



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA



Facultad de Lenguas

LEI students' challenges during the immersion process abroad: perceptions

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages for the Degree of Licenciatura en la
Enseñanza de Inglés

By:

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Thesis Director:

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After thinking and analyzing how to write these words of gratitude, I have concluded not to start with the typical I thank my parents, brother, friends, family, and teachers who were supporting me in this final project of my major because they know that.

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“No one who has lived through the second half of the 20th century could possibly be blind to the enormous impact of exchange programs on the future of countries...”

-Bill Clinton, former US President

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the thing that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

-Mark Twain

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Problem

I have perceived that learning a language is not just to say something. It is to transmit a message to communicate a suitable idea to the receiver.

During my stay in Toronto Canada, I learned new things that helped me to communicate messages, be an English teacher, avoid common problems at the moment of speaking with natives, understand a book, and solve problems while being in a new place.

This let me decide to research about LEI students' challenges during their immersion process abroad, especially regarding their perceptions when they face problems to communicate with native speakers.

1.2 Rationale for the Topic Selection

Learning a second language is not an easy task. Learning English as a second language is even more difficult especially if you are learning English in a non-English speaking country.

For instance, English language learners in countries like Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, and other American countries face a lot of challenges because English is not the official language.

Therefore, it is evident that most of the students, who go out to learn and practice English, face challenges such as communication, lack of lexicon, difficulty to emit sentences grammatically correct, and pronunciation.

Many authors have emphasized the importance of studying abroad as well as the most common problems students face there. However, they did not propose a solution to these kinds of difficulties.

According to a previous literature review, there is no similar research based on how students face problems abroad or teachers who offer an ad hoc solution to teach the four skills, especially while speaking under these circumstances. Indeed, this new investigation will be a complement to a previous study focused on the students' needs abroad.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the English language teaching students' perceptions towards the communicative strategies they use to interact when they were abroad and identify those challenges they faced while being there.

1.4 Research Questions

To accomplish this research, there are two main researcher questions that will guide the project that are the following:

What communicative challenges do you face when being abroad?

What communicative strategies do you use to interact when you were there?

1.5 Research Setting

Reviewing the available context related to the problem, the population and sample of the present study is composed of students who are enrolled in the Bachelor of Teaching English in the Faculty of Languages at Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) in Puebla State, located on the North street 24, 2003, Humboldt.

This context was chosen because according to the institution's official website, its vision is to be the most important educational institution, and one of the most recognized at the local, national and international level in the area of teaching and translation of foreign languages, and Spanish as a second language and foreign-language through an education that will be reflected in the performance of their egress.

To have a major scope of the context, it is important to describe its vision too. Regarding it, its mission is to train professionals in the area of teaching and translation of foreign languages that help to make a more just and equitable society in a spirit of service with an attitude of social commitment; as well as offering courses to the university community as a tool to access the technical, scientific and cultural information generated in other languages for better performance in their professional life and as a means to join with better opportunities in the job market (DGDI, 2018).

Besides, the Faculty of Languages seeks to contribute to the development of society through the provision of free courses of foreign languages and Nahuatl as a second national language; thus, seeking to link more closely with the different groups as a means of aiding cultural enrichment and finally designing.

The main objective of the Faculty of Languages is to train teachers specialized in the teaching of English. Due to this goal, some students travel abroad to practice and improve English. However, while being abroad, students realize that their communicative skills are not enough. Thus, the present research is a suitable way to contribute with information to solve the problem.

The Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) has an agile and flexible organizational structure that promotes and guarantees fair access to international opportunities for training and academic development.

Thanks to its programs and processes, it has an international projection of high quality. Besides, The Faculty of languages offers quality services for the benefit of society as a contribution to the fair and equitable development of the state, national and international environment.

Its current program has subjects focused on communication skills such as workshops to improve the four skills, pragmatics, phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax among others.

1.6 Significance of the Topic

The research provided information about students' challenges of learning or practicing a language abroad as well as some advantages of studying there.

Furthermore, this investigation will be a guide for future students who are thinking about traveling to another country.

This study is beneficial to all the participants who are studying at the Faculty of Languages, BUAP since it will provide information to face communicative situations while staying abroad.

Moreover, this research will be useful for teachers because they are key to the development of their students. Indeed, they are the ones who design and

apply the program in each subject. That is why the educator is best known for the role he plays in the educational field.

Finally, they could help their pupils to achieve their higher education and explore opportunities.

1.7 Conclusion of the chapter

In this chapter, different components of the study were mentioned such as the introduction, rationale for the topic selection, justification of the thesis, and problems that students face when being abroad.

Additionally, the chapter describes the research questions, setting, and significance of the study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews topics that are related to challenges faced by Mexican students who are practicing English as a second language at Camps, in The United States of America, and who are learning English in a social context according to different authors that are specialized in that area.

2.2 The role of English Language in Mexico

English has long been highly regarded among the middle and upper classes of Mexican society, and parents with economic means have the opportunity to send their children to private bilingual and immersion schools with teachers who are highly proficient in the language.

When such students migrate to the US, they typically bring with them a strong foundation in both academic and communicative aspects.

Regarding public education, the Secretaria de Educacion Publica (2018) established an English Program to promote skills, knowledge, attitudes, and learning strategies in social, written, and oral language practices. This implies:

I. Use the foreign language as a means to express ideas and thoughts with confidence and effectiveness towards people of other cultures.

II. Use the foreign language to organize thoughts and discourses, analyze, and solve problems, as well as participate in various exchanges, and cultural expressions of their own and those of other countries.

III. Use the foreign language to interact creatively and ethically with awareness and empathy towards different perspectives and feelings.

IV. Recognize the role of language and culture in the construction of knowledge, the shaping of identity, as well as in the regulation of behavior, experience, and values.

V. Reflect on language and culture to interpret and produce meaning in linguistic and cultural exchanges.

However, a public school may be very limited. The learning process of English should usually begin during the early stages of a child because it focuses primarily on vocabulary and simple phrases (Borjian, 2008).

This means that the lack of suitable teaching methods used by proficient English teachers is an extremely urgency so that students could be prepared to face such environments when they are abroad. Therefore, English teachers play an essential role in engrossing the student's attention.

Besides, it is important to remark that for acquiring communication skills or to excelling in communication skills, a student has to acquire expertise in all four skills.

2.3 Benefits of Learning English

English is the principal language of England, the US, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and many other countries. It is the second most commonly spoken first language with some 400 million native speakers and is the world's most widely used second language (Oxford, 2018).

Learning English as a foreign language allows students many benefits like practicing, traveling, and working outside Mexico to gain incredible experience of learning English with interesting people and learn new words while being exposed to the native pronunciation.

Nowadays, English is the most commonly used language among foreign-language speakers. English is the language with more power around the world, and not only for the benefits of learning but also for the graceful way to learn and practice English in a real context of immersion abroad (Domville-Roach, 2007).

Another benefit of learning English is the opportunity to have access to different literature about many topics around the world since it is the global language, and thus, the most up-dated literature is written in that language.

Besides, for example, in Bachelor's degree, especially in the Language Faculty of Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (the context of this research), learners have the opportunity to travel abroad for a certain period. Indeed, the Dirección General de Desarrollo Internacional (DGDII) offers three

different categories among which the students of the university can choose one to make an exchange for a period of up to one year. Furthermore, the university has an agreement with some companies, working as a chef, counselor or supporting staff abroad, which are the most common positions for this opportunity in the Camps.

Another benefit of being in a summer camp is that this program is for some months, which allows students to study and work without leaving their studies. Thus, it usually combines academic and non-academic work. Indeed, its main purpose is to offer students the opportunity to grow professionally and practice their target language in a native and natural context. Moreover, at the same time, they can develop social relationships with people around the world.

It is essential to mention that more recently, students have had the opportunity to be exposed to international languages, heritage languages, and official languages such as French and English. That is why many students have conveyed a certain level of apprehension towards study abroad programs as a result of the uneasiness associated with potentially missing out on an intensively social part of their lives because studying abroad is a chance to experience different styles of education.

2.4 Cultural Competence in English learning language

Cultural competence is related to some aspects that students need to take into account to perform in a context respecting social rules. Based on the American Speech-language Hearing Association (ASHA, 2017, p.2), "cultural competence involves understanding and appropriately responding to the unique combination of cultural variables and the full range of dimensions of diversity that the professional and client, patient and family bring to interactions".

According to Diller & Moule

It is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than your own. It provides a comprehensive, theoretical, and practical approach to increasing knowledge and awareness, improving attitudes, and

providing the necessary skills for practicing cultural competence each day (2005, p. 13).

When people think about their level of cultural competence, they usually evaluate it higher than it is.

Culture and cultural diversity can incorporate a variety of factors, including "age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, national origins, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and veteran status" (ASHA, 2017, p.3).

As a matter of fact, during the development of cultural competence, students require ongoing self-assessment of cultural knowledge. This knowledge is going to evolve by beginning with an understanding of one's own culture and continuing with interactions with individuals from various cultures.

Moreover, Leavitt (2010) points out that students become a member of another culture by taking on all of the activities, values, and behavior of that target culture. Then, the main focus is to have an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about differences as beliefs, behaviors, languages, practices, and expressions considered unique to members of a specific ethnicity, race or national origin, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families.

Indeed, it is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique while celebrating the between-group variations that make that country a tapestry.

2.5 Cultural Shock

To be part of a new society in a certain period is difficult, especially with the process to adopt a new culture, where the behavior, tradition, and language are different.

Besides, being in a camp where there are students from all over the world is not easy since the cultural shock is associated with the feeling of anger, hostility, indecision, frustration, unhappiness, sadness, and possibly physical illness.

Taking into account Adler, cultural shock is defined as:

Cultural shock, while surely possessing manifestations of crisis, can also be viewed more positively as a profound cross-cultural learning experience; a set of situations or circumstances involving intercultural communication in which the individual, as a result of the experiences, becomes aware of his grown learning and change (2014, p. 14).

As a result of the culture shock process, students have won a new view of themselves in a new environment where they examine the grade in which the second culture has influenced them by understanding and/or adapting values, attitudes, and outlooks of other people.

Paraphrasing Hall (2000), the cultural shock is a hypothetical example of an American living abroad for the first time.

At first, things in the cities look pretty much like. There are taxis, hotels with hot and cold running water, theaters, neon, lights, even tall buildings with elevators and a few people who can speak English. Unfortunately, pretty soon the American realized that underneath the familiar exterior, there are vast differences.

When someone says yes, it does not mean yes at all, and when people smile, it doesn't always mean they are pleased. When American visitors make a helpful gesture, he may be rebuffed; when he tries to be friendly, nothing happens.

It's important to understand what it means knowing the process of culture learning. The case of an American in Japan illustrates that a person in a second culture may initially be comfortable and delighted with the surrounding.

According to Principles Language Learning and Teaching, and paraphrasing Douglas (2007), there are four successive stages of cultural acquisition:

Stage 1. It is a period of excitement and euphoria over the newness of the surroundings.

Stage 2. Culture shock emerges as individuals feel the intrusion of more and more cultural differences. In these stages, individuals rely on and seek out the support of their fellow countrymen in the second culture.

Stage 3. It is gradual. The general process is made slowly but surely as individuals accept the differences in thinking and feeling.

Stage 4. It represents near or full recovery, either assimilation or adaptation. Acceptance of the new culture and self-confidence in the new person that has developed in this culture.

As students lose some links to their native culture and adapt to the second culture, they experience difficulties. However, over time, humans adapt to everything, and students are not an exception when they are abroad.

2.6 Learning a Second Culture

Culture is the characteristic of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts. Thus, culture finds its expression in language, so learning a new language without familiarity with its culture remains incomplete.

Taking into consideration the dynamic nature of culture, some guidelines are formulated by Lessard-Clouston (2007). He considers the importance of developing knowledge about target culture with the necessary skills for mastering communication and behavior in the target culture.

He claims that cultural awareness is necessary for developing a learner's understanding of the dynamic nature of the target and learner's own culture.

From a methodological point of view, teachers must adopt a systematic and structured approach as the learners benefit most when the lessons and the cultural aspects of language teaching are well planned and developed (ebid).

Moreover, cultural learning assessment is part of the learning process and provides important feedback to learners and teachers because they help learners to express and respond to their cultural learning experiences.

From the points above, it is necessary to highlight that the teacher's role in the learning cycle is crucial since it can influence learners' attitudes towards culture learning.

Therefore, the teacher has a central role in developing the cultural awareness of his learners too. Indeed, he helps learners with core materials to integrate cultural objectives into the learning process. To do so, he needs to be aware of the fact that every child is an individual and has his own cultural identity.

2.7 Summer Camps

The Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla provides opportunities to its students to develop their academic abilities by attending to interchange programs and summer camps.

Those give students the chance to experience another culture, make new friends and be part of a new local community. The university is associated with more than three programs to be in a camp, and it also gives students the necessary information and documents required to participate in one of those programs.

It is crucial to point out that Summer Camps are part of American culture. In this field, there are over ten thousand summer camps across the USA; each one with its own history and traditions that has been developed over the years.

Regarding its main goal, it is to create a fun, a safe and learning environment for children. There, students are encouraged to try new activities, step out of their comfort zone in a physical and emotional supported environment.

In the following lines, some programs associated to the university are mentioned (Summers, 2019):

1. International Exchange of North America (IENA). This program has a team of staff and representatives ready to assist you with your application and answer general questions about the summer camp experience as a Camp Counselor program or Supporting Staff.
2. Trout Lake Camps. It is located on 325 acres in the north of Brainerd and offers incredible experiences. Its mission is to engage children, youth, and adults with a life-changing message of Jesus Christ, learning experiences in which words, service, and relationships communicate the essence of the gospel.
3. Camp Fernwood. It is a nurturing, traditional sleep-away summer camp for girls located in Poland, Maine, on the shore of beautiful Lake Thompson. The simplicity, inclusion, tolerance, and friendship help

girls to have a healthy perspective by enhancing their sense of self and teaching them the importance of being strong, healthy, -and independent.

4. Camp Leslie Marrowbone provides a safe and supportive environment for kids to learn, explore, and grow. There, people focus on meeting each camper to realize their greatest individual and collective potentials. Their goal is to teach life skills with caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, and traditional Lakota values.

2.8 Immersion Process

Every year, hundreds of thousands of students travel to all corners of the world to continue their schooling in a new setting. For many young people, studying abroad is an opportunity to get the first glimpse of another part of the world, and it can be a critical experience for their development. Additionally, to be part of a summer camp is the most desirable environment where students can develop, learn, and practice a foreign language.

According to researchers, and travel industries, immersion has transformed into a go-to buzzword to market various types of travel that are more than just your average whirlwind tour bus excursion through Europe.

One of the well-known benefits of international travel is becoming a worldlier person by learning about dissimilar ways of life and people around the world.

Immersive programs and experiences should provide the opportunity to get into the heads of locals, observe their day-to-day lives, and try to understand the differences between foreigners and natives, which can change between cities or even neighborhoods. Explore the same hangout spots, TV shows, grocery stores, and community events. Regarding the above, Poole and Davis (2006) mention that attempts to measure the success of the language acquisition process focuses primarily on extended immersion rather than short term courses because the latter lead to the lack of empirical data about the benefits of language learning.

At this point, it is essential to define what immersion is. According to Ryan (2003), it is a state of intense absorption in the task currently being performed. Taking into account Adams and Rollings (2006), it is a state of intense

preoccupation with observation, calculation, & planning or with swift responses to obstacles. Moreover, for Witmer and Singer (1998), it is a feeling of being enveloped by, included in, & interacting with the virtual environment. However, for the present study, the immersion process will be defined as follow:

The mental absorption experienced when facing challenges that match one's capabilities, including the challenges involved when exposed to nonparticipatory media (Arsenault, 2005) and as the mental absorption experienced when facing challenges requiring mental or motor skills (Ermi and Mäyrä, 2005).

2.9 Challenges when studying abroad

Language difficulty is a big challenge for international students. Regarding Domville-Roach, (2007, p. 37) "language is one of the tools students must use to bring about interaction and sharing with others." As a matter of fact, according to Kuo (2011), the lack of English skills is likely to impact international students' academic performance as well as their experience to be there.

Students who are less fluent in English have more trouble integrating into peer groups and experience lower levels of academic success. These various challenges often put international students at a greater risk for academic difficulties when being compared to domestic students.

One of the biggest issues students encounter while they are abroad is the language barrier. It can make them feel very isolated to be living in a country where no one speaks their language. That means many students studying abroad can find themselves feeling as though they are on their own and start feeling homesick too.

In the following lines, the most common challenges international students face when being abroad are described (Tseng & Netwon, 2002):

- a) Adaptation to a new learning system
- b) Language difficulties.
- c) Homesickness
- d) Discrimination

- e) Psychological problems
- f) Feeling isolated
- g) Socio-cultural problems
- h) Health care
- i) Financial systems

Some others are listed below (Khoo et al., 2002; Leong & Chou, 1996; Lin & Yi, 1997):

- a) Depression
- b) Culture shock
- c) Language barriers

Besides, it is crucial to mention that according to Zahi (2002), the most important issues that international students encounter in the United States are those associated with language difficulties, the American academic system, and cultural differences.

2.10 Studying abroad

The term study abroad has a very precise meaning to some, while to others, it is more of a general concept. To avoid being overly specific or too vague, a definition landing somewhere in the middle of these two extremes seems to work best.

At this point, Carlson & Widman (2013) state that abroad programs constitute all educational programs that occur in a foreign country by offering students the opportunity to learn academic credit through international experience.

Nonetheless, many authors have pointed out that studying abroad is easier with adequate preparation. Several studies have found that migrants, who did not adequately prepare or had unrealistic expectations, were more likely to suffer from depression (Chou, 2009; Ryan, Leavey, Golden, Blizard and King, 2006).

When moving to a distant country, students are often reliant on very limited sources of information to help them prepare for the transition.

The hurdles that international students have to overcome before they even arrive in a host country are rarely discussed or acknowledged by educators. That is

why this research is important to get information that helps them to prepare themselves to overcome these situations.

Far from recognizing the resourcefulness and determination of the students for directing the complex and uncertain administrative processes, educators assume that the international student experience starts on arrival to their chosen host country rather than when they take the decision to start doing formalities in their original country.

2.11 Immersion

Have you ever heard someone say I immersed myself in a book to escape the worries of my world? Have you questioned how babies learn to speak, or how would you go about learning a foreign language?

It is not hard to imagine what it means to immerse yourself in a community. That is what students suffer when they are involved in a different atmosphere. The decision to study abroad means that being part of a new society in which the traditions, values, customs, and language are different.

In terms of traveling, immersion does not have a concrete one-size-fits-all definition, but according to Oxford (2018), immersion is the state of being completely involved in something.

Immersing students themselves in a new culture does not necessarily mean they have to hide every trace of their foreign origin.

Finally, the goal of immersion is not to replace one's own customs and perspectives. Indeed, it is to be part of a new one, adapt it, and learn new cultural experiences.

2.12 Common Mistakes when Learning English

During the language learning process, it is common to make mistakes. For example, some English learners are confused in the plural rule because they usually follow the general rule and add all the time the letter s at the end of a word to form the plural. However, as it is known, there are interruptions of that rule. Some

common examples are childs, persons, womens when the correct plural forms are children, people, and women. In these cases, the rule does not apply.

Besides, most students get confused not only with English grammar structures but also with the four skills (Speaking, Listening, Writing and Reading).

Facing this kind of learning problem, students have to find a solution; this means the correct use of the language taking into account the grammatical rules.

Vygotsky (1978) suggests that the only learning is by going ahead of actual development.

Then, the most common mistakes students have while they are learning a second language are in the use of productive and receptive language skills, which are the base to learn a second or foreign language, like the speaking skill.

2.13 Importance of Speaking Skill

The following table presents the main elements of a speech during the act of speaking.

Situation	The physical setting and the nature of the event.
Participants	Speakers, hearer, audience, and so on; for instance, two examinees, an interlocutor, and an assessor.
Ends	Conventional outcomes of the event, if any. The end also includes the individual participants' goals, such as exposing the strengths and weaknesses of the examinees' speaking ability.
Act sequence	The form and content of speech acts.
Key	Tone, manner, or spirit of the act.
Instrumentalities	Channel or mode (spoken). Forms of speech (dialects, accents, and varieties used).
Norms	Norms for interpretation or interaction.

Genre	Categories such as joke, lecture, description, instruction, storytelling or presentation.
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Table 1. Elements of a speech according to Hymes (2011).

The ability to speak in a foreign language is a satisfactory recognition in the way of learning a new language. Being able to participate in a conversation with friends, visitors, or even foreigners in their native language is certainly the goal of learners. However, speaking is the most difficult skill to achieve correctly. At this point, it is important what Hymes (2012) did to teach speaking students by summarizing the principal elements of a speech into a framework that forms the acronym speaking (see table 1).

2.14 Methods to develop speaking

Communication is an important skill for every student to master. To get a high level, the teachers' role is important because it shapes them in the speaking learning process.

According to Adamson (2004), this is a process shaped by teachers' views of the nature of language teaching, learning, and by their knowledge of the particular socio-cultural setting where the speech act takes place.

Nonetheless, in the reality of educational context, teachers must not only attempt to meet their students' needs but also create other plans according to students' time and attention to promote speaking skills.

As it is known, English is the international language of business and opens up many opportunities as non-native speakers. Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) offers teachers many different ways to transmit teachers' knowledge to their students.

Below, the different methods are described as well as the activities that could promote this important and essential skill when learning English.

Before getting into a deeper explanation about methods to teach speaking, it is necessary to define language teaching.

Regarding Brumfit “language teaching is far more complex than producing cars: we cannot, therefore, assume that the technology of language teaching will lead in a neat, deterministic manner to a predictable set of learning outcomes” (2003, p. 3). For this research, language teaching is defined as a process where the language learning is a process of discovery, where the learner develops ability to use the language for specific communication purposes, and the teacher models language use and facilitates students’ development of language skills (Alatis, 2003).

Besides, effective teaching of the speaking skill depends on preparation of that class. In the following lines, eight principles are highlighted to accomplish an enjoyable teaching experience.

1. Content. In this case, working through the curriculum should be a process of discovery for the students but not for the instructor. [LSEP]
2. Method. Find out what teaching approach you are expected to use to teach speaking. Then, adjust to it.
3. Identify students. First, teacher should find out what level his students will be. This will let him know what to expect from them.
4. Planning. Outline a plan for the class or even for the semester or school year.
5. Relationships. The teacher must learn his students’ names as well as use their names when talking with them and when giving language examples in class either individually or in group.
6. Orientation: The teacher must find out what facilities are available for students such as language lab, computer lab, and library. [LSEP]
7. Expectations. Asking how much and what kind of homework is usually given to students at the level that he is teaching. [LSEP]
8. Guidance. Asking the supervisor or another experienced instructor to serve as a mentor to review the teachers plan (ebid).

Regarding the above, a study of methods is helpful in teacher education in at least five ways according to Larsen and Anderson (2011):

1. A major purpose of teacher education is to help teachers make tacit knowledge explicit. Teacher educators can help teachers become clearer about why they do what they do. They become aware of their fundamental assumptions, values, and beliefs.

2. Teachers choose to teach differently from the way they were taught. They could see why they are attracted to certain methods and repelled by others.

3. Being a community member involves learning the professional discourse that community members use so that professional dialogue can take place. Also, it connects teachers with others, so they can practice and share information.

4. Conversely, by being members of a professional discourse community, teachers may find their conceptions of how teaching leads to learning challenges.

5. Knowledge of methods helps to expand a teachers' repertoire of techniques. This provides a further avenue for professional growth since some teachers find their way to new pedagogical positions by first trying out new techniques rather than by entertaining new principles.

Then, some methods are mentioned to teach the speaking skill.

A. Direct Method

In this method, listening and speaking skills are given priority. Moreover, the lessons are conducted totally in the target language, especially with the speaking skill. The learner is not allowed to use the mother tongue. Grammar rules are avoided, and there is an emphasis on good pronunciation. Regarding this, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) say the Direct Method has one basic rule: No translation is allowed. "[It] receives the name from the fact that meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstrations and visual aids, with no recourse to the students' native language" (p. 25).

The goal of this method is that students learn how to communicate in the target language. To do this successfully, students should learn to think in the target language.

In the direct method, students do a lot of talking, gesturing, acting, and interacting. They're encouraged to talk, no matter how imperfectly. The more talking time students get, the better. They interact with the teacher or fellow students. Instead of looking at examples of sentences written on the blackboard, they get to feel it roll off their tongues and hear themselves speak in a language they will soon be fluent in (Hymes, 2012).

Teachers who use the Direct Method believe that students need to associate the meaning of the words with the target language directly. Larsen-Freeman, and Anderson (2011) mention that when the teacher introduces a new word or phrase, he demonstrates the meaning through the use of pictures or pantomime; he never translated the word in his native language. Thus, students speak in the target language; it means that they have communication as if they were in a real situation.

Some of the advantages that they mention are the following:

1. It is a natural method. It teaches the second/foreign language in the same way as one learns one's mother tongue.
2. There is no difference between active and passive vocabulary. The learner acquires more of passive vocabulary because he concentrates on understanding English rather than expressing through it.
3. This method is based on sound principles of education. It believes in introducing the particular before general, concrete before abstract, and practice before theory.

Practitioners of this method use Second Language (L2) exclusively and never use translation. Everyday vocabulary and structures are imparted, and grammar is learned inductively by generalizing from examples.

Oral communication skills are shown by question and answer between teachers and learners, with all new learning points being introduced orally.

Moreover, Mersin University ELT Department (2010, p. 4) mentions that "this method's name comes from the fact that meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language". It is also called the Natural Method, and it is based on the way children learn their native language.

Besides, this university references that many linguistics in the 19th century applied natural principles of learning languages to the second language classroom.

Taking into account this, Sauveur (2011) pointed out that the use of intensive oral interaction in the target language is a suitable method or technique to develop the oral communication that is helpful to interact with native speakers.

Moreover, Berlitz (2010) refers to the direct method as the “Beatriz Method”. This implies that students never translate, never explain, and never imitate mistakes. However, as Brown points out (2000) the Direct Method did not function well in a public school where it has some limitations like classroom size, time, or teacher background. In fact, the Direct Method was developed as a response to the Grammar-Translation method because it required immersing the learner in the same way as when they learned their first language.

Finally, in the direct method, language is not an academic endeavor as it is in the grammar-translation method since language is considered as a way to communicate.

B. Communicative Language Teaching

Making students speak is neither an easy nor a fast process. Teachers must be aware of some special techniques that will help to achieve this objective, which are based on different approaches.

Another method that is useful to promote speaking is the Communicative Language method that provides language into the classroom to achieve positive results in oral production with their students.

Indeed, students can produce sentences in the class even though they cannot use them appropriately when they have a conversation with a native speaker. Being able to communicate outside of the classroom requires more than master the structures of the language. In short, Hymes (2011) says that being able to communicate requires more than linguistic competence; it requires communicative competence.

In this method, students practice the language using some activities like games, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks. At the end of each activity, the

teacher provides them with feedback. Regarding the use of material, it needs to be authentic and unique, so the teacher has the job to create or adapt new materials for the classroom. About evaluation, it is covered with the participation of the student during the sessions.

Speaking about CLT characteristics, Richards (2006) emphasizes that people learn one language when they use it to do things, rather than by studying its functions. Nowadays, there are a lot of different examples where students can learn a foreign language for their needs in that kind of language.

In general, this method makes students very dependent on the teacher and do not give many opportunities for students to communicate in a relaxed way. According to Richards (2001) learning through communication method is done as:

- a. Interactivity between language learners and speakers.
- b. Creating a cooperative meaning.
- c. Establish meaningful interactivity through a language.
- d. Learning through student participation when they learn or use a language.
- e. Being careful about the language they hear (the input) and attempt to incorporate new forms with anyone who develops communicative competences.
- f. The attempt of using the language and experiment with various forms the language

Finally, based on what Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) claim, the biggest contribution of CLT is asking teachers to look closely at what is involved in communication. If teacher's intent with students to use the target language, they must truly understand more than grammar rules and target language vocabulary.

C. Task-Based Language Teaching

Winnefeld (2012, p. 63) reports that Task-based Language Learning (TBLL) "presents itself a way to promote oral language production and to provide opportunities for meaning-negotiation." He concludes that TBLL is a promising approach for the facilitation of L2 production, and thus, the development of speaking skills.

Tasks are meaningful, and by doing them, students need to communicate. Regarding this, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, p. 54) point out that “tasks have a clear outcome so that the teacher and students know whether or not the communication has been successful”. As Candlin and Murphy (1987) claim, the central purpose humans are concerned with is language learning, and tasks present this in the form of a problem-solving negotiation between knowledge that the learner holds and new knowledge.

For Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), task-based Language Teaching is another version of the communicative approach where the language is acquired by using it. It means that students acquire the language when they need and finish the task that has been established before them.

TBLT has produced very positive results in certain contexts, like every method that has preceded it. Other strengths are identified by Bruton (2005):

- a. There is no acquisition of new grammar or vocabulary features.
- b. Everything is left to the teacher.
- c. Not all students are or will be motivated by TBLT.
- d. Some students need more guidance and will not or cannot ‘notice’ language forms (grammar) or other elements of accuracy.
- e. Students typically translate and use a lot of their L1 rather than the target language in completing the tasks.

In summary, the general purpose of task-based methodology is to create opportunities for language learning and skill development. Thus, when students perform a task, they must be worried about achieving an outcome, not with demonstrate that they know the language.

D. Audio-Lingual

The Audio-Lingual method, which was proposed by American linguists in the 1950s, was developed from the principle that “a language is, first of all, a system of sounds for social communication; writing is a secondary derivative system for the recording of spoken language” (Carroll, 1963: 45). Thus, the purpose of the Audio-Lingual method is to use the target language communicatively. According to this

method, speech is given priority in foreign language teaching. This method is also called an oral-based approach.

However, the difference between this one and the Direct Method is that in the drills, students can use the grammatical sentence forms to help their language acquisition. Regarding Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), some characteristics of this method are the following:

- a. Drills are used to teach structural patterns.
- b. Set phrases are memorized with a focus on intonation.
- c. Grammatical explanations are kept to a minimum.
- d. Vocabulary is taught in the context.
- e. Audio-visual aids are used.
- f. Focus is on pronunciation.
- g. Correct responses are positively reinforced immediately.

Truthfully “the similarities of this method and the Direct Method reflect similar views about the nature of language and language learning, though these views developed from quite different traditions” (Jack, 2010, p. 67).

From the explanation above, the Audio-Lingual Method is the teaching method, which emphasizes speaking and listening skills. In this way, it makes the students pronounce speaking correctly and to be better in the listening skill.

2.15 Communicative Strategies to interact with natives

According to Mariani (2010), there are several strategies that can be used to overcome problems, challenges, and misunderstanding when interacting with a native of the target language. They are the following:

- a. Communication strategies. They include not only the language learner’s or language speaker’s effort to cope with problems or compensate for a limited or insufficient knowledge of the language system as well as more general forms to enhance or make the most of the communicative interaction.
- b. Intra-and inter-cultural strategies. In the former, the speaker relies on a shared base of socio-cultural assumptions and conventions

regarding both the content of what is being communicated and the forms of interaction itself. In the latter, the speaker does not share the same assumptions and conventions, and this makes interaction more complex and demanding.

- c. Reduction. They affect the form of humans' communicative goal. For instance, speakers may want to avoid pronouncing specific words that imply difficult sounds for them.
- d. Achievement. Here, speakers take risks and become more productive based on their actual inter-languages. Indeed, it is this active use of one's limited resources that becomes particularly useful in developing strategic competence.
- e. Meaning-expression strategies. It deals with the individual's attempt to express a meaning when a specific expression is not available for him or her.
- f. Meaning-negotiation strategies. They are based on explicit attempt at establishing meaning from both parties in the interaction.
- g. Conversation-management strategies. It deals with difficult aspects of conversation like opening and closing conversations, trying to keep a conversation open, turn-taking, managing topics and gaining time
- h. Para-and extra-linguistic strategies. They refer to the use of intonation patterns, non-verbal language, facial expression or use of drawings or visual aids.
- i. Interaction-monitoring strategies. It provides feedback from the native in case of mistakes, misinterpretations or inappropriate use of the language.

2.16 Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature was reviewed with some authors who are important for the study. The main topics cited in the Literature Review help

understand how future students will avoid the challenges abroad by using some strategies or methods. Besides, it emphasizes the opportunities that the university offers to students for practicing the target language during their stay.

The following chapter will describe the methodology followed to obtain the data to answer the two main research questions that guide this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the process followed to obtain the necessary information to answer the research topic LEI students' experiences abroad. The methodology used to create the instrument as well as the instrument, participants, the data collection, and analysis procedures will be described too.

3.2 Research design

Reviewing the available literature related to the problem, the methodology followed in the present research is qualitative, which is focused on describing students' lives and getting meaning from them while staying abroad during a certain time.

Paraphrasing Shank (2002, p. 5) qualitative research is defined as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning”. It is important to remark that by systematic he means to plan, order, and public this type of inquiry that is grounded in the world of experience.

Furthermore, according to Denzin and Lincoln as cited in *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (2010, p. 15), qualitative research is defined as followed:

“Qualitative research is a multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of the interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them”.

Therefore, in this case, the qualitative method provides the necessary information about the students' life during their stay in a summer camp with the idea to understand the feelings, values, and perceptions that they had and influenced their behavior over there.

Moreover, qualitative research is perhaps most commonly associated with certain schools that fall broadly within what is known as the sociological tradition,

particularly phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and symbolic interactionism (Creswell, 2008).

For Denzin and Lincoln (2010: 31), the current state of qualitative research can be read as follows: "The field of qualitative research is defined by a series of tensions, contradictions, and hesitations. This tension works back and forth between the broad, doubting postmodern sensibility and the more certain, more traditional positivist, postpositivist, and naturalistic conceptions".

According to Beverley, Ockleford, and Windridge (2009, p. 6) "all research whether quantitative or qualitative must involve an explicit, disciplined, systematic approach to finding things out, using the method most appropriate to the question being asked".

The table below summarizes what qualitative method is:

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
This tends to focus on how people or groups of people can have (somewhat) different ways of looking at reality (usually social or psychological reality).
It takes account of complexity by incorporating the real-world context. Then, it can take different perspectives on board.
This studies behavior in natural settings or uses people's accounts as data without manipulating variables.
It focuses on reports of experience or on data that cannot be adequately expressed numerically.
It focuses on description and interpretation and might lead to the development of new concepts or theory, or an evaluation of an organizational process.
This employs a flexible, emergent but systematic research process.

Table 2. Qualitative method (Beverley, Ockleford, and Windridge, 2009)

Besides, qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena. That is, it aims to help researchers to understand the social world in which humans live and why things are the way they are. It is concerned with the social aspects of sample's world and seeks to answer questions like:

- A. "Why people behave the way they do
- B. How opinions and attitudes are formed
- C. How people are affected by the events that go on around them
- D. How and why cultures and practices have developed in the way they have "(ebid, p. 7)

3.3 Participants

This study was carried out in the Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés (LEI)" in the Language Faculty at Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) in Puebla State located on the street North 24 2003, North Humboldt, 72370.

Regarding the population of the present study, since it was reduced, all of them were taken as the sample. Then, the sample of the study is composed of ten participants (four males and six females), all of them from two different generations, who share the same characteristics:

- a. They were abroad during the same time
- b. They belong to 2015 and 2016 generations
- c. They were in a summer abroad
- d. They are between 20 and 23 year old
- e. While being in a camp, they face problems with the language
- f. They have the same proficiency level of English according to their certifications
- g. They study the same career, have the same percentage of credits and the same approved subjects
- h. The participants are students from the LEI major
- i. They have experiences in common while being abroad; especially when they put in practice all the previous knowledge acquired in the major.

j. Furthermore, their outcomes are the same

3.4 Instrument

In this research project, the instrument is a questionnaire that its main purpose is to get data to know students' perceptions towards their communicative challenges during their immersion process abroad as well as the communicative strategies they use to interact when they were there.

The format of the questionnaire was open-ended questions because according to Züll (2016, p.3) "open-ended questions require respondents to formulate a response in their own words and to express it verbally or in writing". Besides, the author mentioned that by answering open-ended questions respondents have the opportunity to express what they really think regarding the item, in their own words, which also requires not only a willingness to answer but also the ability to freely articulate the response.

The questionnaire is composed of twelve open-ended questions that answer the two main research questions (see Appendix 1). The questions elicit for relevant information concerning experiences and communicative problems in camps.

The structure of the questionnaire is the following:

SECTION	PURPOSE	ITEMS
1	Communicative challenges students face while being abroad	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2	Communicative strategies to interact while being there	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Table 3. Sections of the questionnaire.

As it can be seen, for the first research question, five questions were elaborated and for the second one, there were seven.

It is essential to mention that before applying the instrument, it was piloted with the software Atlas- ti to get trustworthiness and validity.

Then, the questionnaire was applied to the sample completely anonymous and with research purposes only.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

To get the data, the questionnaires were given to the chosen sample of the research project.

The first step was to identify students who had been in a summer camp. Then, with this information, the whole population was identified too from all the generation of the English Language Teaching. Taking into account that the whole population was made of 10 students, it was decided to take the whole as the sample. Indeed, it was observed that students from generation 2015 and 2016 (ten in total) were participating in a summer camp for three months.

After, the researcher contacted them via email to ask them be part of the sample of the research. The participants accepted and answered the instrument.

Finally, the instrument was received, printed, and analyzed question by a question according to the model of analysis of this study.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected from students at Language Faculty were analyzed according to the model analysis of this study.

It was divided taking into account the two main research questions that guided the research. Thus, the first research question has five items, and its purpose is to identify the communicative challenges students faced while being abroad. The second one has seven items, and its purpose is to provide data about the communicative strategies participants used to interact while they were there (see the table below)

Model of analysis	
RQ 1. What communicative challenges do you face when being abroad?	RQ 2. What communicative strategies do you use to interact when you were there?
Q1. In which of the four skills, did you have more problems when you were abroad? Why?	Q6. Did you apply one of the communicative strategies that you learned in your classes? How?
Q2. Does the culture of each country have to do with the problems that you have faced? Why?	Q7. Did you apply any teaching method learned to communicate there?
Q3. Did you have understanding problems when having a conversation? Which ones?	Q8. What non-linguistic resources did you use to communicate with native people?
Q4. Did you have problems with the language? Why?	Q9. To what extent the use of regionalisms was difficult for you to communicate?
Q5. Did you have a challenge that you could not solve at the moment to speak? And why?	Q10. Did you have communicative problems? Which ones?
	Q11. In any moment, did you try to guess what someone said to have a conversation?
	Q12. Did you use mimic as a communicative strategy to imply

something?

Table 4. Model of analysis. Ryan, Leavey, Golden, Blizard, and King, (2006); Summers, (2019).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the methodology used in the research project was described as well as the instrument that was based to answer the two research questions.

In addition, not only the participants and sample were described in detail, but also, the instrument, data collection and data analysis procedures were presented too.

The following chapter explains the findings gotten based on the data.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the results obtained are presented and discussed based on the two research questions that deal with the students' communicative strategies and challenges while being abroad.

4.2 Research questions

To analyze the phenomena of this study, two research questions are presented:

What communicative challenges do you face when being abroad?

What communicative strategies do you use to interact when you were there?

4.3 Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1

For this section, there are five questions to analyze according to the model of analysis.

In the table below, the transcription of the participants' answers to each question as well as the interpretation of each one is described.

Question 1.

Q 1.	In which of the four skills, did you have more problems when you were abroad?	Why?
P1	Listening and speaking	No.
P2	Listening skill. Because English native speakers speak so fast and Shorten	Yes, I did it at several times to be honest. I don't

	words at everyday speech.	know enough vocabulary.
P3	I had problems in listening skill because there were people from different countries, for that reason their accents were difficult to understand, they also used many idioms and contractions that we did not study in formal English.	Of course. Because I was nervous
P4	In listening because people abroad speak like very quickly and they have different accents and slangs according to their state.	No I think I never made use of it.
P5	With listening and speaking because the way that they speak is very fast. Therefore, I couldn't understand enough. Also, the English that I speak is very different from the one I speak here; I think so because my English is more formal and there, they use the informal English.	Yes, I didn't.
P6	Listening, because children speak very different. I found it more difficult that speaking with adults.	Yes, when I forgot some words.
P7	Listening, because the children speak faster than us.	Yes, corporal language.

P8	Speaking could be a problem to me, because I could not have enough vocabulary.	Yeah, when I'm nervous in case I forget words or if I made mistakes.
P9	Listening, I think this is the only one I had the chance to practice.	No.
P10	Listening	No.

Regarding participants' answers, the majority of them agree that listening is the most difficult skill to understand and practice abroad because they met people from different countries, so their accent and pronunciation are different what cause a problem to the sample (LEI students in camps).

Besides, another important finding is that formal training at Faculties was not enough for participants being abroad because they mention that people from native countries use a lot of informal language like slang, idioms and verbal, which they as students of a target language are not used to that lexicon and in general the language.

Other skill in which participants faced problems was with the speaking skill (participants 5 and 8). It is logical because if they could not listen and understand, it is natural that they have problems with speaking. At this point, Thoesen (2017) states that if a student cannot understand a speech, it is almost impossible to have the opportunity to speak and have a conversation in a real context since there is not a content to talk about.

Besides, as it can be seen the participants lack vocabulary, and the practice of an informal language with native people were two big problems to deal with.

Regarding the reasons why they expressed the above, these are some explanations: the participants felt nervous at the moment of speaking, or they lack vocabulary.

Besides, to understand why the listening skill is the most difficult to practice Thomas (2009) mentions that it is necessary to understand the differences between listening and hearing. He says that listening is a search for meaning; an active process. Hearing is passive an example of this comparison; is when people listen to music, they can be hearing the lyrics and not make sense of what is being expressed; however, if they carefully pay attention to the music, they can understand the lyric and meaning. The same happens with the language when people hear someone speaking foreign language that is all they do: they just hear because they don't understand the meaning of what people are saying. Moreover, people familiar with the language can hear, but also they can listen.

They could get meaning from it and be able to participate in a conversation. Nonetheless, speaking skill is also one of the most difficult skills to practice abroad because there are a great number of students who lack the confidence to express themselves because they are afraid of committing mistakes.

Question 2.

Q 2.	Does the culture of each country have to do with the problems that you have faced? Why?
P1	I'm a student. I do not learn what I will face in a real-life context. Our target language is academic.
P2	Absolutely! Because Mexicans, Americans, Europeans, Brazilians, Colombians, Englishmen, Germans, Indians, and Koreans (These nationalities worked at camp) have their own culture and beliefs and that reflects the way in which culture shock and sometimes that phenomenon limits oral communication.

P3	I think so, for historical reasons, each English-region has different accents.
P4	I think so because hard part is to understand that stuff about slang and accentuation.
P5	Yes, I do, because it depends on the social environment where each person develop their skills and how much he/she practice, or the things that they do for to get new vocabulary or knowledge.
P6	No.
P7	No.
P8	I think that culture shock might affect in many cases, and it is because of differences ideas, traditions or even “idioms” because you say something, and people can have a wrong idea about you.
P9	Not really most of staff were Mexicans.
P10	The camp population was formed by Mexicans and Americans. Sometimes racism took place.

Regarding question 2, the majority of the participants affirmed that culture influence to communicate, interchange ideas, believes and behaves (except participants 6, 7 and 9).

Thus, culture is central to what people see, how they make sense of their world and how they express themselves. One aspect of communication style is the

use of the language. That is why across cultures, some words and phrases are used in different ways and of course, with different connotations. For example, even in countries that share the English language, the meaning of yes varies a lot depending on the context where it takes place (Thomas, 2009).

These results are supported by the American Speech-language Hearing Association “ASHA”, (2017, p.2) that claims that “Cultural competence involves understanding and appropriately responding to the unique combination of cultural variables and the full range of dimensions of diversity that the professional and client, patient and family bring to interactions”. Thus, to be in contact with a variety of cultures is difficult, it means to face traditions, language, ideas, costumes, and food. Based on the previous, it is understandable why this was a general problem that he participants had.

Besides, despite the fact that English is a universal language, sometimes phrases or words have different meanings and the English that participants learned was formal (see the table above). Paraphrasing Leavitt (2010), he remarks that when learning a target language, it is necessary to learn both formal and informal registers because learning a foreign or second language implies becoming a member of another culture by taking on values, cultural patterns and expected behavior of that culture. Therefore, an essential step when keeping in touch with natives of that target language is to be aware of one’s own cultural identity, beliefs, behaviors, languages, practices and expressions considered unique to members of a specific ethnicity, race or national origin, and the ability to learn and build on cultural and community norms of students and their families.

Question 3.

Q

Did you have understanding problems when having a conversation? Which ones?

3.	P1	At first I did, I felt like everyone talked faster than usual, but then I got used to it and I understood them more easily.
	P2	Yes, I did! To understand what kids wanted to say because sometimes their speech was not as clear as one thinks it is. On the other side, I had some difficulties at the beginning to understand people from England because of their strong accents.
	P3	Sometimes, as I mentioned above, English is their native language (of some) for that reason, like us in Spanish, they use expressions, idioms and contractions that we do not study in formal English.
	P4	The hardest part was the use of phrasal verbs in a conversation, people in USA use them a lot.
	P5	Yes, I did. Just with some vocabulary.
	P6	Yes, some idioms they used were difficult to understand.
	P7	Not at all, just tried to ask again what they said to me.
	P8	When I don't understand a word, I can't speak. If I listen or understand a word by other, it would be a problem.
	P9	Only when Americans spoken faster.
	P10	Natives speak with unfamiliar expressions or idioms I had never heard before.

As it is observed, when the participants arrive to their camps in the United States, they were not well prepared to communicate with natives. This was especially true for Mexicans who tend to assume that

a) They learned enough about the language in their English classes.

b) Communication styles are very similar and thus, differences were neglected.

However, when they were in the natural and target context, they faced understanding problems when they tried to establish a conversation with native speakers.

Moreover, participants mention that the use of slang, phrasal verbs and idioms were problems at the moment of speaking. This suggests that informal language is not taught in their classes. Thus, a suitable decision based on these results could be the implementation of courses where informal language could be taught even though it is not the mission of the Faculty so that their students could be more prepared for those exchanges like summer camps and avoid problems as participant 2 mentioned "I had enormous difficulties to understand commands from my boss who was one of the camp counselor leaders".

In general having problems with the language comes to the term "study abroad" according to Carson & Widman (2013) who affirm that studying abroad programs constitute all educational programs that occur in a foreign country outside of the geographical boundaries of the country of origin, offering students the opportunity to learn academic credit through international experience. Being abroad implies understanding problems such as:

- a. Pronunciation that are new phonemes not easy to acquire
- b. Grammar. What you used to express in your language with a single word/morpheme, can be expressed in a variety of ways in the target language depending on several factors like conjugations
- c. Vocabulary. It has different forms to express its referents according to its idiomatic expressions, slangs, phrasal verbs, and so on.

Question 4.

Q 4.	Did you have problems with the language? Why?
P1	<p>Yes. Some places have variations in pronunciation per region, for example they pronounce the vowels different from what we normally know, so that was a challenge.</p> <p>Problems: subject-verb agreement and content problems.</p>
P2	<p>Yes, I did! Because when you arrive in the US, you immediately feel like you don't know anything. This means that all you've learned at school, I mean you're listening and speaking skills, are not enough to communicate in real contexts. Therefore, the only thing you have to do is being patient and being extrovert to acquire new language and integrate in the American culture.</p>
P3	<p>Just when they used expressions, idioms and contractions that we do not study informal English. Problems: verbs, correct structure of a sentence.</p>
P4	<p>In my case I didn't have many problems, I am fluent and my speaking is good.</p>
P5	<p>Yes, I did, because I mentioned before, they use more their informal language and I couldn't understand it.</p>

	Problems using conditional sentences, lack of vocabulary, spelling of past tense verbs.
P6	Not too much. I consider I have a good level of English.
P7	Yes. Punctuation marks, conditional sentences, lack of vocabulary, spelling of past tense verbs
P8	No.
P9	Some unfamiliar vocabulary, subject-verb agreement, correct structure of a sentence, spelling verb difficulties
P10	I always asked for a repetition. Problems with spelling

In general participants answer *yes* to this question because as it can be seen, the way in which they learned English was totally different at the moment they experienced it in a natural context.

Participants faced grammatical problems as subject-verb agreement, content problems, correct structure of a sentence, problems using conditional sentences, lack of vocabulary, use of the past tense (spelling difficulties), punctuation marks.

According to Cox (2018), the major reasons of these problems are the lack of skills and strategies to communicate, the suitable detection of areas in education, assessment and school environment to be improved, the use of mother tongue in target language classroom and excessive practice of grammar.

Besides, another important finding is that participant should take this exchange when they are in their eighth level or more because participants 4, 6 and 8 who expressed not to face problems, are in the last stages of their career.

Moreover, regarding Khoo (2011), the main difficulty in learning a foreign language is being gradually exposed to the language since the student's brain is able to absorb the new sounds, rhythms and tones to fit them into a new way of referring to ideas and objects. Then, when people are learning the language is natural to have problems, but they can be overcome with the exposure to it.

According to these results, participants agree about facing problems with the language, probably, mainly because this was the first time they were in a natural and native context. Based on this, the key factor that consist of having enough contact with the target language by having conversations with native speakers or participating in a group with foreign people could be a suitable decision to overcome this problem.

Question 5.

Q 5.

Did you have a challenge that you could not solve at the moment to speak? Why?

P1

Yes, for example the use of slang, there is a lot of slang that we are not even aware of, because it depends on the place that you are located in; also each state has its own way of calling things, I was in Minnesota and they would call soda - pop, and a lot of people from other states in the USA also

P2	<p>didn't know that.</p> <p>, I did! In fact, I challenged myself at several times, but I still kept in mind three of them. One in the middle of a lake during a strong storm rescuing a boat full of kids, the other one ordering a burger at Mc Donald's and the last one at the airport in Toronto Canada when going through the customs office. Because of the lack of vocabulary at those mentioned contexts.</p>
P3	<p>Never. I always asked when I did not understand and I explained that I did not know those expressions.</p>
P4	<p>Not really, any problem that I had with the language my friends from US helped me to solve it, that problems always were about pronunciation and vocabulary.</p>
P5	<p>One thing that I was afraid was the moment where I speak with a native speaker and don't understand him/her. Fortunately, I could have a good interaction.</p>
P6	<p>Yes, when kids asked me for something and I didn't understand.</p>
P7	<p>Yes, I made some mistakes in my pronunciation and children couldn't understand me.</p>
P8	<p>When I forget words and I can't look for synonyms.</p>

	P9	No
	P10	Not really. I always asked for a petition.

Half of the sample said yes and the other half said no. These results suggest that challenges depend on participants, how they feel in the environment, what kind of situations they consider as problems, and the most important thing, what strategies of communication they use to solve those challenges. For example, participants 3, 4 and 10 ask for explanation or repetition, and it functioned as strategy to continue the conversation and get communication.

Moreover, another problem was the lack of vocabulary. Indeed, lexical knowledge is a central part of communicative competence, and for the acquisition of a second or foreign language, this fact is an obstacle to learn and communicate with people. Thus, the lack of vocabulary, slangs, correct grammar usage and pronunciations get participants face challenges abroad like participants 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Moreover, it is vital to remark that the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all interconnected, and to be proficient in the language is necessary to become an experienced communicator, be able to participate in a conversation with friends, visitors or even foreigners in their native language; it is certainly the goal of learners.

However, according to Hymes (2011), speaking is the most difficult skill to use correctly that is why it is necessary to take into account the principal elements of a speech that are: situations, participants, ends, act sequence, keys, instrumentalities, norms and genre. As a matter of fact, participants who have experienced a conversation with a native speaker often feel the normal sense of nervous or tension, that's why students at the language faculty mentioned that effectively they faced challenges at the moment to speak.

As a conclusion for research question one, it could be said that participants faced problems regarding: pronunciation and use of informal language (idiomatic expressions, slangs, phrasal verbs, contractions, and so on), lack of vocabulary and grammatical structure problems.

Research question 2

Respect to the second variable that deals with the communicative strategies participants use to interact when they were over there, there were seven items to analyzed. Based on them, the following results were found:

Question 6.

Q 6.	Did you apply one of the communicative strategies that you learned in your classes? How?	
P1	Communicative strategies, but now that I looked for them so that I could remember them, the ones I used were Nomination, Turn taking, Restriction and Termination.	
P2	To be honest, I don't remember them all, but I did my best to succeed at communication. How? By giving a brief description of the word, I didn't know how to say in English. This was the one I used the most.	
P3	Just ask and use a dictionary of idioms	
P4	I think yeah! All of them, I mean most of my partners were Americans and Hungarians so we could just speak in English to communicate each other.	

	P5	No, I didn't.
	P6	Yes, when I didn't know the answer I pointed out.
	P7	Yes, I tried to explain what I attempted to say through corporal language.
	P8	-
	P9	No.
	P10	Yes, the ones related with listening comprehension.

To learn English requires constant practice and patience. It could be seen that participants' classes helped them to learn knowledge, strategies, grammatical rules and develop the four skills. Some participants claimed that the strategies they used were nomination, turn taking, restriction and termination and mimic.

At this point, Zhang (2009) mentioned that some communicative strategies that help students to maintain a conversation are hesitations, asking for repetition, turn taking and adjacency pairs.

Question 7.

Q 7.	Did you apply any teaching method learned to communicate there?	
	P1	Phrasal verbs, and some slang.

P2	No, I didn't.
P3	No.
P4	Not really.
P5	No, I didn't.
P6	No.
P7	No.
P8	Communicative approach.
P9	No.
P10	No. I only tried formal ways like "explaining" the language to an American.

As it can be seen in the data above, only one participant mentioned that he used a method. The rest of the sample said no or mentioned something different. Then, what it can be inferred is that since they did not use any principle of any teaching method to communicate, there are not enough evidences to assume that a teaching method could be useful as a communicative strategy or to avoid challenges when being abroad.

However, taking into account the previous information, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TESL) offers teachers many different ways to transmit teachers' knowledge to their students that is communication too.

Indeed, methods provide information about how to facilitate communication, also describe activities and exercises that increase students' comprehension of the English language. To conclude Brumfit (2003) claims that teaching methods are a possible way to improve not only listening but also speaking skill to get successful communication in the target language.

Question 8.

Q 8.	What non-linguistic resources did you use to communicate with native people?
P1	Emoji, and gestures.
P2	-
P3	Mimic.
P4	I always tried to speak for everything, I think I always made use of linguistic resources to talk.
P5	-
P6	No.
P7	No.
P8	Signals and body language.
P9	Gestures.

	P10	Gestures.
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There are many ways to transmit information with the use of non-linguistical forms. These include graphic organizers, pictographs (stick figures and symbols), concept maps, dramatizations, and gestures to name a few.

Considering the sample, the most common non-linguistic resource was gestures and mimic that helped participants 1, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 10 while being abroad, especially when facing a communicative problem, asking for directions, transmitting an idea or asking for someone else.

In this question, it was observed that four participants 2, 5, 6 and 7 did not mention to have used non-verbal language as a communicative strategy. However, the majority of the population did it. At this point, Thomas (2009) mentioned that nonlinguistic representations enhance students' ability to use mental images to represent and elaborate on knowledge that is stored in two forms: "linguistic form as language and nonlinguistic form as mental images and physical sensations" (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, p. 73).

Although teachers usually present new knowledge in linguistic form; that is, they either talk to students about new content or ask them to read about new content; participants of this research project practiced the use of one common non-linguistic resource that was gestures, which helped then at the moment to transmit an idea or communicate something.

Question 9.

Q 9.	To what extent the use of regionalisms was difficult for you to communicate	
	P1	When I was in Minnesota I suffered at the beginning, because of the regionalisms, as I already wrote, they have

P2	<p>their own way of naming objects, and pronouncing words.</p> <p>I struggled to understand the idioms and slang.</p>
P3	<p>Quite difficult at the beginning, I had to investigate or ask.</p>
P4	<p>There are a lot of regionalisms that Americans use to speak, sometimes it was difficult for me to understand what people was talking about when they made use of slangs.</p>
P5	<p>I don't use them day to day, so; yes it was difficult to me.</p>
P6	<p>It was difficult for me because I don't have the same backgrounds them.</p>
P7	<p>Yes, it was difficult to catch what they tried to say because of the idioms.</p>
P8	<p>Depends on the place. There are some regionalisms that are easy to understand.</p>
P9	<p>Sometimes.</p>
P10	<p>In a scale from 1 to 10 I would say 4.</p>

According to the sample, the use of regionalism is a problem for getting communication. It is so because in their classrooms, neither teachers nor students speak in that way. Indeed, both communicate by using formal English. However, as the sample mentioned, people around the world develop their own language and for

them as foreign people, regionalisms represent difficulties to communicate with others.

Any language has its own universe of practices, communication and expression that is understood by that society that creates it. Paraphrasing Butcher (2002) many regionalisms (in the U.S.) are relics that are words brought over from Europe, and preserved in one area or another either because of the continuance of older ways of life in these localities or because a particular type of English that was early established and has not been fully overlaid or undermined.

The above explains why it was difficult for participants to face those expressions that are not part of the general knowledge of English but that are considered essential not only in the English language but also for the daily life of a native.

Question 10.

Q10.	Did you have communicative problems? Which ones?
P1	Sometimes a friend from Minnesota would make fun of the vocabulary I used because he told me that it was vocabulary that they don't really use in a real life context, he told me that they way I used it was correct and understandable, but that they were used to talk with a more fluent and informal one.
P2	Yes, I did. The fact of not understanding the meaning of those regionalisms and because I did not use any communicative strategy
P3	No.
P4	The use of slangs and some vocabulary.

P5	Yes, I did, because they use words or phrases that I didn't know or I didn't use before.
P6	Yes, lack of vocabulary and lack of the American background.
P7	So so. Maybe some idioms because I did not use strategies to communicate
P8	Because in some cases people say "words" or "phrases" that I can't understand and it would be a misunderstanding. Because I did not ask for deeper explanation
P9	No.
P10	I struggle that when instructions were faster than I. Yes, Unexpected words. Then I got used to it.

The sample claimed that the communicative problems were due to the lack of slangs, native pronunciation, lack of vocabulary or participants' lack of meaning for expressions original from that place.

As participant 1 mentioned, his English was really formal for that context, which reflected that his background was done in an instructional environment; that is in a classroom.

According to Bertlitz (2010) if students do not have grammar mastery, of course they will not be able to produce sentences grammatically correct, which is a factor that affect students' performance in speaking English fluently. Moreover, they cannot express themselves well or adequately because they lack appropriate vocabulary. Another factor that makes students to hesitate to speak in English is

that they are shy and nervous. They feel fearful to speak English in front of other people because they lack confidence about their own competence in English.

In addition, Hymes (2011) confirmed that being able to communicate requires more than linguistic competence; it requires communicative competence. Speaking problems can be major challenges to effective foreign language learning and communication. English as foreign language learners, no matter how much they know about the English language, still faced many speaking difficulties. Furthermore, Zhang (2009) argued that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. According to Ur (2012), there are many factors that cause difficulty in speaking such as:

1. Inhibition. Students are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism, or simply shy.

2. Nothing to say. Students have no motivation to express themselves.

3. Low participation. Only one participant can talk at a time because of large classes and the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all. These factors inhibit their performance in native contexts.

4. Mother-tongue usage. Learners who share the same mother tongue tend to use it because it is easier and because learners feel less exposed if they are speaking their mother tongue.

Besides, Thomas (2009) pointed out that the difficulties above could be avoided if communicative strategies are applied as participants 2, 7, and 8 mentioned.

Question 11.

Q 11.	In any moment, did you try to guess what someone said to have a conversation?
P1	If I didn't understand I would tell them to talk more slowly.

P2	Yes, I did. By listening to the tone of voice that person was speaking or the moves on their lips and the way that persons looks at you.
P3	-
P4	Sometimes it was easy for me just try to guess what people meant in a conversation to continue talking and don't lose the communication.
P5	Yes, I did.
P6	Yes, many times with my bunkmates.
P7	Just if I didn't recognize some word.
P8	Yes.
P9	Yes.
P10	Yes.

Guess what people said to participants at the moment to interact with someone else was one strategy to overcome challenges while being abroad.

This strategy helped them at once; however, it is not recommend because sometimes what people say doesn't have the say meaning as the one understood (Thoesen, 2017).

Question 12.

Q12.	Did you use mimic as a communicative strategy to imply something?
P1	No.
P2	Yes, I did it at several times to be honest.
P3	Of course.
P4	No I think I never made use of it.
P5	Yes, I did.
P6	Yes, when I forgot some words.
P7	Yes, when I used corporal language.
P8	Yeah, when I'm nervous in case I forget words or if I made mistakes.
P9	No.
P10	No, I don't think. I did it.

Taking into account the sample, some participants answered *yes* (participants 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8) and the rest said *no* (participants 1, 4, 9 and 10).

Thus, the main reason to use mimic to communicate was because of their nervousness at the moment to speak or lack of vocabulary. That is why mimic was a strategy to communicate with others.

According to Corder (2008), communicative strategies are regular techniques used by speakers in case of problems, which may occur while expressing the intended meaning. Every learner, who encounters those difficulties, can react in two ways. Firstly, a student may adjust the message, which he or she is trying to transfer to their language abilities. Secondly, a learner can try to express a desired meaning in its full form or increase their linguistic knowledge in different ways.

In conclusion, for research questions two, the findings pointed out that the most common communicative strategies used by the sample were:

Turn taking, non-verbal or non-linguistic language or guess what the speaker was saying to say.

In the next chapter, the conclusions for this study are described.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In the following chapter, a summary of the research is presented as well as the significance of this research in its immediate context and recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of the findings

During the research on the topic LEI students' perception towards communicative challenge during their immersion process abroad, the data reports the following conclusions:

1. The communicative strategies participants used were mime, gestures, movements and even signs to establish a conversation with native people.
2. The communicative challenges that participants faced were pronunciation, use of informal language (idiomatic expressions, slangs, phrasal verbs, contractions, and so on), lack of vocabulary and grammatical structure problems.
3. In general terms, it could be said that both verbal and nonverbal communication are significant in the process of transmitting and receiving ideas, information and messages; however, it is pertinent to consider the cultural aspects of a society, the personal characteristics of individuals, the place where they live, their nature, and their philosophical thinking to understand and speak a language, especially while being abroad.

5.3 Accomplishments of the aims

The purpose of the study was accomplished. Indeed, now there is accurate information about participants' problems while being abroad as well as the communicative strategies they used overcome those difficulties. Then, that state of art and those findings are key to take decisions to solve future students' exchanges to summer camps.

Besides, the two research questions were answered, and that data will allow both teachers and students to prepare themselves for future exchanges or prepare future international students.

5.4 Limitations of the study

One limitation of the study is that it is qualitative, which is considered subjective (Guevara, 2017). Then, it represents an obstacle to generalize the data.

Another limitation is the sample because it is reduced. However, there are not many students in programs like this.

Finally, other limitation was the interpretation of the data because it contains spelling and grammatical mistakes, which made the process of analysis slower.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Some suggestions for future research are:

- A. Take advantage of a quantitative research to complement these results and be able to generalize them in a bigger sample to improve the preparation of students.
- B. Apply the instrument (questionnaire) to a larger sample
- C. To implement the application of this procedure, to obtain data based on the verbal or nonverbal communicative tendency while being abroad to corroborate or refute these results.

5.6 Personal reflection

I spent many hours doing this project, but through it I learned that if I set goals, I could achieve them. As I reflect upon what I learned that was the most valuable; I think it was truly seeing that persistence provides results.

I learned that I could achieve more than I think I can, so just push myself. I have not always pushed myself, but, now, I enjoy the challenge and feel driven to do as well as I could. I learned that when I enjoy what I am doing, it is much easier for me to excel.

Personally, I can say that this research work helped me to realize what different cultures have an important impact when learning or practicing a

language. I can now look back and realize that this experience has helped me both as a student and as a young professional.

Research and writing skills are not only valued in an academic setting, but also in the pedagogy sector as well. I now feel much more confident in my writing abilities and research skills.

5.7 Final comments

Classroom activities should equip the learner of a foreign language with the necessary communication skills in a variety of contexts. For them, I suggest that LEI teachers should speak all the time in English because it is the best way to train the student to have real communication; that is in any context. Moreover, using materials that seek to faithfully imitate reality outside the classroom among teacher-students, students-student or students-teacher is a priority too.

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APENDIX 1

**Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
Facultad de Lenguas
Licenciatura en la enseñanza del inglés**

The following instrument is part of a research. Thus, we appreciate your cooperation and answer it as objectively as possible.

General information:

Gender: (M) (F)

Age: _____

1. In which of the four skills, did you have more problems when you were abroad? Why?
2. Does the culture of each country have to do with the problems that you have faced? Why?
3. Did you have understanding problems when having a conversation? Which ones?
4. Did you have problems with the language? Why?
5. Did you have a challenge that you could not solve at the moment to speak? And why?
6. Did you apply one of the communicative strategies that you learned in your classes? How?
7. Did you apply any teaching method learned to communicate there?
8. What non-linguistic resources did you use to communicate with native people?
9. To what extent the use of regionalisms was difficult for you to communicate?
10. Did you have communicative problems? Which ones?
11. In any moment, did you try to guess what someone said to have a conversation?

12. Did you use mimic as a communicative strategy to imply something?