same whether there are assistants or not, because the main objective of the class is to learn from this extra help but it is the same with the assistant or with

the teacher; other 40% of participants showed their preferences regarding the presence of native assistants. Those participants who approve the strategy think that having an assistant is better for their learning process in terms of speaking and listening skills. Finally, with 20% of the answers, some participants mentioned that they were against the presence of the assistants (Survey question #7), because that specific task could be done perfectly by an English teacher.

Assistants' contributions to the process

Along this category, we will expose the information gathered through the analysis of the data collection method in relation to the contributions made by assistants during their presence in the classes of integrated English and the classes taught in English.

Advantages of having a Native assistant in the classroom: In general terms, students agreed that the advantages that a native assistant brought to them, were related to cultural exchange that could be present in the classes with the presence of a person from other context. Hence, accent and pronunciation play an important role in the improvement of mistakes in terms of pronunciation or some others structural matters. (Research journal, April 25, 2019).

Disadvantages of having a native assistant in the classroom: On the other hand, students expressed their dislikes regarding the presence of a native assistants by explaining that there could be a cultural interference. This means that although cultural exchanges are necessary in the process of learning a new language, assistants

should be more aware about the dynamics of the current context. Students said that assistants' attitude were very distant and students felt that, perhaps, they were not interested in the process at all (Interview participant A, Question number four, April 11, 2019). Additionally, Students stated that assistant should, at least, have a brief knowledge about pedagogy, because it is very difficult for students to understand the way in which assistant explain the contents and sometimes assistants were not able to solve students' doubts because of ignorance about the topic in general (Research journal # 2, 25/04/2019).

Dependency of the native assistant to improve any skill: Participants were asked about whether they thought they could improve any skill without the presence of a native assistant or not. 90% of participants agreed that they could improve any skill without assistants, and only 10% of the participants were in disagree (Survey, question #8). As a result, participants concluded that having a native assistant inside the classroom is not synonym of improvement, as they have improve all skills without the help of an English native. It could also means that non-native teachers are prepared enough to solve doubts, correct and help students with their learning process.

The help of the assistants to improve any skill: Generally, students agreed that they received a help to improve pronunciation from assistants. Nevertheless, the opinions were splitted between the ones who thought that they definitely were helped by assistants, and the ones who thought that not. This discussion ended up with a

50% for those who answered positively, while the ones who said not obtained the 40% of the votes (Interview participants, Question 6; April 23, 2019)

Skills improved by students: According to the answers obtained from the survey (Survey Question number four, May 06, 2019) the skill that was improved the most was “listening”. This skill received 50% of the votes. Secondly, “speaking” was the skill with more votes with 20%, parallel with 20% of the votes, some participants considered that they did not improve any skill with the help of a native assistant. Finally, with 10%, some participants pointed out that they could improve the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) during the process with native assistants.

The relationship between students and assistants

This category will explain the relationship established through students' experiences during the classes with presence of assistants. Additionally, students will express some generalities regarding the process students have had with the assistants.

The contact of students with the assistants: Based on the survey (Survey question number one; May 06, 2019). All participants responded affirmatively to the question: have you ever had a native assistant in any class? It means that the 100% percent of students have had at least a class with the presence of a native assistant. As it was mentioned previously, participants have had at least one class with the presence of a native assistant. This could be supported by the answers obtained in the survey (Survey question number 2; May 06, 2019) in which the 10% of participants

said that they have had a native assistant in a class only once. Additionally 90% of participants have had an assistant in a class more than twice. Consequently, this information affirms the fact that we stated in the justification, because all participants have attended at least one class with a native assistant, hence the information has a significant support.

Specific subject: Participants were asked about the specific subject in which they have had a native assistant. 90% of students answered that they have had a native assistant in the classes taught in English, while 40% said that they have had one in the integrated English classes (Survey question #3, 06/05/2019). It is important to mention that a portion of students have had a native assistant in both subjects. Additionally, some students stated that it is better to have a native assistant in the integrated English classes because in those classes should be an integration of skills, hence the presence of a native assistant could be interesting.

Students' feedback regarding the process.

To close the categories, students expressed their opinions to the process carried out by the language center. These comments include both: gratitude and suggestions to the process in order to improve the strategy.

Students' suggestions: In overall, students agreed that there are some aspects that could be changed in order to improve the methodology with the native assistants. Giving and approximately data, 70% of students thought that assistant should have, what they called, "pedagogical knowledgement" so as to support correctly the

process, because the fact of knowing a second language it is not the fact of knowing how to teach it (Interview,. Question number 7; April 11, 2019). In addition to this, Students insisted in the relationship between students and assistants, because students perceived that assistants are not interested in the process, so they should be more likely to help students through a continuous process (Research journal number 3; May 09, 2019).

Students' congratulations: Students expressed their gratitude to the language center because of the implementation of the strategy. Students thought that through this process there could be many advantages for students to improve the language, which is why students want to say a big thanks. In spite of having some aspects to improve, it is also necessary to highlight the benefits that the process has carried out until this moment (Interviews, April 11, 2019).

DISCUSSION.

Along this paper it was found that most participants believe that an assistant is the person in charge of helping students along the process, but students pointed out that it is not necessary to have an assistant when there are some teachers that are really prepared for this task. Moreover, participants highlight the positive aspects that have the non-native English teacher and the native English teacher; this is similar to the results stated by Walkinshaw and Hoang, (2014) where participants tend to see the native teacher as a model to improve pronunciation, on the other side, the non-native teacher is seen as the one who manage grammar better. Furthermore,

the necessity of having a native assistant with enough preparation was evident, because students tended to be very confused with some explanations given by assistant. Finally, this results became important in the case of needing some information regarding the process with the ETA in the program, for that reason this information is important for both students and people in charge of manage the role of the assistants.

CONCLUSIONS

During the process that we decided to develop, we could figure out the importance of knowing students' experiences regarding the process with native assistants as they had a lot to say regarding the process. Hence, this study provided us with enough information to conclude that students really care about the processes that the University suggests for them.

Thus, this study evidenced two important steps which are necessary to remark. First at all, students always highlighted the importance of having a native assistant inside the classroom, as assistants can provide students with extra information about the language because of the management that assistants have with the language. It is notorious that the native assistant can correct pronunciation mistakes, structural mistakes and even expand the vocabulary if necessary, but this could also be made by an English teacher. On the contrary, students stated the lack of preparation that some assistants have shown during their permanence in the process.

Thus, the rejection that students expressed upon the characteristics that a native assistant should have before intervening in the classroom were evident. In consequence, students proposed that assistants should have at least a minimum knowledge in the field of pedagogy, so as to have a better intervention when assisting students in the classes.

Finally, we concluded that the strategy implemented is very useful for students in their processes of learning a language, thus students need a model to base on when pronouncing and using the language. It does not mean that non-native teacher are not capable of doing the same, but in this case is pertinent to make the differentiation between “Native English teachers” and “Native English assistants”. Consequently, as we are working with native English assistants, it is supposed that the role of the assistants is to “assist”, as it was stated by the majority of participants. To sum up, although the process is useful for students to improve the language, we cannot avoid the fact that there are some aspects to improve to the light of students’ experiences.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

Semi-structured interview

- How would you define the role of an English native assistant?
- Do you consider important the presence of a native assistant? Say why in the case of yes or not.
- What are the advantages of having a native assistant in the classroom?
- What are the disadvantages of having a native assistant in the classroom?
- Do you consider that a mixture of different accents could influence the way in which you improve the language?
- Do you consider that the presence of a native assistant has helped you somehow to improve your English? In the case of an affirmative answer say: why?
- Do you have any suggestions or congratulation for the language center regarding the implementation of English native assistant in the classroom?

Appendix 2

Survey

- 1- Have you ever had a native assistant in any class?
 - Yes
 - No
- 2- How many classes have you had with the presence of a native assistant?
 - Only one
 - Two
 - More than two
- 3- In which classes have you had a native assistant?
 - Integrated English

- Classes taught in English.

4- Which skill or skills do you consider you have improved with the help of a native assistant in the class?

- Listening
- Speaking
- Writing
- Reading
- None of them

5- Have you felt comfortable with the presence of the Native assistants in the classroom?

- Yes
- No

6- Do you approve the strategy of native assistants in the classroom?

- Yes
- Not

Perhaps

7- Do you think that a class with a native assistant is better than a class without assistants?

- Yes
- Not
- It is the same

8- Based on the fourth question, do you consider that you could improve any skill without

The help of a native assistant?

- Yes
- Not
- Perhaps
-

Appendix 3

Research journal

Nombre del (los) observador (s):	Fecha:
Nombre de la clase:	Salón:
Nombre del (la) Docente: Nombre la (del) asistente:	Número de participantes:
¿Cómo se desarrolló la clase? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participación de los estudiantes- Actitud de los estudiantes- Temas trabajados por el asistente- Relación asistente – estudiante- Manejo del tema (explicaciones, actividades, actitud, etc).	

